



**Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
&
African Guild of Filmmakers and Producers**

"Emergence" on Screen and on Stage

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WORKSHOP REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), in partnership with the African Guild of Filmmakers and Producers, organized a workshop on "*Emergence on Screen and on Stage*", as part of the 25th edition of Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO). The workshop, held in Ouagadougou on 27-28 February 2017, was the 5th edition of the CODESRIA workshop series at FESPACO and continued reflections of previous workshops on the 'screen' and 'stage' in Africa. The main objective of the workshop was to promote dialogue between film actors and African researchers on the theme of: "Emergence on Screen and on Stage".

The opening ceremony was marked by three speeches by, CODESRIA Scientific Committee President, Professor Mamadou Diouf, and the President of the African Guild of Filmmakers and Producers, Mr Balufu Bakupa-Kanyinda and CODESRIA's Head of Research Program, Ato Kwamena Onoma. In his remarks, Ato Kwamena Onoma placed the 2017 workshop in the historical context of CODESRIA FESPACO workshop series, which began in 2007 under the theme: "African Cinema and Television and Sociocultural Transformations". These workshops are motivated by CODESRIA's desire to foster fruitful exchanges between the social sciences and humanities. In addition to promoting such dialogue, the 2017 workshop sought to contribute to debates on the issue of emergence and knowledge production in the field of cinema and furnish policy makers with practical insights into the concept of 'emergence,' which is very important in development discussions and practice today.

The concept of emergence arouses mistrust because it is part of a long history of "slogans" imposed by the West. For some speakers, the concept of emergence can be considered as a "denial of intelligence in Africa today." This underlies the incapacity of Africans to conceive an endogenous model of development. Beyond political economy, the performance of emergence on screen and state has particular significance in the African context, which is currently marked by different forms of violence, including xenophobia and wars.

The workshop brought together researchers and practitioners from a diverse background to reflect on the issue of emergence in Africa. In total, the meeting was attended by 52 researchers, academics and practitioners from 15 countries (Senegal, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa, DRC, Egypt, Tunisia, Cameroon, Gabon, Gambia, France, Belgium, Germany, Canada, UK, USA and Brazil).

The papers addressed topics such as: conceptual and contextual analysis, theories of change, issues of development, citizenship, the past and prospects for the future in countries in Africa. The agenda of the meeting was structured around three panels and three roundtables:

- Reflections on the Meanings of a Travelling Concept

- Theories of Positive Social and Artistic Change
- The Endpoint / Destination of Emergence
- The Making of the Past in Emergence Discourses
- The Toils of Emergence
- Going Beyond Emergence: The Silenced and Distorted Visions

II. ROUNDTABLES AND PANELS OF PRESENTATIONS

The programme of the workshop was a combination of roundtables and panels structured around a certain number of questions.

Roundtable #1: Reflection on the Meanings of a Travelling Concept

Speakers were invited to answer two key questions: What is emergence? How is emergence conceived in the various spaces and times in which it is deployed?

Mamadou Diouf note that "emergence" takes on multiple meanings that impact whether it is received positively or negatively. He emphasized the difference between 'emergence plans' and 'visions', adding that many African emergence plans are in fact visions rather than realistic plans for a passage from one status to another. The concept of emergence appeared for the first time in the 1980s through the prospective studies by American firm McKinsey. The Senegalese emergence plan is inspired by the Moroccan emergence plan of 2005 which is considered as the first African emergence plan.

Kofi Anyidoho noted that the wealth of a nation is partly based on the 'immaterial' such as arts, literature, etc. Therefore, development must not be conceived only from a material point of view but also from an immaterial one. From this point of view, it is more important to speak of an African 're-emergence' on the international scene.

Magueye Kassé addressed the issue of emergence through a multiplicity of questions that prompt reflection on the point of reference or the starting point of emergence (developed countries) and its relevance for Africa. "Does this concept not tend to perpetuate systems? Are such kinds of developments suitable for Africa?"

Two major concerns emerged from these presentations. On the one hand, emergence is a political discourse (through its deployment and its actors), and not just a new status. On the other hand, emergence is the result of an epistemological evolution of the concept that began with that of 'development' in the 1960s and 1970s, of 'economic growth' in the 1990s, and of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the 2000s. Given the political nature of the concept of emergence, it is necessary to produce a counter-discourse to question the type of development that is proposed to Africa. Re-emergence on the international scene implies the possibility for Africans to tell their own stories to the rest of the world, a question to which the speakers in presentation # 1 provided answers.

Panel # 1: Theories of Positive Social and Artistic Change

Presentations addressed the following questions: How does emergence occur? What about the many imaginations about how do societies, people, institutions, art forms, etc. emerge?

Jacqueline Kubasu Ojiambo's paper questioned emergence from an analysis of the feature film *Soul Boy* by Hawa Essuman. There is an emergence of voices calling for the integration of Kenyan youth into the political and decision-making process of their country. This appeal is perceptible through the narrative structure (coming of age) of the film *Soul Boy* where the protagonist must go through seven ordeals to save the soul of his father.

For Rachel Diang'a, emergence is apprehended through a chronological and thematic analysis of the history of the Kenyan cinema. An examination that begins with the creation of the Kenya Film Corporation, then the direction of the first Kenyan film, *Calamas* in 1986 with financial support from the government. The 1990s were marked by the emergence of films financed by Western donors, but also films in local languages such as those directed by Riverhood Productions.

According to Michael Africanus Aveh, two major trends emerged in Ghanaian cinema in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These included increased exchanges and co-productions between Ghana and Nigeria, and the development of films in local languages (Twi), inspired by the tradition of itinerant theater. Another notable achievement is the adoption of the 'Development of Film Act in December 2016 for the establishment of the National Film Authority and the Film Fund for the production and distribution of Ghanaian national cinema. In addition, the media landscape is changing with the emergence of new actors who produce and distribute content.

Janaína Oliveira's paper analyzed emergence from the Afro-Brazilian perspective. It presented the historical trajectory of the development of 'Black Cinema' in Brazil: Cinema Novo (50s and 60s), 'Brazilian Black cinema' with directors such as Zozimo Bulbul in the 70s, the manifesto (Dogma) for a black cinema. At the distribution level, there is currently the 'Afro Filix' online distribution platform which is entirely devoted to Brazilian black cinema.

The papers showed that the dynamics of change are underway. This change is staged differently by the cinematographic medium according to the different socio-political contexts. Youth is represented as the future of the nation in Kenya, despite the fact that African leaders do not seem to prepare youth for succession. As far as the audiovisual landscape is concerned, change can be measured by internationalization initiatives, the emergence of new actors, and an institutional organization for the development of a Ghanaian national cinema. Once at the margin and not visible enough, Black Brazilian cinema is being built through various initiatives. If emergence is already triggered in various forms, one can wonder about its outcome or the outlines of its destination. The speakers in presentation # 2 attempted to provide answers.

Panel #2: The Endpoint/Destination of Emergence

This panel focused on the following questions: Where are we emerging to? What are the many ways in which the destination of the emergent are headed, imagined and portrayed?

According to Boukary Sawadogo, emergence in African cinema can be analyzed through the video and digital revolution, but also through the development of a filmic corpus that inscribes its narrative in the near future -near future narrative. In this regard, films such as *Africa Paradis*, *Les Saignantes*, and *Pumzi* represent the emergence of a filmic corpus that can be grasped in the conceptual framework of Afrofuturism. The latter is a discourse and aesthetics that inscribe black in the future by borrowing generic codes of science fiction.

Marie-Nadège Tsogo Momo's paper focused on a chronological and thematic approach of Cameroonian cinema since independence. It demonstrated the different deployments of the concept of emergence by multiple generations of directors. The works of the generation of "Sharpshooters" was focused on political slogans, while emergence according to the second generation (the "Scouts") is perceptible through the evolution of characters and situations. As for the new generation, that of 2000s, it speaks of a declining society.

From the point of view of cinematographic studies, a critical analysis of African cinema can be conceived through "gender/gender film studies (sci-fi)" or the problematization of the issue of "gender ownership" in the global context of circulation of cultural products. The ownership of the concept of emergence also depends on the socio-political context, as it is, for example, perceptible through the works of the three generations of Cameroonian directors. Thus, emergence in African cinema is not only an aesthetic but also a discursive issue. Speaking of and staging emergence through history also deserves special attention, which was the focus of the participants of Roundtable#2.

Roundtable# 2: The Making of the Past in Emergence Discourses

This roundtable addressed the following questions: What are we emerging from? How is the space and time from which an entity emerges portrayed?

Jihan El Tahri questioned the conceptual divide that is often made between the North and the South of the Sahara, which is so deeply rooted in the imagination. For example, why is Mauritania considered Sub-Saharan and not Sudan? We should build stories from African perspective. In this regard, she said: "I want to use African images from African perspective and not African images from western perspective."

Mbye Cham's presentation addressed the following question: "What is the meaning of independence for the majority of Africans?" Around this question is built a rich African filmography that seeks to "engage the past in ways that can inform the present". Films such as *Camp Thiaroye* and *Indigènes* have had an impact on the issue of the revaluation of retirement pensions for 'Senegalese skirmishers'. In the same vein, the recent film entitled *Frontières* by Appoline Traoré examines the effectiveness of the free movement of people and goods in the ECOWAS space.

Mamadou Diouf presented history as a disorderly juxtaposition, hence the relevance of the choice of temporality to reconstitute Africa. For Sembene, colonial time occupies an important place in the history of Africa. It is a matter of re-ordering the history of the world to show the prominent place of Africa. In this representation, the figure of the prostitute is that of the 'future' or emergence because it breaks with tradition. However, according to Djibril Mambéty Diop, it is the anarchic and poetic time to think the history of Africa outside the world.

Finally, Femi Osofisan through his paper painted a grim picture of the Nigerian theater, which is facing several challenges, including the emergence of "Pentecostal movements also known as prosperity gospel," new forms of entertainment (social networks, cable TV channels), and lack of infrastructure and trained professionals. Theater suffers from several evils.

The common denominator between these presentations was the examination of the multiple ways in which the past is continually reinvented and erased. In this context, emergence would be an effort to reconstruct the memory of the mutilated African continent. Thus, the notion of 're-emergence' takes a particular meaning because it is a historical reconstruction or a sectoral reconstruction, as is the case with the Nigerian theater where Nollywood could contribute. The reconstruction work for an emergence or re-emergence has a cost, a theme that the speakers of panel # 3 addressed in their papers.

Panel # 3: The Toils of Emergence

Speakers were asked to measure the costs of emergence: What are the (potential) costs of emergence? What are the costs of the struggle to achieve it?

Azeez Isiaka Adetunji's paper apprehended emergence under the prism of the identity issue, namely "Who is afraid of gays and lesbians?". This question serves as a starting point for the examination of the perception and penalization of homosexuality in Nigeria through the film *Law 58*. As far as research is concerned, this question also arises because homosexuality is a field of research which is not explored enough by researchers on the continent despite its emerging cinematographic corpus.

According to Vicensia Shule, Tanzanian cinema is the second largest videofilm industry, following Nigeria. In recent years, there has been a growing emergence of donors who fund productions that often include their 'development' messages. These films mix with those known as commercial films. This intervention of donors has advantages and disadvantages for the development of Tanzanian cinema.

Gora Seck proposes an examination of cinematographic theatricality in *Hyènes* by Djibril Diop Mambéty and *Guelwaar* by Sembène Ousmane. A paper based on the question: "what role should the people play in emergence?" The cinematographic theatricality involved consists in making the spectator aware of the message and in inviting them to commit. The need for moralization of public life, in *Hyènes*, is expressed through the aspiration to a decent material life.

Finally, Taiwo Akanbi Olaiya's presentation helped to rethink the curse of natural resources in Nigeria. The concept of emergence was analyzed from the perspective of political science, namely how the representation of natural resources is a source of hope for countries like Nigeria whose economy depends heavily on the exploitation of hydrocarbon resources. In this representation, populations are presented as the forces of change.

Through their papers, the speakers demonstrated that emergence is made by the people, i.e. from the bottom and not from the top. This perspective is interesting in that it challenges the model of the decision-making process in which African leaders impose concepts from outside on populations. The intervention of donors like USAID in the financing of Tanzanian cinema confirms this imposition from outside. During this panel, presentations highlighted the need to rethink the conceptual distinction between emergence, renaissance, and development. African alternatives should be offered.

Roundtable #3: Going Beyond Emergence: The Silenced and Distorted Visions

The following are the questions that informed this roundtable: What are the alternative visions and conceptions of the better life that are silenced, side-lined and muted in the dominant discourses on emergence? What are the alternative visions and conceptions of the process for striving toward the good life that dominant discourses on emergence mute or elide?

Fatoumata Kande Senghor's paper clearly showed that hip hop has a very strong political culture in Senegal. This strong political awareness is particularly perceptible in texts on emergence as follows: "We created the slogan 'emergence' to allow crawling to the new boundary, and then we will find another slogan.' The dangerous image of hip hop is perhaps not unrelated to the difficulty that filmmakers encounter in making films on this musical genre. The civic commitment of the hip hop movement is real in the political arena and in popular neighborhoods.

With regard to the concept of emergence, Balufu Bakupa-Kanyinda expressed his skepticism about the will of political decision-makers to accompany the people on the path of development. He also noted the difficulty of filmmakers in portraying emergence in an (African) context where imagination is corrupted by the past, and where one is afflicted by the hardships of the present time. In each country, emergence must be measured through its cultural policy and respect for the people. The population must be part of its development approach.

These comments are in line with the previous debates on concepts alien to Africa such as those of emergence, development and renaissance. Thus, since decolonization, we have been dependent on the narratives of others. The paths of development have been conceptualized for Africans. Emergence must be conceived through a cultural policy that promotes our own vision and a civic commitment of all the vital forces of the nation.

Book Launch

Lazare Ki-Zerbo contributed to the debates by presenting a book which is a translation into French of a corpus of pan-African texts that were only available in English. This linguistic barrier hindered the circulation of such texts in French-speaking areas. The ownership of these texts will certainly contribute to the emergence of a pan-Africanist political consciousness.

III. OVERALL CONCLUSION

In the closing session of the workshop, a summary was made and perspectives on the two days of reflection identified. In their concluding remarks, the panelists repeatedly emphasized the relevance of the theme of the workshop because of our marginality in our very own narratives. Then, a very fruitful exchange between participants made it possible to demonstrate the complexity of the concept of emergence and to contextualize its epistemological development. To conceptualize the imposition of concepts alien to Africa, several areas of analysis were debated: dispossession, repossession, re-emergence and multiplicity of temporalities. As for the epistemological development of emergence, it includes development (exploitation of colonies), governance, economic growth and the Millennium Development Goals.

Guidance was provided on the next steps of reflection following the workshop. The workshop report to be finalized shortly will be followed by a policy brief. The policy brief summarizing the main conclusions of the workshop will be presented at a dissemination workshop with policy makers and practitioners representing organizations.

The organizers invited all participants to finalize the papers presented at the workshop based on discussions. The best papers will be published in 2017.

Concerns were expressed about the delay in publishing the papers of the last five workshops and the production of a documentary film. CODESRIA assured that efforts were being made to find a solution to this situation.

The richness of exchanges is indicative of the relevance of the workshop organized by CODESRIA. The screen and stage make it possible to explain the concepts imposed on Africa and to deconstruct imposed imaginaries. In addition, the presence of many students from the University of Ghana, Legon promises to further the renewal of CODESRIA.

During the two-day workshop, four main issues were discussed: the imposition the development models from outside; the multifaceted process of changes on screen and on stage; identity and citizenship; and the conceptual framework of emergence. Following discussions, there was consensus on the first two major issues. Participants agreed on the historicity and systematic nature of Western conceptualization of the development model for Africa. There was also unanimity on changes in African cinema and theater: technological innovation, the emergence of new actors and the changing institutional environment.

Yet, there were divergences on the other two main issues: identity (homosexuality) and articulation of the conceptual framework of emergence. The issue of homosexuality gave rise to lively discussions that sparked the use of the word 'thing' to name homosexuality and the lack of thorough research blamed on the paper presented on the subject. As a result, a substantive debate on the portrayal of homosexuality in African cinemas could not actually take place. As regards the conceptual framework in which the concept of emergence must be inscribed and explained, various areas of reflection were put forward: 're-emergence', 'dispossession' and 'dismemberment'. However, none of these areas of analysis succeeded in imposing itself as the most appropriate one. This may indicate the need for a multidisciplinary approach to the complexity of the concept of emergence.

Beyond the aforementioned points of convergence and divergence, it is worth noting two main concerns which were not the subject of thorough discussions: the diaspora's place in the emergence of Africa and the endogenous models of development. Drafts on the issue of the diaspora were certainly made through references to *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and *The Invention of Africa* by Valentin Mudimbe, but they deserve more attention. What is the place and role of the African Diaspora in the development of the continent? How does Africa conceive a rapprochement or reunification with its diaspora? Given the foreign origin of development concepts, more in-depth exchanges on the conceptualization of endogenous development models are needed. In this regard, the work of Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Cheikh Anta Diop and other researchers provide some avenues for reflection.