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Idumota Market
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Cover: Vigilism, „Idumota Market, Lagos 2081A.D.“ des nigerianischen Künstlers Olalekan Jeyifous aus der Serie „Our Africa 2081A.D.“. Eine Illustration für die Kollektion „Heritage Menswear“ von Ikiré Jones, 2013 (© Olalekan Jeyifous [vigilism.com] & Walé Oyéjidé [ikirejones.com]). Das Bild wird im Rahmen der Ausstellung „Making Africa. A Continent of Contemporary Design“ im Vitra Design Museum gezeigt, siehe den entsprechenden Beitrag in diesem Newsletter.

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Report: Social Anthropology and Global Transformations (SEG/SES Annual Conference, Basel 31.10.–01.11.2015)

■ FIONA SIEGENTHALER

The Conference was organized as collaboration between the Science Commission of the Swiss Ethnological Society SEG/SSE and the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel, the Centre for African Studies Basel and the Museum der Kulturen Basel. In the foreground were anthropological perspectives on the processes of transformation in societies worldwide, and how these transformations effect transformations in research questions and methods in contemporary social anthropology. The conference offered a rich programme. It was preceded on Thursday by the General Assembly of the Swiss Ethnological Society at the Museum der Kulturen and the subsequent screening of Balz Andrea Alter's documentary *Europaland – A Journey into Popular Cameroonian Imagination* (2010).



The first day started with the keynote lecture “Life within Limits and the Perplexities of Migration” of Prof. Michael D. Jackson (Harvard Divinity School), which likewise constituted the first “JJ Bachofen Lecture: Grundfragen der Ethnologie,” an annual distinguished lecture series launched by the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Basel. Quoting extensively from conversations he had conducted with a young Kuranko girl, the eminent proponent of existential anthropology lured the audience into a fascinating world of conversation, social imagination, migratory experience and intersubjectivity, particularly between the anthropologist and his West African interlocutors.

The second part of the day, as well as Saturday afternoon, were marked by eight thematic plenary sessions, while Saturday morning was dedicated to a plenary discussion organized by the Science Commission of the SEG. Moderated by Bettina Beer, Till Förster, Kathrin Oester, Barbara Waldis and Alessandro Monsutti discussed challenges and chances regarding “Transformation in cultural and social anthropology in different contexts of higher education in Switzerland”. While some institutions have to grapple with comparable difficulties such as continuing structural and educational reforms that impact on the programming of courses, the plenary showed that there also are significant differences in the role and relevance attributed to anthropology between the institutions, depending on, for instance, the type of institution, the flexibility and freedom in the course designs, and the particular federal policies.

The core of the conference consisted of eight thematic panels, with five to nine papers presented in each. The majority of the panels had invited a keynote speaker or a discussant from universities all over Europe and beyond who significantly contributed to a diverse and multi-perspective discussion of the panel themes. The range of regional and thematic foci in the panels was as broad as the Swiss expertise in anthropology, with the first block of panels discussing transnational corporations and their role in local

The keynote by Michael D. Jackson attracted a large audience (picture: Anna Stahl 2014).



Plenary session on transformation in Cultural and Social Anthropology in different contexts of higher education in Switzerland (picture: Anna Stahl 2014).

transformations (chaired by Doris Bacalzo, Bettina Beer and Tobias Schwörer, University of Lucerne); anthropology and education (chaired by Kathrin Oester and Judith Hangartner, University of Teacher Education Bern; Anja Sieber, University of Bern, and Gisela Unterweger, Zurich University of Teacher Education), the panel resulting in the foundation of a new working group specializing in this field; exhibition concepts and the role and function of anthropological museums in times of global cultural dynamics (chaired by Alexander Brust, Museum der Kulturen Basel and Karin Renold, School of Museum Studies); and new approaches in the research of health and care of elderly people with regard to both bodily transformation in age and transformations in institutional and intergenerational care relationships (chaired by: Piet van Eeuwijk, Sandra Staudacher Preite, Andrea Grolimund, University of Basel and Marion Droz Mendelzweig, University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland).

Kinship and the role of assisted reproductive technologies in a globalized world was the topic of one of the four panels on Saturday afternoon (chaired by Anika König, Freie Universität Berlin and Nolwenn Bühler, University of Zurich), with concurrent panels on the relation between global discourse and local realities of indigenous communal land titling (chairs: Esther Leemann, University of Lucerne and Irina Wenk, University of Zurich); and two quite different panels on methodology, the one dealing with mixed methods approaches in health research (organized by the commission for medical anthropology), the other on comparison and participation and observation as complementary methods (chairs: Barbara Heer, Lucy Koechlin, Till Förster and Rita Kesselring, all University of Basel). A workshop organized by the commission for audiovisual media (chaired by Silke Andris and Balz Alter, University of Basel and University of Aarhus) furthermore presented short films produced by students of visual anthropology in the framework of the SEG-Camera Workshop in summer 2014.

As an evening programme, the Museum der Kulturen offered well-attended guided walkabouts through its three current exhibitions, followed by the conference dinner at the Museumsbistro Rollerhof. On Saturday lunch, the fantastic weather as well as the "Herbstmesse" lured the conference participants out into the sun, where soup and sandwiches were offered in the medieval courtyard of the Museumsbistro.

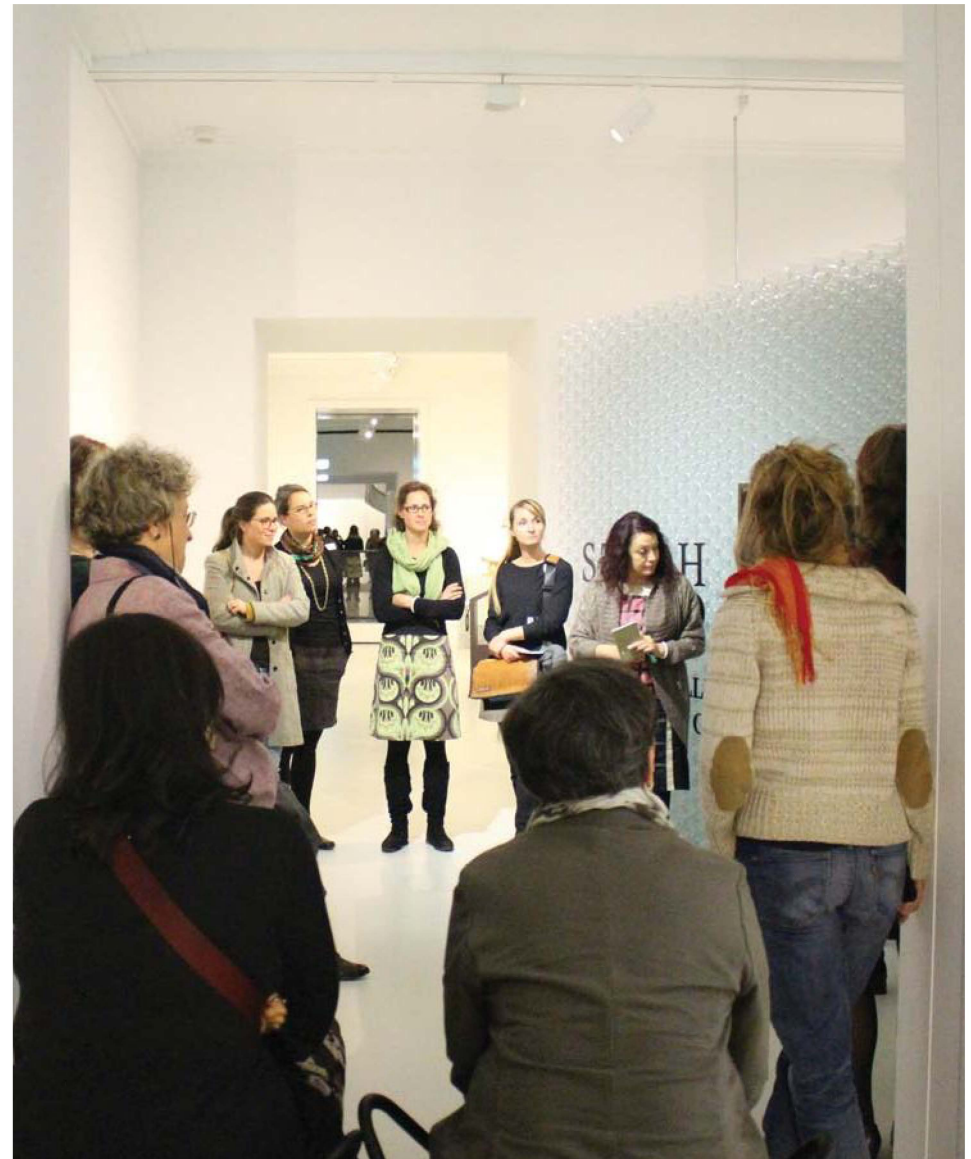
With research fields regionally ranging from central and eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, Meso- and South America, India, South East Asia to Africa, the conference adequately reflected the specializations of the institutes for Anthropology in Swiss universities, with almost all parts of Africa represented mainly in the contributions from scholars in Basel or international scholars who at some point in their career studied or worked in Basel. The conference was attended by more than 160 participants, reach-

ing a new peak in the long-term increase of the annual SEG conference participants. It is noteworthy that a remarkable number of speakers as well as visitors were international, coming from European countries, Israel, Australia, the USA, Tanzania, and Mali. Several students were engaged as helping hands in the conference preparation and realization, as audiences in the diverse panels, and entire classes attended the jam-packed keynote lecture by Michael D. Jackson. The audience of the keynote lecture perhaps was most reflective of the synergies and symbiosis of African Studies and Social Anthropology at the University of Basel, and their common intensive and extensive scholarly networks not only in Africa, but also beyond.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE OF THE CONFERENCE:

Alex Brust (Museum der Kulturen Basel), Piet van Eeuwijk and Fiona Siegenthaler (Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel).

The conference program is available on the website of the SEG:
www.sagw.ch/seg/colloques/archive-colloques/colloque2014.html.



Friday evening visit to the Museum der Kulturen Basel, which co-organized the conference (picture: Anna Stahl 2014).