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Diaspora as Social and Cultural Practice: a Study of Transnational Networks across Europe and Africa
End of year report for 2008

Innovative research design:

- TNMundi departs from conventional diaspora research in having adopted a network structure whereby we follow individual musicians from North African and Malagasy origin across their diverse links.
- TNMundi expands on the study of flows of artists between originating countries and diaspora by attention to multidirectional flows as well as translocal networks across Europe and Africa.
- TNMundi traces the virtually undocumented relations between artists and NGOs for originating country development.

Innovative research questions:

- TNMundi adopts a comparative approach between a series of contrastive research sites and populations that share certain characteristics whilst sharply diverging in others, and compares them for salient issues such as motivation for migration, identity and artistic practices:
 - Indian ocean island vs North African artists in countries of origin (translocal migration)
 - Indian ocean island vs North African origin artists across Europe (transnational migration)
 - Dense diaspora populations (in postimperial France) vs dispersed small or individualised minority populations (non-Francophone countries in Europe).

Innovative results:

- Interim results regarding different identity patterns and artistic relations according to the above contrasts.

- Growing cultural dynamism:

In Morocco and Madagascar, and to a lesser extent Algeria there is a growing phenomenon of diasporic artists' and cultural actors' 'return' from Europe to their country of origin (intermittently or permanently; throwing up issues re. return migration).

- Networks:

Networks are multi-determined, and in some cases fragmented. The role of Paris remains central to some, but metropolitan cities in countries of origin such as Antananarivo and Casablanca in particular equally function as hubs for transnational and translocal networks.

We traced a number of translocal networks: – these include for North African as well as for Malagasy networks the links (both institutional and informal) between a number of artists and cultural actors in the south-west of France (Toulouse, Marmande, Bordeaux) and Casablanca, Agadir and Antananarivo respectively which suggest that the poles of attraction for musicians are diversifying.

Equally, we traced networks that have formed between Malagasy musicians and environmentally concerned NGOs in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France and the UK, which suggest a new and sustainable dynamic of mutual support for artists and activists alike.

Further North African case-studies include Marseille-based group Watcha Clan who are not only developing working relationships with musicians in Agadir (Morocco) and Oran (Algeria) through artists' residencies. They are also able to use these connections and link up with other artists elsewhere in Europe (here, Barcelona) through the African cities (Oran in this case). Likewise, Paris and Nantes-based group *Gaâda Diwane de Béchar* whose name suggests, are

originally from Béchar in southern Algeria, are starting to work with Béchar-based cultural practitioners towards the professionalisation of the musical scene 'back home', mainly through the establishment of music festival in the city.

Malagasy case studies include amongst others, the Madagascar All Stars, a transnational group, consisting of 5, occasionally 6 solo artists from France and Madagascar who have started to work together alongside their on-going solely France- or solely Madagascar-based ensembles. Also, the Orchestra Justin Vali, a pan-Malagasy group of musicians forming and re-forming around the Lille-based valiha player of that name, and the group Tarika who also attempts to support local rural artists from different directions. The formation of ad-hoc groups of Malagasy musicians, often with support from cultural institutes (e.g. the Alliance Française) coming from different regions in Madagascar as well as from their new European countries seems to be an emerging phenomenon.

Fieldwork in Morocco and Madagascar

- Many Moroccan-based artists are not that concerned about what is going on outside Morocco, i.e. Casablanca remains key for them instead. France still remains a reference, but not necessarily in hierarchical sense – e.g. diasporic Maghrebi artists, Cheikh Sidi Bemol a reference for many of the so-called 'underground' acts in Morocco (who gravitate around the Boulevard etc.). Other European references: Netherlands (esp for rap scene); Spain; Belgium; Switzerland. Little in way of south-south networks but growing interest (eg, ABSawt; growing involvement of building network of North and sub-Saharan African cultural professionals). However, France remains a reference when it comes to certain 'industry standards' (copyright/royalties/piracy).
- Most urban Malagasy artists have or aspire to transnational connections since hardly any Malagasy artist can live by his or her music. In face of a struggling though gradually emerging music industry, permanent emigration or regular international tours that mainly serve an international Malagasy diaspora, are still amongst the main options for aspiring artists to gain a living. Antananarivo-based music promoters (e.g. Media Consulting) have started to develop links both nationally as well as internationally, and are acting as booking agents for outgoing and in-coming artists.
- Migration – little sense that young Moroccan musicians seriously contemplating migration to Europe, even if some of them have studied abroad etc. This may in some cases be due to resigned realism re. acquiring visas and in other cases, due to desire to focus on home.
- Importance of foreign cultural institutes is high in both Madagascar and Morocco: the Institut Français in Morocco and Madagascar is often the main cultural/performance venue and sponsor in smaller towns/cities such as Meknès, Agadir, Fes in Morocco, and Tulear, Morondava, Mahajanga in Madagascar. Other cultural institutes also play a significant role in promoting local artists, such as in Madagascar the Goethe Institute's off-shoot CGM (Cercle Germano-Malgache), the Centre Albert Camus, and various foreign embassies' cultural offices; and in Morocco, the Instituto Cervantes and the British Council.
- Alternative nationalism is also a feature of both Madagascar and Morocco. Musicians valorise particular types of 'home-grown' genres and styles, in opposition to long-term European-US features of cultural production and in Morocco, Middle Eastern (Egyptian) dominance.
- New findings regarding the interdependencies of South <> North, North <> South relations in the field of development, relations between NGOs and artists in the diaspora and 'at home'.

Fieldwork in the United Kingdom

- The ethnography of musicians' work and lives provides an insight into understanding the synergies and tensions between migration experiences, the socio-political context, professional constraints, and individual subjectivity.
- It interrogates the collective imagination and representations both imposed on, and developed by, members of former French colonized populations in a post-post-colonial migration context.
- somewhat ambiguous relation between grassroots' community projects promoting cultural practices as a means to reclaim a somewhat stigmatised cultural specificity, and the instrumentalisation of such practices by local authorities as proof that the supposedly ideal path to "social cohesion" is well in progress.

Innovative dissemination strategies:

- Project conferences in 3 key sites (Madagascar, Morocco, UK)
- The three events combine academic workshops with artistic production (see sections output), and have been or will be disseminated via press, radio and television
- Involvement of all users and stakeholders in these events: artists, academics and students, artistic producers and promoters, media professionals, NGOs, politicians.