

Institution: SOAS
Unit of Assessment: 27 Area Studies
Title of case study: Bringing African Film to International Audiences (Lindiwe Dovey)
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>African filmmakers have long experienced difficulties in funding, exhibiting and distributing their work, reflecting the dominance of Hollywood and 'mainstream' cinema. Dr Lindiwe Dovey's research into African film and international film distribution investigates how such difficulties might be overcome, while drawing attention to the diversity and originality of African filmmaking practices. This research inspired and enabled the creation of the UK's largest film festival, Film Africa, showcasing African-made culture to a wider audience, and providing a space where African filmmakers can meet with distributors and funders, enhancing their potential to further their careers internationally.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Dr Lindiwe Dovey comes from a filmmaking background and pursued a career in higher education with the explicit aim of combining academic and practice-based research. Upon completing her PhD at Cambridge in 2005, she held a Mellon Research Fellowship in Film, before joining SOAS in 2007 as Lecturer in African Film and Performance Arts. She was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 2010. Her research focuses on African literary film adaptations and cultural appropriation, postcolonial film and music, and the processes and dynamics of African film production, distribution and exhibition both in and outside Africa. Alongside academic publication, Dovey has made several short films and documentaries.</p> <p>In 2009, Dovey published her first monograph, the first book in English to explore the phenomenon of African literary film adaptations, <i>African Film and Literature: Adapting Violence to the Screen</i>. Focusing on South Africa and francophone West Africa, Dovey explores how filmmakers have used adaptations to critique colonial and contemporary violence. She argues that, through their sophisticated analyses of different forms of violence in Africa, African filmmakers contribute to a wider critique of violence and the stereotypes underpinning notions of an inherently violent Africa. Dovey's extensive analysis of a wide range of films brings a fresh and original perspective to African Film Studies and Adaptation Studies through its combination of close, critical readings of films and interpretation of the narratives based on their historical and socio-political contexts. Moreover, Dovey's book, informed by her own experience of filmmaking and curating, examines the many obstacles that hinder film production, distribution and exhibition across Africa, and the power structures within the international film market that determine what films get shown and valued.</p> <p>In 2010, Dovey edited a special issue of the <i>Journal of African Cultural Studies</i>, entitled 'African Film and Video: Pleasure, Politics and Performance', for which she also wrote the editorial and co-authored an article, "'African Jim': Sound, Politics, and Pleasure in Early 'Black' South African Cinema", which uncovers a previously-ignored political subtext to the 1949 South African film, as conveyed through the film's aural/oral aspects. The same year, she co-authored another article, "Bizet in Khayelitsha: <i>U-Carmen eKhayelitsha</i> as Audio-visual Transculturation" that, like output c, saw her collaborate with a scholar of African music to provide an interdisciplinary audio-visual analysis of the award-winning South African film opera <i>U-Carmen eKhayelitsha</i>. The article featured in an issue of the <i>Journal of African Media Studies</i>, which was also edited by Dovey (output e).</p> <p>More recently, Dovey has elaborated a feminist critique of African filmmaking, a field in which very few African women have directed feature films. She also notes the relative lack of attention to African women's filmmaking in both scholarship and film programming, which serves in part as a justification of her deliberate focus on 'African Women Filmmakers' in the programming of Film</p>

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Africa 2011, a festival she founded and co-directed (described in section four). She has complemented this work and reflection with critique of male-authored films featured in the Africa-themed programmes of leading film festivals (output f).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- a. *African Film and Literature: Adapting Violence to the Screen*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- b. ed. African Film and Video: Pleasure, Politics, Performance. *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 22/1 (2010).
- c. and Angela Impey. "'African Jim': Sound, Politics, and Pleasure in Early 'Black' South African Cinema." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 22/1 (2010): 57-73.
- d. "Report on Film Africa: Celebrating African Cinema, 3-13 November 2011." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 24/1 (2012): 113-20.
- e. and James Davies. "Bizet in Khayelitsha: U-Carmen eKhayelitsha as audio-visual transculturation." *Journal of African Media Studies* 2/1 (2010): 39-53.
- f. "New Looks: The Rise of African Women Filmmakers." *Feminist Africa* 16 (2012): 18-36.

Output a) won the 2009 Outstanding Academic Title Award, judged by Choice magazine, the pre-eminent review journal for academic libraries in North America published by the Association for College and Research Libraries.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Through extensive research into African film, combined with her founding, organizing and curating of African film festivals over the past twelve years, Dovey has developed a keen appreciation of the difficulties faced by African filmmakers given Hollywood's dominance in the international film market. Dovey's academic and non-academic work is preoccupied with how such an imbalance can be rectified and how African filmmakers might be assisted in garnering wider audiences.

Dovey has sought to address these concerns primarily through founding and curating two of the UK's leading African film festivals: the Cambridge African film festival, the longest-running annual African film festival in the UK, launched in 2002, and Film Africa in London, which has grown to be the UK's largest annual celebration of African cinema and culture (1). In addition to co-founding Film Africa in 2008, Dovey acted as Co-Director (with Namvula Rennie) and Film Programme Director in 2011 and 2012, devoting six months each year to its planning, programming, and delivery alongside her academic role at SOAS. Her in-depth knowledge of filmmaking across Africa enabled the design of a diverse programme that brought African cinematic achievements to an international audience. In 2011, Dovey brought 51 African films and 10 African filmmakers to Film Africa; in 2012, the programme expanded to include over 70 African films and 30 filmmakers, as well as education and arts workshops. Through her contacts in the film industry developed over a decade of work, Dovey secured substantial funding as well as high-profile London venues for the festival, such as the BFI Southbank and the Ritzy in Brixton. Box office figures reveal that audience numbers increased by 90%, from 2000 people in 2011 to 3800 in 2012.

Film Africa has garnered much media attention, with reports and reviews in, for example, *The Guardian* (2), *Time Out*, *Metro* and on CNN International (3, 4) and the BBC World Service; Dovey has been interviewed, for example, on CNN, Radio 4, BBC London News (5) and BBC Network Africa.

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The festival has had extremely positive impacts on African filmmakers, affording them significant international publicity and enabling them to broker deals for mainstream distribution (e.g. the films *The Athlete* and *Otelo Burning* secured distribution thanks to the festival). The winner of the festival's 2011 Silver Baobab Award for Best Short Film, believes that the press attention attracted by the award led to her BAFTA nomination, while the £2,000 prize money allowed her to work on her next script (6):

"It's the first time I got to take part in a real press junket. In the end it got me a spot on CNN and BBC World radio and I couldn't have asked for more publicity and I think this helped considerably – especially leading up to the BAFTA votes!"

South African director of the documentary *Surfing Soweto*, said (7):

"I have travelled around the world extensively with my film Surfing Soweto last year but I have to say my experience at Film Africa was by far the best. Lindiwe and Namvula really catered to our needs as African filmmakers and had a really deep understanding of the problems we face when we try and get our films distributed abroad. The discussions, workshops, presentations and networking opportunities were really right on point and tackled these issues head on (...). In actual fact they also do seem to be paying off because my film will be screened in the UK later in the year. And this is in no small part thanks to the contacts I made while there (...). I honestly cannot speak more highly of my experience in London."

Feedback from a Nigerian director, who participated in Film Africa 2012, was equally positive (8):

"I went away from Film Africa 2012 with great hope and optimism for African cinema, particularly the role Nigeria is destined to play in a couple of years... The festival gave my Maami the needed exposure to new and old audiences of African cinema... The results are beginning to manifest as acquisition contacts are already showing interest in my film. I am happy I did not miss Film Africa 2012, which has further inspired me and fuelled my desire to make greater films".

Dovey's work with Film Africa constitutes a significant contribution to promoting African culture in the UK, thereby enhancing international public awareness and engagement with African film. Her path-breaking research has greatly informed her conceptualisation of Film Africa, shaping programmes that showcase the complexity of African film and alternative narratives about Africa, by Africans.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Film Africa website: <http://www.filmafrica.org.uk/> [Most recently accessed 18.11.13].
2. Guardian article mentioning Film Africa: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/nov/03/film-africa-post-colonial-hollywood> [Most recently accessed 18.11.13].
3. CNN Inside Africa article on Film Africa and one of its featured films in 2012: <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/05/world/africa/auma-obama-film/index.html> [Most recently accessed 19.11.13].
4. Additional report on CNN Inside Africa: <http://edition.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/world/2011/11/21/inside-africa-nyoni-film-festival-b.cnn.html> [Most recently accessed 18.11.13].
5. BBC News report on Film Africa: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20213696> [Most recently accessed 18.11.13].
6. Testimonial from Zambian filmmaker, as included in the Final Report for Film Africa 2011.

Impact case study (REF3b)

7. Testimonial from South African filmmaker, as included in the Final Report for Film Africa 2011.
8. Testimonial from Nigerian filmmaker, as included in the Final Report for Film Africa 2012.
9. Film Africa Final Report 2011 (document available on request).
10. Film Africa Final Report 2012 (document available on request).