



Diaspora Screen Media Network: Charting Glocal Imaginaries

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1. Objectives

The 'Diaspora Screen Media Network' (DSMN) aims to

- 1 examine the impact of electronic technologies and social media on production, consumption patterns, and modes of reception of diaspora screen media texts, taking Black British and British Asian cinemas as test cases.
- 2 generate cross-disciplinary exchange with researchers in film and media studies, cultural studies, digital humanities, postcolonial and diaspora studies, and journalism, about contemporary innovations in the production and dissemination of diaspora cinema.
- 3 explore through workshop engagements between film-makers and new media industry practitioners, academics and university students in Birmingham and Northampton, the changing content of cinema and the influence of new media on modes of reception.
- 4 provide opportunities for university students, early career researchers, and film programming partners for creative exchange and to co-produce research concerning the production, distribution and circulation of diaspora screen media texts in relation to media culture.
- 5 engage with and contribute to debates about the role and function of new media in contemporary society in relation to diaspora cinema.
- 6 disseminate our findings through open access articles, a YouTube channel and a legacy project website that will also offer open access to interested parties globally.

These aims acknowledge the significant shifts in broader visual culture, away from literary and text-based humanities analysis to collaborative forms of cultural creativity and exchange facilitated by social networking and the new media, and recent studies of this phenomenon.

Consequently, the network will:

1. Explore new developments in scholarship on diasporic media culture, and synergies between new media studies and the global-local (i.e. 'glocal') marketplace, foregrounding current media debates and analysing a media ecology of relevant relationships: i.e. cultural exchange through crowd sourcing, and new technologies such as digital formats that inform cinematic texts.
2. Test this discursive framework by analysing case studies of Black British and British Asian cinema as instances of 'glocal' imaginaries.
3. Examine the dissemination of diaspora cinema and related material via online social networks or Web 2.0 websites (e.g. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram); identify the role of online

delivery platforms (Netflix, Spuul.com etc.) in the distribution of diasporic cinema with reference to the case studies.

4. Discuss with practitioners from the film and screen media industries, the incorporation of new media into the film industry and practitioners' engagement in dialogue
5. Convene two workshops and a symposium that will bring together these interdisciplinary strands across points 1-4 accompanied by film screenings in Northampton and Birmingham, and a permanent online exhibition on the open access project website of ephemera (e.g. posters, trailers, ticket stubs, press packs etc.) to create a material trail for these artefacts.
6. Build on research undertaken through existing networks and related research: e.g. AHRC-funded programmes, 'Cinema, Soft Power and the BRICs', 'Migrant and Diaspora Cinema in Contemporary Europe', and the Leverhulme network 'Dynamics of World Cinema' and invite their PIs and Co-Is to join the Steering Committee.
7. Extend the project's life by developing and maintaining the open access website; create a YouTube online viewing channel of the workshops and symposium that will be populated with relevant publically available clips and web links to topics covered by the network; broadcast podcasts, reports and interviews on UoN (University of Northampton) TV, and student and community radio stations in Birmingham and at Birmingham City University (BCU); expand the network, and seek further funding based on the outcomes: e.g. relevant schemes offered by the AHRC and British Academy.

2. Summary

The DSMN will explore how selected diaspora screen media texts including documentaries and short films engage with new media and the digital world of the internet to create new global forms of visual awareness considered as 'glocal imaginaries'. Building on recent work that traces the global mobilization of culture, the project will fill a gap in current research by using British Asian and Black British screen texts as case studies in identifying how 'glocal' formats of the new media align with or juxtapose national, regional or transnational perspectives of today's increasingly fluid visual culture (i.e. here routed through Birmingham and Northampton).

The network events will explore diaspora screen media texts' engagement with contemporary 'media ecologies' (Fuller 2005) in order to shape new understandings of the locatedness and mobility of diasporic audiences. It will provide an arena for dialogue between the educational sector, creative professionals and the general public including student groups and migrant communities with which participants have affiliations.

In defining 'glocal' imaginaries (e.g. in media examples and their distribution), the project will examine how the work of representative filmmakers, cultural practitioners and writers is viewed by the public who use social media, and together create an open reciprocal relationship that redefines and represents diaspora themes (e.g. cultural identity, relocation, cultural translation, home and belonging, religious beliefs and practices). Methodologically the network will articulate new cross-cutting debates on diasporic media cultures, address recent modes of access to diaspora screen media texts, and communication through social media. In identifying the changing landscape of film and online media production, reception, and promotion it asks:

1. How are diasporic screen media changing in terms of social impact through modification of themes and issues via interventions by new media?

2. Does new media's remapping of diasporic screen texts' traditional concerns encourage a more nuanced 'glocal imaginary' and how might this be defined?

The workshops and symposium will address through a specific research question elements of the interrelationship between diaspora cinema and new media ecologies implied by these two key research questions:

1. **University of Northampton (UoN)** [5 Feb. 2020]: 'Black British and British Asian Cinema and New Media' will focus on the current state of diaspora screen media texts and digital technologies used in production and reception. The changing circulation and consumption patterns of visual culture due to the impact of social media and digital technologies, will feature in discussions involving researchers and industry practitioners, film festival curators at the Filmhouse (Northampton), and FlatPack Film Festival, Birmingham), university students and the public.

2. **Midlands Arts Centre (MAC)**, Birmingham [Approx. 30 June 2020]: 'Social Networks and New Media' will examine the new media formats of diasporic screen media texts. Their changing role due to new media uses will be addressed by industry practitioners, film festival programmers, university students and early career researchers. Partners, e.g. Threshold Studios (Northampton), will be invited.

3. **Birmingham City University (BCU)** [Approx. 1 Feb. 2021]: 'Globalising the Local in Diaspora Cinema and Media', a two-day symposium with invited speakers, film-makers, university students, members of public. Drawing on workshop findings, presentations will track new pathways to a glocal imaginary identified in the case studies associated with new media. Keynote speakers will be John Akomfrah, director of *Handsworth Songs*, and Vijay Mishra, author of *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (2013) and *Theorising the Diasporic Imaginary* (2007). All network partners and stakeholders will be invited.

4. Events will be accompanied by screenings at venues.

3. IMPACT

Impact generated by the use of digital technologies in producing and disseminating diasporic media culture will ensure the network's local, transnational and cross-generational reach. The project will collect, curate and publish digital content on case studies of Black British and British Asian film through its public website <https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/dsmn/about/>. This platform will facilitate the network's local and transnational impact by providing visitors with free access to multimedia, digital resources: e.g. podcasts of lectures; discussions and interviews filmed at the workshops; an annotated filmography of Black British and British Asian cinema; screening notes on screen media for undergraduates, researchers and interested members of the public. Building on the concept of 'digital diasporas' (Axel, 2004; Brinkerhoff, 2009; Everett, 2009), the platform will include an exhibition of Black British and British Asian film ephemera contributed by members of the public and local collections. It will combine official and unofficial archiving methods, and formal and informal practices of anthologising, to form an online resource of Black British and British Asian cinema and global media culture.

The network's outreach and impact on the public, end-users and stakeholders will be generated through film showings and discussions at Northampton's Filmhouse.

These events will coincide with the project's workshops and symposium consisting of academics, undergraduate and postgraduate student audiences, film practitioners, critics and archivists,

organisations like Northamptonshire Rights and Equality Council, and Northamptonshire Borough Council's Diverse Communities Forum.

These groups will be engaged through cultural organisations such as film clubs, theatres, art galleries and exhibition spaces, local libraries, community centres and through online networks. Research findings will be disseminated through liaison with UoN and BCU press offices with press releases for national and international media outlets. Members of local migrant communities will be accessed by relevant staff and international students studying at the universities. Students of different nationalities and ethnicities will be invited via staff teaching on salient modules such as the recently launched Black Studies undergraduate degree programme at BCU, and the universities' international offices and student societies. Debates on the possibilities, benefits and disadvantages of the new media, e.g. the mobile phone and I-Pad tablet, in accessing visual culture will aim to engage the wider public as well as members of the universities.

Film screenings and associated events aim to:

- Bring the diaspora screen media texts investigated to the mainstream and the target audiences identified above via our creative partners; e.g. Northampton's Threshold Studios, The Northampton Filmhouse, Flatpack Film Festival (Birmingham), local media and film clubs. Some screenings will be dedicated to diaspora cinema from new/ emerging directors.
- Offer public opportunities for film education about new media ecologies and the politics of representation, through prescreening lectures and talks. These will be filmed and/or audio-recorded and made freely available on the network's website and/or through the project's YouTube channel.
- Engage UoN and BCU students and lecturers in TV, film and media to participate in workshops in relation to distribution outlets and channels such as BBC3, Amazon, Zee TV, Netflix and other online distributors of video content.