



AEGIS



KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT
LEUVEN

Tuning in to African Cities
Popular Culture and Urban Experience in sub-Saharan Africa

Birmingham, 6-8 May 2010

The Centre of West African Studies 10-week residential Cadbury Fellows' Workshop on popular culture and urban experience in sub-Saharan Africa will culminate in a three-day international and interdisciplinary conference (6-8 May), bringing together specialists of popular culture and urban studies working on all regions of Africa.

Conference participants will explore the material and symbolic dimensions of urban forms of popular culture.

The conference is funded by the Cadbury Programm and a conference grant of the British Academy.

This leaflet contains the following information

1. conference schedule
2. locations (accommodation, conference, food)
3. arriving at the University of Birmingham
4. list of conference participants (presenters and chairs)
5. abstracts

Preliminary information for conference participants (per 26/04/2010)

Tuning in to African Cities – Birmingham, May 6-8 2010

1. CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DAY 1 -- Thursday 6 May

1.30-2.00 Filip de Boeck and Karin Barber: Introduction: Popular culture and the city

2.00-4.00: Panel 1

Panel 1:-- Fluidity, improvisation and getting by in the city

Laura Bleckmann, K.U.Leuven (Belgium), *'The world is turning around': uncertainty and belonging in pop songs from Kaokoland*

Patience Mususa, University of Cape Town (South Africa), *Driving life along a precarious journey: popular music as articulation of trying to get by in urban Zambia*

Okome Onokome, University of Alberta (Canada), *Nollywood and the Good-Time Woman of the City*

4.00-4.30 Tea

4.30-6.00 Film screening: Jesse Weaver Shipley, *Living the Hiplife*.

6.00-7.30 Welcome reception

DAY 2 --- Friday 7 May

9.30-10.30 Keynote address: Dr Mbugua wa Mungai, Senior Lecturer, Literature Department, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya: "Beyond spectacle: reflections on popular culture in Nairobi, Kenya".

10.30-11.00 Coffee

11.00-1.00 Panel 2a and 2b:

Panel 2a: Composing the city

Connie Rapoo, University of Botswana (Botswana), *Urbanized soundtracks: performing memory, history and identity in modern Botswana*

Till Förster, University of Basel (Switzerland), *Ndofoa Zofoa – an artist digesting the city*

Caroline Mose, SOAS (UK), *Hip hop and the urban feel in Nairobi*

Panel 2b: Urban confrontations

Leon Tsambu, University of Kinshasa, and Cadbury Fellow at the University of Birmingham, *Popular music and religious censorship in Kinshasa*

Kristien Geenen, K.U.Leuven (Belgium), *How people of Butembo were chosen to show the way to 'the new Congo': and analysis of the Congo ya sika-myth and its after-effects*

Frederik Lamote, K.U.Leuven (Belgium), *"In towns like this, who is your god?" On popular culture, urban space and spiritual power in Techiman, Ghana*

1.00-2.00 Lunch

2.00-4.00 Panel 3a and 3b:

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Panel 3a: Intimacy and public space in the city

Julie Archambault, SOAS (UK), *Relationships, derisive commentary and the aural environment in Inhambane, Southern Mozambique*

Tilo Grätz, University of Hamburg & University of Halle-Wittenberg (Germany), *New urban radio stations & the success of call-in-shows on intimate issues in Benin*

Vicki Brennan, University of Vermont (US), *"To God be the Glory": Gospel Music and Public Christianity in Lagos*

Panel 3b: The urban global

Naomi Van Stapele, University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands), *"No 50 Cent in Ghetto, just 10 Cents": why Nairobi ghetto boys juxtapose Kenyan hip hop to American hip hop culture in constructing "true ghettoness"*

Jesse Weaver Shipley, Haverford College (US), *Number One Mango Street: labor and a celebrity theory of value in Ghana's popular music*

Shani Omari, University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), *Call me Shakespeare! : the role of alias and boasting in Bongo Flewa scene*

4.00-4.30 Tea

4.30-6.30 Panel 4a and 4b:

Panel 4a: Exchange, commerce and consumption

Bianca Murillo, Willamette University (US), *Commercial space, consumer politics, and establishment of Kingsway department stores in Accra*

Ute Röschenhaler, Goethe University Frankfurt (Germany), *Mobile urban images: advertising in Bamako*

Joseph Trapido, UCL (UK), *Jaguars and pigs, fake people and real money: potlatches between Europe and Kinshasa*

Panel 4b: Youth and generation

Anne Schumann, SOAS (UK) and Cadbury visiting fellow at the University of Birmingham, *Zouglou music in Côte d'Ivoire: songs of the 'sacrificed generation'*

Hélène Kringelbach, University of Oxford (UK), *Performing the Casamance in Dakar: migrants' associations, dance and intergenerational politics in urban Senegal*

Sophie Moulard-Kouka, University of Bordeaux (France), *Rap as a media of emancipation for urban youths in Dakar (Senegal) and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania): a comparative approach*

7.30 Conference dinner

DAY 3 --- Saturday 8 May

9.30-10.30 Keynote address: Professor Ch. Didier Gondola, Professor of African History, University of Indiana-Purdue University, USA (keynote): "Western Films, Masculinities and Sexual Violence in Kinshasa"

10.30-11.00 Coffee

11.00-1.00: Panel 5

Panel 5: Music, citizenship and nation

Andrew Eisenberg, Stony Brooke U, (US) *Mombasa arabesque: hip-hop self-fashioning and the resonance of the national imaginary in Mombasa, Kenya*

Bob White, University of Montreal (Canada), *Rumba patriotism: narrativity and sycophancy in Congolese popular music videos*

Maurice Soudieck Dione, University of Bordeaux, (France) *From mbalax to rap: popular music and citizenship building in Senegal*

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1.00-2.00 Lunch

2.00-4.00: Panel 6

Panel 6: Nightlife and good times

Patrick Oloko, University of Lagos (Nigeria) and Cadbury Fellow at University of Birmingham, *Seriously joking: urbanisation, stand-up comedy and the Nigerian condition*

Joseph Wasswa-Matovu, Makerere University (Uganda), *Youth livelihoods and karaoke work in Kampala's nightlife spaces*

Tom Devriendt, K.U.Leuven (Belgium), *Jolling in the Cape: staging urban Afrikaner identities*

4.00-4.30 Tea

4.30-5.30 Katrien Pype – overview and general discussion; publication plans.

LOCATION

- Conference

The conference will take place in the rooms of the Centre of West African Studies in the Arts Building (2nd floor) on the Edgbaston Campus of the University of Birmingham. R16 on the map linked below.

<http://www.about.bham.ac.uk/maps/pdfs/edgbaston-map-09.pdf>

Registration will be from 12. to 1.30pm on Thursday.

2. ARRIVING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

(<http://www.about.bham.ac.uk/maps/edgbaston.shtml>)

By car

Approaching from the north west or south east along the M6:

Leave at Junction 6 (signposted Birmingham Central) to join the A38(M). At the end of the motorway, keep to the right, go over a flyover, then through some underpasses to join the A38 Bristol Road. The University is on your right, two and a half miles from the city centre

Approaching from the M42 north:

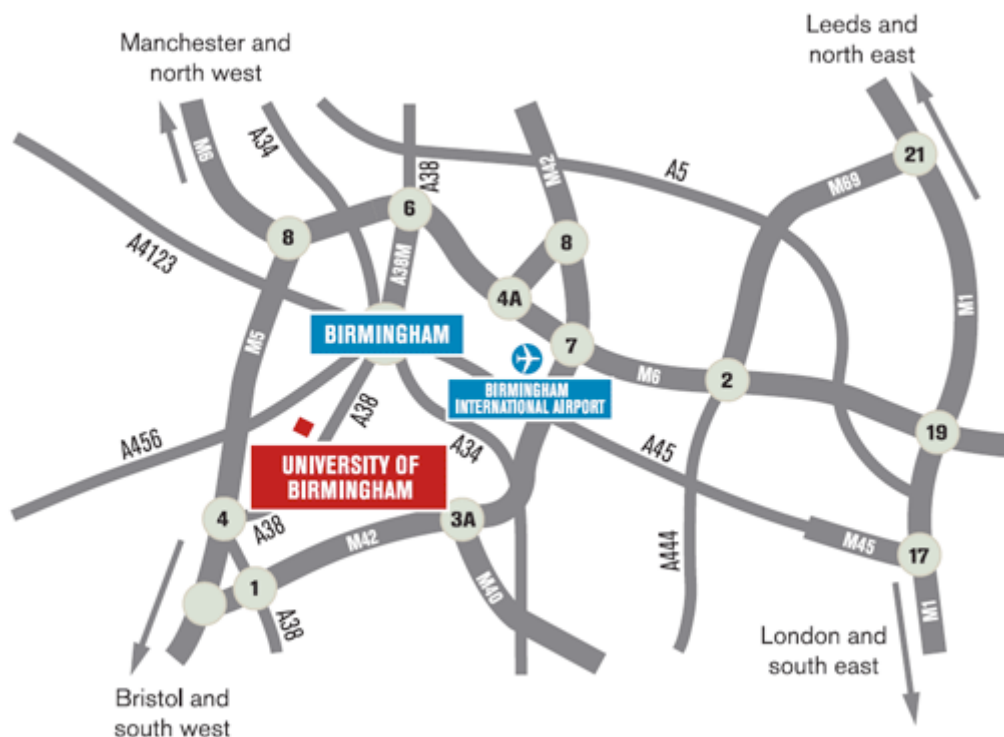
Leave at Junction 8 to join the M6 northbound and follow the instructions above

Approaching from the south west:

Leave the M5 at Junction 4 signposted Birmingham SW) to join the A38. The University is approximately eight miles from the motorway

Approaching from the M40:

It is easier to turn south on the M42 and leave at Junction 1, heading north on the A38 Bristol Road. The University is approximately eight miles from the motorway



By rail

Most cross-country services to Birmingham arrive at New Street Station. Up to six trains an hour depart for the University on the cross-city line (ten minutes to University station, final destination Longbridge or Redditch). The centre of the main campus is a five-minute walk from University Station.

By coach

There are frequent express coach services to Birmingham from London, Heathrow and Gatwick Airports, and many UK cities. The long-distance coach station is in Digbeth in the city centre.

By bus

Numbers 61, 62 and 63 travel to the University's Edgbaston and Selly Oak campuses, while the 21 and 44 serve the Medical School and Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The services all run frequently from the city centre. There is a travel information office outside New Street Station, where you can obtain bus timetables and departure point information. Maps can be found throughout the city centre indicating bus stop locations.

By taxi

There are taxi ranks at New Street Station and throughout the city centre. The journey to the University takes about ten minutes.

By air

Birmingham International Airport has direct flights from locations in the UK, as well as from the USA, Canada, Europe and the Middle East.

The journey by taxi from the airport to the University takes approximately half an hour. Alternatively, Air-Rail Link provides a free, fast connection between the airport terminals and Birmingham International railway station. Air-Rail Link operates every two minutes (journey time 90 seconds). Birmingham International railway station has frequent services to New Street Station in the city centre (journey time around 15 minutes). Up to six trains an hour depart for the University (train station on campus) on the cross-city line (ten minutes to University station, final destination Longbridge or Redditch). The centre of the main campus is a five-minute walk from University Station.

If you are arriving at London, there is a frequent train service from London

Euston railway station to New Street Station (journey time around 1 hour 30 minutes).

From Heathrow Airport. Take the Heathrow Express train to Paddington Station and then the Underground or a taxi to Euston Station.
Alternatively, an Airbus runs from Heathrow Airport direct to Euston Station

From Gatwick Airport. Take the Airport Express train to Victoria Station and then the Underground or a taxi to Euston Station

Visitor car parking

Visitors to campus are requested to park in any of the 4 pay & display car parks, those are:

South Car Park (access via Edgbaston Park Road)

North Car Park (access via Pritchatts Rd)

Vincent Drive Car Park (access via Vincent Drive)

Pritchatts Rd Car Park (at the junction with Vincent Drive)

All of the above are peripheral car parks and can be accessed without entering the main campus. The current cost is £1.00 per day. Visitors who require access to the main campus should contact the department they are visiting to request a permit which should be hung from the rear view mirror of their vehicle.

3. LIST OF CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS (PRESENTERS AND CHAIRS)

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4. ABSTRACTS

Archambault, Julie-Soleil

Relationships, derisive commentary and the aural environment in Inhambane, Southern Mozambique

"Where have you been?", asks an upset wife to her husband as he enters their house late one evening. "And how come your phone was disconnected?", she adds. Just as the man explains that his battery is flat, his phone starts ringing, thus exposing his lie. The song from which this extract is taken discusses the role mobile phones are understood to play in intimate conflicts and, like so many other popular songs in Mozambique, it depicts a case of deceit familiar to many. Based on 18 months of fieldwork I conducted in the city of Inhambane, Mozambique, this paper examines the role popular music plays in alimenting local debates, especially regarding the redrawing of gender relations currently underway in the postwar, postsocialist context. It also looks into the ways in which these songs are embedded into everyday life not only as derisive commentary but also as audio-visual features of the urban environment. Drawing on Brian Larkin's (2008) research on media in Nigeria, I show how, through omnipresence, volume and repetition, popular music participates in the creation of a particular aural environment in which new forms of sociality are shaped, represented and debated.

Bleckmann, Laura

'The world is turning around': Uncertainty and belonging in pop songs from Kaokoland

This paper digs into one realm of popular culture as produced in the songs of one of the most popular and favorite pop groups from Kaokoland which is situated in northwestern Namibia and home for several otjiHererospeaking groups. In Kaokoland the songs of the pop group 'bullet' sound from jukeboxes in bars in town and villages, the radio or on life concerts. While the songs 'travel' from place to place and resound in different settings, their contents travel as well, tying up places, kinship and names of people. Their topics reach from love and death, the praising and introduction of the group's members and the group's emergence up to the praise of an old gravel road or call to stick to one's culture. The songs address the challenges of (post)modern life giving voice to uncertainty and unpredictability. At the same time they express longing and belonging as experienced in the everyday. As such they bear the reflections and critiques of Kaokolands' youth in post-independent Namibia. By making use of an old genre – the *omitandu* (praise poems) – the songs embed people in kinship and places and as such they tie up in form and content the old with the new, the past with the present and the forefathers with people of today.

The aim of this paper is an exploration of form and content of the songs and to investigate in how far they enhance belonging which bridges modernity and tradition, different generations, time and place.

Brennan, Vicki L.

"To God be the Glory": Gospel Music and Public Christianity in Lagos

In Lagos gospel music is ubiquitous. It blares from car radios in Lagos' legendary traffic jams, and from speakers at kiosks in the city's busy markets. Live performances by gospel musicians may provide the soundtrack for a socialite's birthday party or be part of the entertainment provided at a televised political rally. This paper asks what sorts of identities and imaginaries are produced by the performance of Christian music at the level of popular culture in Lagos. Based on ethnographic research and interviews with Nigerian gospel musicians, in this presentation I describe the emergence of a public culture of Christianity in Nigeria's largest city. I examine how claims to urban space in Lagos are produced, negotiated, and experienced through the sound of religious popular music. Through a detailed analysis of how mass-mediated gospel music transforms urban spaces into Christian spaces, I unpack the implications this urban sonic transformation has on the imagination of civic culture and civil society in Nigeria.

Devriendt, Tom

Jolling in the Cape: Staging urban Afrikaner identities.

When writing an ethnography on how young Afrikaners re-imagine their cultural and religious identities in South Africa, one is hard pressed not to include the importance given to the production and reception of music by those youth. Places where they can meet in Cape Town to 'jol' (to party, to have a good time) are aplenty. Small and larger hot spots lie dispersed in the old city centre, some just outside of it, some in the suburbs. Some have been around for years, others are fairly new. Specific venues often stage similar kinds of music bands, drawing a loyal crowd. As places where a whole generation of city-dwelling Afrikaner youth flock together, they become sites where fraught identities are being stitched together. Engaging the past and the present, the bands and their audience play upon cultural stereotypes, alternative expectations and the city life. Add to this the relatively recent use of the virtual networks through which they build both an international and a national following and one could easily conclude that the young Afrikaner music scene seems to have rediscovered its mettle. Little has been written on this expressing and staging of urban Afrikaner identities. In our paper we will try to open up the debate by comparing the contemporary musical city scene with what some would regard as its now twenty-year-old predecessor: the Voëlvry movement.

Dione, Maurice Soudieck

From Mbalax to Rap: Popular Music and Citizenship Building in Senegal

Conscious of the popular music' wide social impact, the power has tried for a long time to confine it to the register of entertainment and the singing of rulers' praises; making it an instrument to sublimate the real society's problems, and to give an approval to the regime. Repression and censorship in the public media were the means used against independent and critical artists. Despite this, the mbalax popular music tries with difficulty to produce a subversive discourse, generally avoiding to clash with the power head-on, speaking to no-one in particular. By contrast, as from the end of 1980's and the early 1990's, a true musical

revolution took place with the rap phenomenon: an urban popular music increasingly committed, and enrolled without ambiguity in the building and the strengthening of democratic citizenship. Both in the form and the content, rappers break with the traditional forms of expression in the public space; they say in rather blunt terms what they think. Therefore, in an economic crisis context marked by structural adjustment programmes, with such disastrous consequences as poverty, unemployment, marginalization, etc., rappers incisive and virulent songs, denounce politicians' defects and bad governance. This protesting discourse by urban popular music is going with an awareness discourse, in order to enlighten all those who were the prisoners of ignorance darkness. Rap artists call for people's sense of civic responsibility and permanent vigilance; they also remind politicians of their duties, and on the realities of international system.

Eisenberg, Andrew

Mombasa Arabesque: Hip-Hop Self-Fashioning and the Resonance of the National Imaginary in Mombasa, Kenya

This paper examines hip-hop music and video production in Mombasa, Kenya, with an ear toward the resonance of the Kenyan national imaginary on the "Swahili coast." With virtually all Kenyan media outlets located in the capital Nairobi, aspiring hip-hop artists in the coastal city of Mombasa must first appeal to a Nairobi audience before they can hope to achieve national, international, or even more local success. In the early 2000s, keenly aware of the heavy thematic emphasis on urban identity in Kenyan hip-hop, Mombasan hip-hop artists of upcountry origin (so-called "WaMombasani") began representing themselves in their songs and videos as denizens of the dangerous streets of modern Mombasa. Despite the apparent success of this representational strategy, aspiring hip-hop artists from Mombasa's traditional community of Swahili-speaking Muslims seemed unwilling or unable to adopt it. One Swahili-speaking Muslim rapper sought instead to represent himself as an "Arab" denizen of Mombasa's casbah-like Old Town, a location stereotyped in Kenyan public culture as an exotic internal Orient. Even in retrospect, the results of this endeavor—a song and related video that skirt the line between self-representation and self-parody—are puzzling. Questions remain about the intentions behind these productions and how they were ultimately received by a broader Kenyan audience. Applying ethnographic and semiotic methods, I put this experimental moment in Mombasan hip-hop into context, making it speak to the antinomies of youth culture in Mombasa and the place of the "Swahili coast" in the Kenyan nation.

Förster, Till

NDOFOA ZOFOA – An art digesting the city

Individual Creativity and African Urban Visual Culture

Ndofoa Zofoa is the son of the Fon of Babungo, the ruler of a traditional kingdom in the Cameroon grassfields and one of the famous *rois sculpteurs* who practiced wood carving himself. Zofoa the son, however, lives and works in Yaoundé, the capital of the country. In Mbankolo Chefferie, the wealthy Beverley Hills of Yaoundé at the slopes of Mount Fébé, he has constructed a house which he slowly but steadily transforms into an art work. He collects all kinds of objects that are linked to the urban life of Yaoundé, from sinks and plastic flowers to mobile phones and CDs. His home mirrors a kalei-doscope of new identities in which ethnicity and the old kingdom of Babungo play an increasingly small role. Ndofoa continues to work on his house, adding a room, installing a new object here and decorating another, already incorporated object there. The constant re-building of the house and its rooms as a practice corresponds to his vision of the urban as a world that always remains in flux and never achieves a definite shape.

This paper traces the constitution of Ndofoa's house and centers on how his work is related to the urban visual culture of Yaoundé. At a more theoretical level, it asks how individual

creativity is trans-formed by the experience of the urban and how the artist's agency then transforms the visual ex-pression of that urban culture. It aims at overcoming the shortcomings of visual culture theory with its basically dichotomous concepts of individual expression and collective experience by proposing an approach that looks at the materiality of objects, sensory experience and expression as interrelated variables.

This paper is based on research carried out within the framework of a project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation on "Visual Culture in Urban Africa".

Geenen, Kristien

How people of Butembo were chosen to show the way to 'the new Congo': an analysis of the Congo ya Sika-myth and its after-effects.

In the paper, I translate local narratives about one particular event into a reading of a city as a whole. The city concerned is Butembo, a secondary city in the North Kivu province (DRC). The incident relates to the appearance of a foreign flower in the late fifties. This water hyacinth – named "Congo ya Sika," which means "the New Congo" – had already caused severe damage in the rivers, lakes and waterways of the Belgian Congo, as it obstructed navigation, and caused fish starvation, amongst other negative effects. The colonial authorities decided to mobilise the population in order to eradicate the plague. Pamphlets and posters were spread, with the request to destroy the pictured flower when spotted. People of Butembo reacted in a most particular way to the appearance of these posters in their city, ascribing the Congo ya Sika flower mythical proportions right from the start. They were not aware that the flower had already appeared in large parts of the Congo, and that it needed to be destroyed because of its damaging consequences. In their interpretation, the appearance of the flower was a sign that 'the new Congo' would rise in their town, endowing their place exclusively with a particular force. Whereas the Congolese population as a whole were struggling against the botanical plague, people of Butembo considered themselves to be 'the chosen people.' I scrutinise the myth's origin and analyse its social meaning, in an effort at a better understanding of Butembo's society. Throughout my analysis, special attention is paid to (self)representation, and to noise in media discourse.

Gondola, Didier Ch.

Tropical Cowboys: Dope, Rape, and other "Dirty Tricks" in Colonial Kinshasa

This paper deals a youth sub-culture that developed in 1950s Kinshasa, Congo. At first marginalized and criminalized by society, this urban sub-culture and its new cultural patterns finally found their way into the mainstream culture. Against the backdrop of urban unrest that presided over the decolonization process in Congo and under the influence of the Western cinematic genre, and especially the emblematic figure of Buffalo Bill, several youth gangs sprouted in many corners of the Congolese capital. Scholars have long reduced the activities and behaviors of these young "Bills," as they dubbed themselves, to their most ostensible deviant and delinquent aspects, thus overlooking the multifarious nature of this youth movement. I argue in this paper that it was one of the many examples of political resistance forms displayed by colonial subject groups. The Young "Bills" did not merely mimic and reenact the inherent violence that suffused so many Western movies that were shown to Congolese natives as early as the 1930s. Rather, they manipulated and ritualized cowboy violence as their way of reacting to the political oppression and instability that climaxed in Congo in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Grätz, Tilo

New urban radio stations & the success of call-in-shows on intimate issues in Benin (West Africa)

My paper analyses aspects of the current changes that are shaping the landscape of electronic media in West Africa, induced among others by the enormous proliferation of new (i.e. independent) radio stations in major African cities, and their promotion by cultural entrepreneurs. I argue that a new generation of urban media producers (and their audiences) emerged, employing particular modes of media appropriation, cultural creativity and sociopolitical attitudes. Furthermore, successful formats of radio production, especially call-in shows, focussing on contemporary social issues and personal problems that are typical for young urban listeners, are gaining new ground and contribute to a growing discursive field on morality and personal conduct. Taking the example of 'sentimental programs' aired by urban radio stations in the Republic of Benin, I will follow the various practices of radio presenters and technicians and their relations to their audiences. With regard to some simplistic assumptions on public culture, I will critically discuss the argument of orality as principal vector of the success of radio production in Africa, and demonstrate the importance of intermediality and new, hybrid genres of radio production. Finally, I will follow the growing interrelation yet conversion of different media with regard to information and entertainment strategies employed by radio producers, triggering various new methodological challenges.

Kringelbach, H el ene Neveu

Performing the Casamance in Dakar: migrants' associations, dance and intergenerational politics in urban Senegal

Over the past decades, dance- and theatre troupes have become increasingly popular in urban Senegal. Drawing on fieldwork in Dakar, this paper looks at the interplay between such troupes and Casaman ais identities. In contemporary Senegal, Casaman ais separatism appears as a regionalist, mainly Jola movement in a nation dominated by Wolof speakers. Scholarship on the separatist conflict which has been going on since the early 1980s has focused on the enduring marginalisation of the region, and more recently on the role played by schooling and migration to Dakar. Building on the more recent approaches, this paper shows how Casaman ais hometown associations in Dakar organised themselves in dance- and theatre troupes in the 1960s and 70s, thereby appropriating the artistic policies of the Senghor regime to serve their own cultural agendas. It also looks at the ways in which the younger generations of performers, often the children of the founders, have in turn used the troupes to launch transnational artistic careers, or simply to travel and migrate to Europe or North America, all while retaining strong links to Dakar and the Casamance. It is argued that popular culture, performance in particular, is often popular precisely because it is sufficiently malleable to accommodate a variety of agendas across the generations.

Lamote, Frederik

"In towns like this, who is your god?"

On Popular culture, urban space and spiritual power in Techiman, Ghana

This paper is based on recent field research in Techiman, a small but fast growing city in central Ghana. Within the broad fields of research on religious change and urbanisation in Africa, the paper describes how the interplay between the growth of the city and changes in the religious landscape influences popular culture in Techiman. The city's public space has become the scene of a fierce 'spiritual competition' between Pentecostal pastors and prophets on the one hand and the so-called 'Traditional priests' on the other. By mapping Traditional and Christian religious places at different points in time (1930-2010), this first part of the paper lays bare how the expansion of the built space triggers processes of religious

change and alters the material manifestations of spiritual power. The history of the Boo-shrine, for example, illustrates how traditional priests reinforce their shrines by relocating them outside town and by catching new “travelling” gods. These changes are a response to the rising popularity of the Pentecostal movement that demonizes the Traditional religion and claims the monopoly on ‘true’ spiritual power.

The second part of the paper sketches how the spiritual competition turns religious places into highly contested and sometimes fraudulent zones of entertainment. During services, Traditional priests and Pentecostal pastors perform miracles, reinvent traditional drumming patterns, crack jokes or launch new fashion trends in a quest for popularity. However, their love of monetary gain also leads to ‘spiritual fraud’. By scrutinising a case of ‘spiritual fraud’, I illustrate how the spiritual competition between Traditional and Pentecostal priests blurs the distinction between the two religions. The quest for power, popularity and money reshapes Techiman’s popular culture and challenges us to rethink the relation between religion, urban space and popular culture.

Keywords: African urbanity; Traditional religion; Pentecostal movement; spiritual competition; space and place; popular culture; Techiman

Mose, Caroline

Presently, popular culture, especially in the African urban setting, is increasingly contributing greatly, or even directly influencing public life, socio-political landscapes and a unique identity. In this, questions arise regarding what terms like ‘urban’ mean for example, and whether this meaning shifts with every genre and subgenre of popular urban culture.

My paper, working along a central thesis that argues that popular culture strives to create a decidedly urban feel that is central to the modern African urban experience, begins with defining what ‘urban’ means in the city of Nairobi, examining first how this meaning is negotiated and then, how this meaning is renegotiated, bearing in mind the socio-political background of a post ‘post-election violence’ era.¹ I do this by citing the example of hip hop culture², including its music, its texts, its production and its performance spaces.

In defining ‘urban’, I explore whether hip hop culture produces an urban style that is African, bearing in mind its growing popularity, and its direct linkage in style and form to American hip hop. Here, I examine the various forms of hip hop in Nairobi, including how it self-identifies, questioning whether it is even relevant to pursue a decidedly ‘African feel’ in a globalized and culturally fluid world. I further examine how Kenyan hip hop ties in with religion, politics and the market, questioning whether this is also symbolic of other African cities.

Moulard-Kouka, Sophie

Rap as a media of emancipation for urban youths in Dakar (Senegal) and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania): a comparative approach

Rap has developed into an important form of expression for young Africans in many countries of the continent. Dakar (Senegal) has emerged as a “hotspot” in Western Africa while Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) can be considered the main place of Eastern Africa’s rap. In this presentation, I aim to expose how urban youths, who are traditionally kept away from public discourse and responsibilities in these two countries, assume a role in redefining society, both in reality and by symbolic expressions.

First, I will show how they define the urban space in an original way: rappers are emblems for their neighbourhoods, and they mark a separation between the city centre and its suburbs,

¹ Kenya’s post election violence following the 2007 presidential poll where thousands were both killed and displaced. A major flashpoint for this violence was the inner city of Nairobi.

² I demonstrate here that hip hop also encompasses visceral spaces like radio, the internet and the theatre stage. Thus, hip hop culture here transcends traditional performance and aesthetical spaces and media, contributing widely to the urban experience.

with their different styles and claims. Their access to urban infrastructures, like entertainment places or media (with a special emphasis on radios, which have been liberalised in both countries in 1994) also allow them to broadcast their music, to participate in the political, social and religious debates.

Therefore, these young urban dwellers played a role in the elections in Dakar as well as in Dar es Salaam. But while Senegalese rappers were active in the mobilisation of the youth to go and register for the electoral polls and vote for change, *Bongo Flava* artists from Tanzania either have supported the President, or have kept away from the public discourse. Their relation to politicians and religious leaders will also be analysed. Rappers can act for collective protest and individual emancipation, as well as for nationalistic aims. This paper is based on fourteen months of fieldwork in Dakar, and a current research in Dar es Salaam. It will be supported by an audio-visual material.

Mungai, Mbugua wa

Beyond spectacle: reflections on popular culture in Nairobi, Kenya

Current discourses on popular culture in Africa emphasize spectacle and political statements that come through in the myriad manifestations of this genre. Hence dress, popular music, vehicle art and paintings for instance—these being some of the more common forms of quotidian popular expression throughout Africa—are analyzed often times solely for their spectacularity than anything else. A guiding assumption in these discussions generally is that these forms mask, and at times make evident, a politics inherent in them. Be that as it may, it is clear that more attention needs to be paid to the editorial process—the selections, by means of conflation, inclusion as well as occlusion—by which these forms come to mean as they do.

Popular culture means as it does because in contemporary Africa, the construction of popular histories is a principal means—and for most people perhaps it is the only one available—by which subjects engage with those in power. Proceeding from the insights offered by Mbembe, Fabian and Barber amongst others, this paper seeks to engage with questions about processes of selecting material in the construction of popular histories within Kenyan popular culture. Thus the paper seeks to interrogate the following questions: who selects the content of popular histories as told in popular culture and why? Given that the construction of popular culture evinces clear intertextual processes, how is Kenyan national history edited to fit not just particular modes of telling but also in order to project specific counter-narratives and meanings? Indeed what do these popular metanarratives help to mask or reveal about the editors?

Anchored in the representational strategies of Kenyan youth subcultures, the paper specifically examines the Mau Mau narrative—a popular subject amongst self-perceived marginalized youth—and its oppositional readings to illustrate the workings of the editorial processes in popular culture by which youth rewrite dominant narratives of 'Kenyan' identity and history.

Murillo, Bianca

Commercial Space, Consumer Politics, and Establishment of Kingsway Department Stores in Accra

On January 31, 1957, Kwame Nkrumah inaugurated the opening of what he described as the largest, most modern department store in all of West Africa—Kingsway, Accra. Occupying over two acres, the new building housed three floors of retail space, a restaurant, barbershop, pharmacy, and the country's first escalator. According to Nkrumah, Kingsway symbolized a peaceful and prosperous new Ghana. Its self-service supermarket, friendly sales staff, and wide variety of imported goods also promised Ghanaian consumers "the modern shopping experience." This paper uses the history of Kingsway as a lens to exploring connections between politics, urban space, and the role

of consumerism in postcolonial Ghana. It argues that while Kingsway became a place for upper and emerging middle-class urbanites to participate in a shared sociability, it also fostered new sets of inequalities, sharpening social divisions along gender, class, and generational lines. In addition, because the United Africa Company (UAC), a colonial trading firm, owned and operated Kingsway, tensions surrounding the store's development illuminate larger political and economic issues surrounding postcolonial nation building. The development of commercial space and consumer politics in Accra provides a rich site to investigate "Tuning in to African Cities" conference themes, which still holds relevance today. In 2007, at the opening of the long-awaited Accra Mall, developers introduced the new shopping center as a national symbol of modernization and progress. Inaugural speeches echoed those of Nkrumah's fifty years earlier, and reinforce the importance of a historical approach to understanding contemporary commercial developments and the politics of consumerism in Ghana.

Mususa, Patience Ntelamo

Driving life along a precarious journey: Popular music as articulation of trying to get by in urban Zambia.

Zambians, since the widespread implementation of structural adjustment policies in the mid 1990's, experience great hardship and attempt to make a self-sufficient living. My presentation will show how contemporary Zambian popular music articulates this effort that makes the rhythm and noise of the Zambian city. Drawing from a juncture of Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold's (2007) ideas of life as a processual improvisatory practice and the notion of 'trying' a common heard expression in urban Zambia used to indicate an engagement with the effort of life; I intend to show how the metaphorical expressions of song and dance provide a powerful social commentary for this experience. Life, as portrayed in contemporary Zambian music, is a journey, albeit a precarious one; an embodied and continuous practice of trying. The lyrics of the popular song 'Oh no' (2005) by the artist Petersen sing of a journey that is too frightening to contemplate, that it is better not to look '*sinifuna nakulanga*' and that all one can do is 'try'. The artist Mozegater's 'Chiunda' ('noise') music embodies the dramaturgical movements of this journey amidst crisis when his songs, a combination of morale songs heard at football games and those of a funeral-lament are danced in a parody of suffering. The past in all these songs is ever present, a nostalgic experience that underlies the temporal present. Some people make it, others don't, what happens in between is a series of improvisations to extend life, *uku toping'a* (literally 'to add on', Bemba slang in reference to extending life using HIV/AIDS anti-retroviral medication).

Okome, Onookome

Nollywood and the Good-Time Woman of the City

Nollywood is essentially the medium of the city. It was defined by the city in its early days and is being constantly redefined by the city on a daily basis. This relationship is itself very symbiotic and symbolic on different levels, a point which I made in an earlier essay, "Writing the African City: Images of the City in Nigerian Home Video Films (2000)." This connection also defines the narrative trajectories that are the common fair in the practice of this industry. although there has been a healthy outpouring of essay and articles on Nollywood of late, very little attention has been paid to the connection which I make between the city and the narrative practice of Nollywood. My paper speaks to this scholarly lacuna and the aim is to follow up with my previous work on the subject by re-engaging with the Nollywood city as the ordering category of the narrative items in Nollywood films. Of special interest to my argument is the way Nollywood articulate the women of the city, especially that category of women, which Kenneth Little describes as "the good time women." I wish to do so by identifying the ways that the Nollywood city, that is Lagos, instigate the writing of this

category of the women in Nollywood films. The designation of Lagos as an “ocean community” also brings into the equation a measure of cosmopolitanism that offers a peculiar form of “freedom” to these women who perform multiple roles to quote an essential aspect of Jonathan Raban study of the modern city in his book, *The Soft City*. In the case of the postcolonial city of which Lagos is implicated, this freedom to perform *selfhood* offers women a sense of anonymity, making this performance fluid and free. It is my intention in this paper to argue that it is here-in the articulation of the city of Nollywood-that we engage with some of the most telling changes that women have gone through in the last twenty years in Nigeria. My paper discusses why and how this image of the *good-time* women offers us a way of interrogating the city as an ordering category that empowers women even as the social narrative of the Nollywood film compels a reading that is dis-empowering. I will use three examples-*Living in Bondage*, *The Bastard* and *Highway to the Grave*.

Oloko, Patrick

Seriously joking: urbanisation, stand-up comedy and the Nigerian condition

Nigerian stand-up comedians seek to appropriate an American form of popular entertainment by domesticating, it through the imposition of autochthonous subjects, colour, craft and language in ways that obscure its origin. A typical show attracts the attention of the informed observer to the new forms which the ancient art of story-telling is assuming in the Nigerian urban space as youths utilize the resources offered by satellite television and other electronic media to at once further cultural globalisation and resist the idea of global interconnectedness. They particularly grapple with the complex nature of identity as ethnic, national and international impulses attempt to merge in them.

The objective of the study I am proposing is to initiate a scholarly engagement of stand – up comedy in Nigeria as an urban art form by investigating how the ancient oral art of story-telling during moon-lit nights has appropriated a modern form to perform meaningfully the roles of entertainment and social criticism within the Nigerian cosmopolitan space.

Omari, Shari

Call me Shakespeare!: The role of alias and boasting in bongo fleva scene

Over the last two decades Bongo Fleva (BF) music, which started as rap music, has become a key cultural style among Tanzanian youth. BF is the collection of youth music genres in urban Tanzania, mostly sung in Kiswahili which became popular from the 1980s. The music was initially considered as hooliganism due to its ‘strange’ cultural styles such as violence, vulgar language, dressing styles, excessive use of boastful language and peculiar alias. Although there are a handful of scholars locally and abroad such as Remes (1998), Perullo (2003), and Omari (2009) who studied this music, none of them has critically examined the above mentioned elements.

The objective of this project, however, is to examine only two cultural elements; the use of boasting and alias in Bongo Fleva scene in Tanzania. This project examines how the use of boasting and alias shape and identify youths in contemporary Tanzania. Boasting is to brag about oneself or blow your own trumpet in front of people. Alias is a fictitious name given to an artist. In many traditional African societies the boaster normally bragged before the rulers at a ceremony. The boasters praised the heroic acts of their rulers or chiefs or sometimes praised themselves. During those days, praise poetry aimed at improving or reinforcing heroism, bravery, hardworking, endurance, good governance, security, patriotism and adeptness in war and hunting. However, today boastful language is one of the common

elements in Bongo Flewa poetry. Why boasting is more prevalent among Bongo Flewa artists than other Tanzanian music genres such as taarab or dance music?

Rapoo, Connie

Urbanized soundtracks: Performing memory, history, and identity in modern Botswana

This paper seeks to investigate performances that combine sound ethnography with enactments of cultural memory to construct the urbanized landscape of Botswana. It examines Botswana popular culture, particularly popularized traditional music, House music, the localized hip hop culture of *Kwaito*, and DJ Dignash Morapedi's radio voice impersonations. The main argument is that these expressive forms interrupt Botswana cultural authenticity. Popularized traditional music from Botswana works through a symbolist aesthetic, echoing and mapping the differing trajectories of Botswana cultural formations. Contemporary genres of music and performance forms such as House and *Kwaito* articulate the dynamics of appropriation and self-fashioning to constitute a distinct urban black African landscape. DJ Dignash's dramatic representations offer a cacophony of sounds that is inextricably linked to the market, reflecting changes in the city of Gaborone's infrastructural landscape and human geography. The city's industrial economy is currently characterized by a boom in Asian and Nigerian warehouse stores. DJ Dignash acoustically conceptualizes this urbanized cosmopolitan landscape by dramatizing stereotyped identifications of Botswana, Chinese, Indian, and Nigerian entrepreneurs, proprietors, and media celebrities in their everyday encounters with ordinary citizens.

Röschenthaler, Ute

Mobile Urban Images: Advertising in Bamako

The liberalisation of the market of the 1990s did not only facilitate trade for the large transnational companies. It also encouraged local entrepreneurs to find economic niches, create new products and sell them to local consumers, occasionally even beyond Mali. They advertise their brands to make their products known to a wider public, and therewith they provide job opportunities for a range of different people: billboard producers, painters, actors, drivers, street sellers etc. Others right away work with advertising agencies who also have multiplied since the 1990s.

This paper is based on field research in Bamako between 2005 and 2010. It will look into various types of advertising, focussing on those images which move in temporal and geographic urban space: some are shown in television at certain times during the day, others move as paintings with vehicles around town, still others move with or on people in the streets. We can observe a particular concentration of such images at specific times during the day and at certain places in town. At these same places also a concentration of non-moving advertising images can usually be found.

My argument is that while concentrations of advertising and movement at certain places and times can probably be found in every city, the type of images that circulate and the advertscape they create are different and thus may help us to understand urban realities.

Schumann, Anne

Zouglou Music in Côte d'Ivoire: Songs of the 'Sacrificed Generation'

Côte d'Ivoire has travelled a full circle from economic success (from 1960 to about 1979) to failure (from the 1980s onwards) in little more than a generation. In the early 1990s, *zouglou*,

today Côte d'Ivoire's internationally most well-known music, emerged at the university residences in Yopougon of the University of Abidjan. The youth who were to become the 'zouglou generation' is precisely the generation that bore the brunt of this economic deterioration. *Zouglou* was born at a time when, as a result of an unprecedented economic crisis and the attendant structural adjustment measures, university students experienced a general downgrading not only as students but also as future graduates hoping to find employment. In addition, the number of students who were unable to complete their education grew considerably during this time. As this paper demonstrates, these phenomena had a profound influence on the development of the philosophy associated with *zouglou* music. Accordingly, *zouglou* singers have called themselves the 'sacrificed generation'. Indeed, the many songs about orphans in *zouglou* music can be read as a symbolic statement about the experience of this generation: the sense that Ivoirian youth have been abandoned by their elders, their families and the political authorities, becomes apparent through the words of *zouglou* songs consoling such (metaphorical) orphans. *Zouglou* music has become an important platform through which this generation has been able to express their experiences, as well as a site for oral street poetry and collective catharsis. This paper will examine the content of these songs, as well as interviews with *zouglou* singers on this matter, to investigate how *zouglou*, as a cultural phenomenon, grew out of experience of this generation.

Trapido, Joseph

Jaguars and Pigs, Fake People and Real Money: potlatches between Europe and Kinshasa.

This paper looks at how patronage in Kinshasa popular music has been connected to a wider potlatch economy that connects small time Congolese gangsters in the diaspora, diamond dealers and political elites in Kinshasa. Setting the romantic texts of popular songs in the context of wider patronage relationships, this paper will show how exchanges of prestige goods, music and emotions have all been central to the control of social reproduction in this Kinshasa world. This paper will attempt to explain the local notions of hierarchy which emerge from these exchanges, hierarchies which contrast the west with *Ngwanzu* (China – but also fake or poor quality), and 'heavy' with 'empty' or 'worthless' persons (*mutu ya kilo/mutu pamba*). The paper will connect these local diagnoses to Marxist arguments about the role of 'articulation', and the relationship between 'production and reproduction'.

Tsambu, Léon

Popular music and religious censorship in Kinshasa

Through two major periods of political and social history of the DRC, namely the colonial and postcolonial periods, this study proposes to hold the juridical influence of religion on Congolese-Kinshasan music practice, and to reveal stakes (political, social, economic and symbolic) on the basis of this censorship that has now become more or less privatized by the hyper-religiosity who won or corrupted the Congolese capital since the late 1980s, thus taxing incarnate Apocalypse this popular music of bars and broadcasting. Thus, the study will seek to place the matter in confidence in the content of songs, the show and dance gestures, the rhetoric of videos, as well as stage nicknames of stars like "Benedict XVI". It will ensure to highlight the severe tone taken by the censorship on body or policies of the female body that has become the subject of surveillance under the microscope of religions in inflation in Kinshasa.

It's all try to answer the following questions: what role do popular music and religion play in the imaginary and the social and cultural representations in Kinshasa? Why music censorship has become more privatized, more popular in recent years than institutional it was yesterday? Why, in spite of religious censorship has become more virulent and popular, artists are making use of increasing debauchery in the texts of their songs and music videos that

figure them? How to define the stakes that motivate religious censorship of “profane” popular music in Kinshasa? How cultural and media globalization does affect the Kinshasan musical practice on point to be open to religious censorship?

van Stapele, Naomi

“No 50 Cent in Ghetto, Just 10 Cents”: Why Nairobi Ghetto Boys Juxtapose Kenyan Hip Hop to American Hip Hop Culture in Constructing ‘True Ghettoiness’.

My paper focuses on the question why young, male gang members in Nairobi ghettos construct renowned African-American Hip Hop artists such as 50 Cent as ‘white’. What does this tell us about the historical, cultural, economic and political relationships between Kenyan Hip Hop and American Hip Hop culture as perceived by young, male gang members in Nairobi ghettos? Why do they (re)construct 2Pac, a famous African-American Hip Hop artist who was killed in 1996, as ‘their hero’ and why are more recent African-American Hip Hop artists perceived as the ‘other’ and typified as ‘sell-outs’ and ‘whites’? How does this articulate with the way other international popular cultures, such as Reggae and Dance Hall, and their local variants are experienced and shaped by these young men? And how can all these questions lead to a better understanding of the shared sensational forms that constitute the ‘aesthetics of persuasion’ of Nairobi gang cultures? In my paper I particularly look at notions of belonging and at the intertextuality between fluid and context bound constructions of manhood, class, ethnicity and race to explicate why juxtaposing American Hip Hop to Kenyan Hip Hop culture enables the young, male gang members to claim ‘true ghettoiness’ and thus power.

This paper is based on ongoing field research with gangs in Mathare Valley, a Nairobi ghetto. I started my research in 1998 and I first saw the emergence of a Kenyan Hip Hop culture among gang cultures in Mathare Valley that was based on the local slang (Sheng) and I later witnessed its spread to a more mainstream audience.

This paper touches on the following two conference workshop themes; ‘Power and Popular Culture’ and ‘Visceral Aesthetics and the City’.

Wasswa-Matovu, Joseph

Youth Livelihoods and Karaoke Work in Kampala's Nightlife Spaces.

In Kampala, Uganda's administrative and commercial capital, youth in the 15-24 year age bracket are shown to suffer the highest rate of economic inactivity compared to older cohorts, and that the rate is heavily gendered. Nevertheless, for a substantial number of unemployed youth in Kampala's poor and low income neighborhoods, ‘Karaoke’ has come to provide some semblance of productive work. Karaoke work refers to the activities of youth who are co-opted into entertainment groups to provide a host of nightlife entrainment acts in the numerous single-site music, club and bar venues around the city. While distinct from karaoke as conventionally practiced in up-market entertainment spaces (with its arsenal of teleprompters and lyrical materials); the karaoke work of the youth here is epitomized by a range of stage acts that include singing, (both actual and lip singing or mimicking), dancing, comedy, and veiled attempts to striptease by female members of the groups.

However, notwithstanding the opportunities karaoke work affords unemployed youth to negotiate some semblance of livelihoods, anecdotal evidence points to a number of risks youth face in the occupation. Thus, many are cheated and not paid for services rendered, yet they cannot seek legal redress. Working hours are also known to be long, with managers lining up their groups to perform at various venues in a given night. In-group competitive practices also put pressure on the youth to put on exceptional performances to attract the crowd's approval and earn tips from the crowds. Youth in karaoke groups are also susceptible to sexual harassment and abuse, and to be at risk of acquiring sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as HIV/AIDS in spaces that bring them in close contact with much older and possibly less well-meaning individuals. Also, youth karaoke group members

are likely to suffer stigma from family, friends and the community as their work is generally frowned on as decadent.

Yet, for youth excluded from the urban labor market, either because they lack the necessary skills and/or education or the jobs themselves are unavailable; Kampala's nightlife spaces appear to offer opportunities to negotiate some forms of livelihoods out of their karaoke work. By soliciting the views of the youth in the karaoke groups, this paper explores how karaoke work offers youth agency to negotiate some semblance of urban livelihoods despite the dangers in the occupation.

Weaver Shipley, Jesse

*Number One Mango Street:
Labor and a Celebrity Theory of Value in Ghana's Popular Music*

At the end of 2009, Mensa, a London-based, Ghanaian-born rapper, released *Ajuma* [or *Work*] the first single from his new album *Number One Mango Street*. The album's title refers to Mensa's childhood address in Accra. Its themes of movement and the collaborative labor that went into making the music reflect what DJ Rab the International calls the "tri-continental status" of young Africans: the album was conceived in London, recorded in Ghana, and mixed and mastered in New York. The single *Ajuma* reflects on how labor defines contemporary life. Mensa's rap lyrics implore, "We don't have a life, all we do is work. When we go to sleep, we dream about work." It marks a lesson relevant to both the music industry as well as, what Jane Guyer has noted is the centrality of long distance exchange and complex value conversions to West African economies. The lyrics state that no matter your profession—carpenter, football player, doctor—labor is hustling. Here hustle has a dual sense of defining both life's possibilities and its constraints. This paper examines the work, collaborations, and travels that go into making and marketing Mensa's album. I trace the labor and exchanges of beatmakers, DJs, producers, and promoters that go into making and circulating digitally-oriented popular music. The advent of digital file-sharing and PC-based music software has led to new possibilities for independent artists. It has also led to a global crisis across the music industry, undercutting the ability of record labels and musicians to make money from selling physical products. Artists struggle to find new ways to convert artistic labor into audience recognition and economic value. Underlying the work of young musicians like Mensa are profound shifts in broader dynamics of labor, value, and how African youth re-imagine dispersed communities of affiliation. Musicians strategize on how to use travel and connections to create notoriety, imbuing their musical products with distinction. Corporate sponsorship of musicians has come to dominate the economics of popular music in Africa where artists' primary financial support comes in marketing everything from mobile phones to banks to beverages. Hip hop's globally-recognized sensibility of individual hustler agency and Pan-African affiliation makes musical celebrities central to branding products for young African markets.

White, Bob

*Rumba Patriotism:
Narrativity and Sycophancy in Congolese Popular Music Videos*

With the explosion of private-sector mass media outlets in the D.R. Congo over the last decade, new forms of visual popular culture have become increasingly viable and visible; this is especially the case for music videos. This paper examines the unexpected case of « Baminga FARDC », a recently produced music video that sings in praise of the Congolese armed forces, who have been involved for better or worse, in a regional conflict that has plagued the DRC for the last ten years. What makes this video so unique is not the fact that it references politics (though this is quite remarkable in the context of popular music in Kinshasa which at least on the surface is generally allergic to politics), but the fact that it makes a political statement that is simultaneously consistent with and outside of the idiom of

commercialized praisesinging known as *libanga* (itself rooted in the “tradition” of political propaganda during the Mobutu regime). This statement, one of indignation with regards to violation of national sovereignty and one of patriotism with regards to the menace of foreign “invaders”, is cleverly couched in a show of support for “the troops”, thus raising many questions about who exactly was being praised and who was being paid. The “Bambinga” video (whose title references a play on words between “the big ones” and “the soldiers”) came under a great deal of criticism because of this ambiguity, but also because of the backstory, which involves a generational conflict between popular musicians who were competing for access to contributions from the office of President Kabila. Following a critical reading of the emerging literature on music videos, this paper will examine the thorny question of narrativity in Congolese popular music videos and explore debates among Congolese (some of them on the Congolese blogosphere) about youth, politics and the legacy of sycophancy that has come to characterize political culture in Congo-Zaire.