

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR'S REPORT

AHRC RESEARCH NETWORK: MIGRANT AND DIASPORIC CINEMA IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE

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SCOPE AND RATIONALE OF THE MIGRANT AND DIASPORIC CINEMA NETWORK

The AHRC Research Network 'Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe' consisted of eight researchers and one media practitioner who – in consultation with filmmakers, producers, distributors, policy makers and festival organisers – explored the evolution of migrant and diasporic cinemas in contemporary Europe over the past twenty-five years. The Network has been concerned with how films made by migrant and diasporic filmmakers as well as productions which represent migratory or diasporic experiences have shaped and modified our understanding of European identity/ies, previously constructed and narrated within distinct national cinemas. The Network worked on the premise that multicultural and multiethnic presences and themes in contemporary European cinemas should not be studied in terms of their national specificity, because such critical paradigms do not adequately address the shift from the national to the transnational which has occurred since the early to mid-1980s.

This shift has been fuelled by the long legacy of colonialism, the ongoing process of European integration, the geopolitical changes after the collapse of communism and the continuing influx of migrants to what is still perceived as the politically and economically stable heartland of Europe. Migrant and diasporic cinema in Europe, therefore, potentially refers to a multitude of social and ethnic groups, movements and histories, cultural heritages and practices. The Network had purposely brought together experts working on Western *and* Eastern European cinemas to overcome the persisting inner-European division between

East and West. By employing a comparative approach, the Networkers – many of them multilingual and with a migrant or diasporic background themselves – transgressed academic and cultural boundaries. While the debates about the comparability of postcoloniality and postcommunism were not conclusive and the transcultural constellation of the Network inevitably made participants aware of linguistic and other limitations, the collaboration clearly resulted in an enhanced understanding of contemporary cinema and European societies and led to a degree of crosscultural referencing not usually experienced within the discipline.

In recent decades, representations of migrant and diasporic identities have assumed a more prominent position in the cinema, and respective productions have increasingly captured large and multiple audiences and won considerable public and critical acclaim. The Network investigated this development not simply by analysing individual films, but also examined the industrial and cultural contexts in which productions are made, promoted and received. Here, in particular, the Network benefited from working closely with practitioners of different generations and backgrounds.

The Network's endeavour to develop a theoretical underpinning for 'migrant and diasporic cinema' involved a critical investigation of related political and aesthetic concepts such as Third Cinema, Black film, independent film, transcultural cinema, accented cinema, cinema of displacement, *cinéma de métissage*, etc. The Network has taken up current discourses of postnational, transnational and World cinema, but maintains that its own – admittedly non-static – category is both distinct and analytically productive. The Network rejects the traditionally prevalent Eurocentrism, which renders migrant and diasporic subjects invisible or constructs them as 'other'; instead it proposes a perspective of polycentric Europeanness to acknowledge the historical situatedness of the filmmakers and subject matter.

ACTIVITIES OF THE NETWORK AND THE THEMES EXPLORED

The Network organised two international conferences, four public film screenings and four workshops during the funding period (15 January 2006 – 14 January 2008). Placing considerable emphasis on the exchange of knowledge and expertise, the Network initiated a productive dialogue with stakeholders from the film and media industry and the cultural sector. Research findings have been – and will continue to be – disseminated by an interactive project website (www.migrantcinema.net) and a collection of essays, *European Cinema in Motion: Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe*, authored by members of the Network, co-edited by Daniela Berghahn (Network leader) and Claudia Sternberg (Network coordinator) and published by Wallflower Press in 2009.

A number of outcomes of the Network go beyond what was envisaged in the original project proposal. The most significant additional achievements include: two guest-edited journal issues (*New Cinemas*, ed. Daniela Berghahn, and *Journal of Popular South Asian Culture*, ed. Sarita Malik, forthcoming 2009) and one dossier in *Cineaste* (co-edited by Carrie Tarr, 2007); a film retrospective and conference on Maghrebi-French cinema organised by Carrie Tarr in New York; a conference panel convened by Daniela Berghahn on 'Turkish-German Dialogues on Screen' at the SCMS conference in Philadelphia 2008; a postgraduate conference on 'Cinemas, Identities and Beyond' and a workshop on 'Roma in Politics, Art and the Academy' (Dina Iordanova); various events at the film training and funding initiative BABYLON, which promotes cultural diversity in European cinema (Gareth Jones). In addition to playing an active role in the two conferences organised by the Network, participants gave more than thirty additional conference and seminar presentations on issues relating to migrant and diasporic cinema in the UK and overseas.

CONFERENCES

The first conference on 'Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe', (6 - 8 July 2006, Lincoln College, Oxford), jointly organised by Daniela Berghahn (Network leader) and Claudia Sternberg (Network coordinator), attracted more than seventy delegates from eighteen different countries. The more than twenty panels and plenary presentations aimed to transgress the confines of national cinema by exploring issues of cultural hybridity, the artistic trajectories of migrant filmmakers and the mainstreaming of migrant and diasporic filmmaking in comparative, transnational contexts. Themes which emerged most prominently at the conference were gender, sexuality and the diaspora, the position of Turkey in Europe, the evolution of *beur* cinema in France, developments in contemporary Black and Asian British cinema, the representation of migration and remigration on the screen and the significant changes that have affected East European and Balkan cinema since the collapse of communism.

Amongst the many highlights of the conference were film screenings of Ayse Polat's *En Garde* (Germany, 2004) and Pawel Pawlikowski's *Last Resort* (UK, 2000) followed by Q & A sessions with the directors. Other focal points of the conference were the keynote addresses given by Professor Rob Burns, University of Warwick ('Turkish-German Cinema: From Cultural Resistance to Transnational Cinema?'), Professor Deniz Göktürk, UC Berkeley ('Sound Bridges: Transnational Mobility as Ironic Melodrama'), Professor Dina Iordanova, University of St. Andrews ('Migration and Creative Convenience: Pragmatics of Belonging and Domicile') and Professor Hamid Naficy, Northwestern University ('Accented Cinema and its Multiple Languages'). Professor Kim Knott, who is Director of the AHRC Programme Diasporas, Migration and Identities, provided an overview of the Programme and insight into other DMI projects.

At our second conference 'The Industrial Context of Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe', organised by Berghahn and Sternberg in

collaboration with the IGRS, Ciné Lumière and the French Institute in London (12-13 January 2007), seven distinguished media professionals took centre stage: producer and diversity adviser Parminder Vir, OBE; filmmakers John Akomfrah, OBE, and Abdelkrim Bahloul; Thierry Lenouvel of the Amiens Film Festival; Gareth Jones, founder of the script-funding initiative BABYLON; Eve Gabereau, managing director of Soda Pictures UK; and German film producer Ralph Schwingel of Wüste Film. Carrie Tarr organised a public film screening of Abdelkrim Bahloul's films *The Night of Destiny* (1997) and *The Assassinated Sun* (2003) at the Ciné Lumière, followed by a very well-attended Q & A session with the director and one of the lead actors. Conference delegates came from as far as Göteborg, Istanbul, Samarkand and Sydney. The young international profile of the audience suggests a rising interest in migrant and diasporic cinema amongst the new generation of academics.

PODCASTS

The six presentations given by the media practitioners at the second conference were made available in six podcasts (<http://www.migrantcinema.net/podcasts/>) on our project website. The podcasts, available to all Internet users, address the following questions: What are the challenges encountered by diasporic filmmakers in France and the UK? Why does the transcultural status of diasporic cinema often make it particularly difficult for these films to be entered at international film festivals? What particular funding initiatives are available across Europe to support the filmmaking of ethnic minority filmmakers? Who are the audiences, for example, of Turkish German cinema, and why is it necessary to develop different distribution strategies for a film like *Head On* in countries like France and Britain?

WORKSHOPS

Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg organised four Network workshops in Oxford (6 July 2006), London (12 January 2007), Manchester (6 September 2007) and one additional workshop in Leeds (10-11 January 2008). These

workshops provided a vital platform for developing a strategy for the attainment of the Network's aims and objectives. These were in particular:

1. To map our area of research by probing the heuristic value and socio-political implications of existing terminology in different contexts (academia, film distribution and marketing, policy making) and develop a theoretical underpinning for 'migrant and diasporic cinema' by critically reappraising related political and aesthetic concepts.
2. To challenge national as well as Eurocentric perspectives by operating analytically from the position of a polycentric Europeanness.
3. To analyse how migrant and diasporic European cinema articulates difference across the axes of nation, race, gender, sexuality, religion, language and class.
4. To generate public awareness of our research on migrant and diasporic cinemas by disseminating our research findings beyond the academic community and by engaging in a productive dialogue with professionals working in the film and media industries and with policy makers.

PROJECT WEBSITE

The project website (<http://www.migrantcinema.net/>) enhances the visibility of the project and provides an accessible reference point for the academic community, representatives from the media industry and the interested public. Within the academic community, the website is an excellent tool for the exchange of ideas and information via an interactive discussion forum. The website provides information about the aims and objectives of the Migrant and Diasporic Cinema Network and documents the activities of the Network (conferences programmes and reports, public screenings and events with filmmakers, related publications, news). It also contains an electronic archive of resources (a film database, a bibliography, a glossary of terms, links to other websites and podcasts), which provide anyone interested in the field with a wealth of information. The lifespan of the project website will exceed that of the Network itself. It will be hosted for at

least another three years and is envisaged to provide a basis for continued research beyond the funding period.

OVERVIEW OF THE PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

The research undertaken by our Network depended on intensive collaboration between its nine participants:

Dr Daniela Berghahn (Network Leader, Royal Holloway, University of London)

Dr Claudia Sternberg (Network Coordinator, University of Leeds)

Dr Birgit Beumers (University of Bristol)

Prof. Dina Iordanova (University of St. Andrews)

Gareth Jones (Scenario Films Ltd.)

Dr Sarita Malik (Brunel University)

Prof. Dominique Nasta (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Prof. Isabel Santaolalla (Roehampton University)

Dr Carrie Tarr (Kingston University)

The project aims and objectives could only be met because Networkers were prepared to expand their expertise in specific national cinemas by adopting a comparative, transnational approach. Research collaboration was supported by a well-designed infrastructure, consisting of a DVD library, a searchable database of films and intensive discussions at workshops and on a virtual platform.

All participants have been involved in various forms in the activities of the Network by contributing to our conferences and workshops, by writing a chapter for our book, *European Cinema in Motion*, and by disseminating the research findings of the Network at numerous conferences, international film festivals and retrospectives and at other events in the UK, continental Europe and the US.

We have also invited colleagues with particular expertise in transnational European cinema from outside the Network to contribute to our research project

in various forms (conferences, additional one-to-one meetings, authoring book chapters and journal articles). These affiliated researchers include:

Prof. Savas Arslan, Bahcesehir University

Dr Verena Berger, University of Vienna

Prof. Rob Burns, University of Warwick

Dr Shohini Choudhuri, University of Essex

Prof. Nezih Erdogan, Istanbul Bilgi University

Prof. Angelica Fenner, University of Toronto

Dr Bernhard Fuchs, University of Vienna

Rahul Gairola, University of Washington, USA

Giorgio Galbusera, City University New York

Prof. Deniz Göktürk, University of California, Berkeley

Prof. Randall Halle, University of Pittsburgh

Anne Jäckel, Visiting Research Fellow, University of West England

Prof. Ayla Kanbur, Yeditepe University, Istanbul

Dr Renata Murawska, Macquarie University, Sydney

Prof. Hamid Naficy, Northwestern University, IL

Dr Gilad Padva, Tel Aviv University

Dr Sandra Ponzanesi, Utrecht University

Dr Luisa Rivi, University of Southern California

Dr Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, University of Manchester

Dr Sanjay Sharma, Brunel University

Dr Asuman Suner, Sabanci University, Istanbul

Prof. James Williams, Royal Holloway, University of London

Dr Daniel Winkler, University of Vienna

ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE

It has been our contention that migrant and diasporic European cinema is still an under-researched and under-theorised field. Despite the fact that transnationally mobile filmmakers have assumed a distinctive place in European film cultures,

their significance for European cinema has so far not been analysed from a truly transnational vantage point. This provided our Network with the challenging opportunity to undertake some pioneering work.

We have endeavoured to establish a theoretical framework that underpins the collaborative as well as the individual research input of the Networkers. We analysed how 'migrant and diasporic cinema' is referred to and examined the socio-political implications of existing terminology (including in languages other than English). Our attempt to locate migrant and diasporic cinema in relation to discourses of postcolonialism, globalisation, etc. as well as to current debates in film studies enabled us to identify the specificities of this 'cinema of dual occupancy', which make it distinct from other types of transnational cinema such as 'global Hollywood' or 'Europuddings'. We argue that the emergence of migrant and diasporic cinema has played a crucial role in the 'World Cinema turn' that has taken place in European cinema, both in academia and in the industry.

The project engaged with a large corpus of films made by migrant and diasporic filmmakers across Europe, including a number of not previously analysed productions. Networkers acknowledged the considerable scope and differences of the films under investigation, but also identified some recurring thematic concerns, aesthetic practices and representational strategies. While not all European regions and cinemas could be covered, the Network ensured – possibly for the first time in this context – that a 'New Europe' approach was taken so that Western *and* Eastern European cinemas and filmmakers were equally represented and issues of migration and diaspora were discussed contrapuntally to former dividing lines and paradigms.

While the representation and construction of migrant and diasporic identities in cinematic texts have been at the centre of our research, we never lost sight of the socio-political, cultural and industrial contexts in which these films are made.

In researching issues of film production, film funding and distribution we relied to a significant extent on first-hand information provided by industry insiders.

The international scope of the Network conferences with their delegates and visitors from film studies, cultural studies, modern languages and arts indicates an interdisciplinary academic interest in migrant and diasporic cinema. Among the conference attendees were many younger scholars who will follow up on the groundwork the Network has laid. The interest expressed by journal editors and publishers in the work of the Networkers and conference delegates further underlines the positive prospects of future research in this field.

Knowledge Exchange

Consistent with the DMI programme priorities, the Network has placed considerable emphasis on the exchange of knowledge and expertise between the academic community and stakeholders in the media industries and the cultural sector. Filmmakers, policy advisors and other media professionals who participated in the conferences and screenings were as interested in a dialogue with the academic community as the Networkers were in testing their readings against industrial practice and the practitioners' various points of view.

The BABYLON film training and funding initiative, led by Networker Gareth Jones, offers the strongest evidence of a productive cross-fertilisation between the academic community and a professional and vocational initiative which benefits precisely those filmmakers whose work is at the centre of the project. (For further details about BABYLON: <http://www.babylon-film.eu/>)

Through academic publications, reports, screenings, webpages, podcasts, postgraduate supervision, plans for further research projects and events, etc., the Network has helped to enhance the visibility and cultural prestige of migrant and diasporic films. The fact that migrant and diasporic cinema is featuring more

prominently on scholarly and cultural agendas will benefit producers, filmmakers and distributors who are operating in this sector.

CONTRIBUTION TO DMI PROGRAMME

Migrant and diasporic film must be seen – alongside music – as the most significant and influential popular and artistic practice with regard to the (self-)representation of migrant and diasporic groups, individuals, experiences and concerns. Migrant and diasporic cinema addresses questions of identity formation, challenges national and ethnocentric myths and revisits and revises traditional historical narratives. It offers a discursively diverse critique of modernity and postmodernity and the ('old' and 'new') European imaginary and is of relevance to migrant and non-migrant, diasporic and non-diasporic Europeans alike.

By theorising the field, engaging with terminologies, offering specific case studies and providing a host of platforms for formal and informal, academic and public exchange, the AHRC Research Network Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe has and continues to pursue the objectives of the DMI strategic initiative. By sharing knowledge and resources and working comparatively and across national and linguistic boundaries, the Network members themselves not only analytically, but also methodologically approximated the transculturality and transnationality of their subject matter.

The Network has perceived the DMI Strategic Initiative as a unique opportunity for further networking and research collaboration. Throughout the funding period and even beyond, the nine members of the Network engaged in highly productive and continuous collaboration (cf. Activities of the Network above). The project leader, Daniela Berghahn, and other participants represented the Network and disseminated its research findings on a number of national and international platforms. Links were established between the Networkers' institutions, with

renowned international scholars in the field, art cinemas, media practitioners and most notably the European film development initiative and pan-European network of minority filmmakers BABYLON. The Network has also worked closely with other projects funded by the DMI scheme, notably the *Migration and Diaspora Cultural Studies Network* (University of Manchester), the Workshop Series on *Mobility and Identity Formation: The Italian Case* (University of Warwick), events organised by the DMI Programme Director, Professor Kim Knott (DMI workshop, Leeds, November 2007, and book symposium on *Diasporas*, April 2008), the *Encounters and Intersections Conference* (University of Oxford, July 2008) and the *Reading After Empire Conference* (Devolving Diasporas, University of Stirling, September 2008).

The Network raised the public awareness of migrant and diasporic cinema, its creative practitioners and the academic discourse emerging in this field by presenting their findings electronically on the interactive project website www.migrantcinema.net, at public film screenings and festivals, at events targeting non-specialist audiences and in higher education teaching and widening participation events. We are confident that the field will develop further and that Networkers will continue to be instrumental in its expansion.

FUTURE RESEARCH PROJECTS AND PLANS

During the course of the Network, several participants have begun to prepare future projects, some direct offshoots of activities and collaborative links developed during the funding period, others a productive synthesis of already existing research expertise and new inspirations gained through the Network.

Daniela Berghahn has established useful contacts with scholars in Turkey and in the US, who are working on new Turkish or Turkish German cinema. This is an area she will pursue further, in the first instance, by guest-editing a special issue on 'Turkish German Dialogues on Screen' for *New Cinemas*. Her own

contribution in this volume investigates the reassessment of patriarchy in contemporary Turkish German cinema. She is currently supervising a PhD student from Turkey who is researching 'Turkish diasporic filmmakers in Europe' and who will investigate, amongst other issues, the reception of Turkish diasporic cinema in Turkey.

Berghahn's current research centres on hybrid identity formation and the representation of youth and the family in diasporic European cinema. She is planning to take her investigation of this particular area further by applying a quintessentially American critical paradigm – genre criticism – to European films about diasporic youth, examining to what extent the diasporic youth film contributes to the extension, renewal and hybridisation of the 'teenpic' genre. She intends to develop a collaborative research project around this area and apply for research funding.

Claudia Sternberg will continue to employ a transcultural and comparative perspective in a project dedicated to the investigation of the social, intellectual and artistic encounters between Jewish and postcolonial diasporic cultures in 20th- and 21st-century Britain. This project synthesises her past and present research interests and will include, but will not be restricted to, visual culture. A grant application for this project, which will involve a number of researchers, is in preparation.

Sternberg has been invited to guest-edit a special issue on "Contemporary British Jewish Culture" for the *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*. In her own contribution for this issue, she plans to discuss the work of British Jewish filmmaker Paul Morrison, paying special attention to Morrison's narrative emphasis on shared (diasporic) histories. In cooperation with her Network colleague Isabel Santaolalla, Sternberg is also planning to edit a selection of papers for a journal issue on 'European Cinema: Migratory and Transnational Perspective'.

Dina Iordanova will continue to work on the dynamics of global filmmaking and on the changing nature of film festivals as important sites of cross-cultural mediation. Furthermore, she will pursue a number of other large collaborative and multinational projects, investigating migratory and creative paths around the axis Europe-Hollywood in contemporary cinema.

Gareth Jones is taking the BABYLON film training initiative to the next level. He is involved in the preparations of a major Festival and Symposium of Migrant and Diasporic Film scheduled to take place at the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in Berlin in October 2008. This event is promoted by the *Bundeskanzleramt* (German Chancellery) in conjunction with its equal opportunities campaign and the EU Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Jones, who has already been very successful in finding sponsors for this initiative, is planning to generate further funding.

Sarita Malik is currently engaged in writing about the black and Asian British diaspora and visual representation and plans to bid for research funding for future projects in this area. Moreover, drawing on her expertise in South Asian film and television, she is going to guest-edit a special issue of the *Journal of Popular South Asian Culture* on 'South Asian Migrant Media', which includes papers generated by Network activities, specially commissioned papers and an interview, conducted by Malik, with filmmaker Asif Kapadia.

Carrie Tarr applied successfully to attend a research matchmaking event in Paris, funded by HERA, the first event launching a major European funding initiative. She intends to establish an international research consortium and apply to HERA under the 'Cultural Dynamics: Inheritance and Identity' Strategic Initiative for a project investigating 'The Production, Distribution and Consumption of Postcolonial Films in Europe'. This project will focus on the cinema(s) which arise as a result of Europe's diverse and changing postcolonial

relations, be it in films by and about migrant and diasporic populations, or films (co)produced by Europe's former colonies in South Asia, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, etc. Tarr's project will build on the collaborative research undertaken by this Network as well as her earlier and ongoing work on Maghrebi-French cinema, but will place particular emphasis on the circulation and consumption of postcolonial European cinema, using audience surveys as one of its methodologies.