

17.11.2018–17.03.2019, ZKM_Atrium 1+2

Digital Imaginaries – Africas in Production

Exhibition and research project with partners in Senegal and South Africa

Africa is radically changing and digitization features prominently in contemporary African imaginaries and realities. The mobile phone boom and the development of mobile-enabled banking services demonstrate that African specific digital practices are very lively and start to shape globalized digital technologies. The diverse digital scenes that emerged in the few well-connected African hubs provide new perspectives, metropolitan pride, and a sense of global participation.

The exhibition *Africas in Production* is part of the project Digital Imaginaries that started in spring 2018 with events in Senegal and continued in South Africa before coming to ZKM | Karlsruhe. Throughout 2018, institutions and project partners in Dakar, Johannesburg, and Karlsruhe collaborated through a series of distinct but linked programs, consisting of workshops, seminars, talks, residencies, performances, and exhibitions. Collectively, these events brought together artists, architects, makers, hackers, and researchers to question and reimagine how globalized digital technologies shape and shift African futures.

Exhibition project at ZKM | Karlsruhe

The *Africas in Production* exhibition at the ZKM | Karlsruhe is the third leg of the project which will conclude in 2019 with a collectively edited publication. Digital Imaginaries – Africas in Production features numerous new works developed during the project. In addition, the exhibition presents documentations of the Dakar and Johannesburg events and additional videos, photographs, sculptures, and installations that broaden its scope.

The works from Gabon, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe as well as the African diaspora in France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America presented in this exhibition do not offer a unified narrative. Yet, together they challenge dominant digital imaginaries and thus contribute to richer, more diverse configurations of the digital. The Digital Imaginaries events in Dakar and Johannesburg both activated locally specific histories and contemporary practices to explore what futures the digital might hold for Africa, and what Africa might contribute to the digital. Many of the works in the ZKM exhibition employ a similar strategy. Going beyond critique, they refract the digital through contemporary African concerns, situations, practices, or histories to enrich and reconfigure digital practices. In doing so, they reveal that the notion of a homogeneous global digital space is nothing but another

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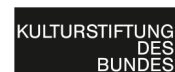
Location
ZKM_Lichthof 1+2

Press contact
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instance of particular market-driven patterns of thought and interest posing as universals. By engaging with African specificities, they are thus expanding the horizon that delimits what kinds of digital futures are imaginable – in Africa, in Europe, and around the globe.

First leg: Afropixel Festival Dakar

The Afropixel Festival constituted the first leg of the Digital Imaginaries project, and ran from February to May 2018. Afropixel is an initiative by our project partner Kër Thiossane, an independent multimedia art space in Dakar. Dedicated to Non-Aligned Utopias, the festival's sixth edition focused on African initiatives that employ digital technologies and practices critically to reclaim local practices as means of action and emancipation.

Second leg: Wits Art Museum, Fak'ugesi African Digital Innovation Festival Johannesburg

An exhibition at the Wits Art Museum and a series of linked workshops plus the Fak'ugesi African Digital Innovation Festival in Johannesburg represented the second leg of the project. The Johannesburg exhibition that ran from July to September 2018 drew on the notion of "premonition" and the extensive collection of African art at the Wits Art Museum to explore links between algorithmic prediction, ceremonial hallucinations, fractal mathematics, spiritual-digital urban spaces, traditional beadwork, and divination objects. It thus activated the museum collection and the wider African archive to reconsider contemporary digital practices.

Participating artists:

Larry Achiampong / Sénamé Koffi Agbodjinou, L'Africaine d'architecture / Younes Baba-Ali / David Blandy / Tegan Bristow, Alex Coelho, Russel Hlongwane & João Roxo / Kombo Chapfika / Joshua Chiundiza / CUSS Group / Milumbe Haimbe aka ArtisTrophe / Olalekan Jeyifous & Wale Lawal / Isaac Kariuki / Wanuri Kahiu / Francois Knoetze / Maurice Mbikayi / DK Osseo Asare & Yasmine Abbas, Agbogloboshie Makerspace Platform (AMP) / Marcus Neustetter / Tabita Rezaire / The Nest Collective

Curators: Oulimata Gueye, Julien McHardy, Philipp Ziegler

Scientific advisor and project initiator: Richard Rottenburg

Cooperation partners: Kër Thiossane, Afropixel Festival, Wits Art Museum, Fak'ugesi African Digital Innovation Festival

Funded by Fonds TURN der Kulturstiftung des Bundes and Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung

Accompanying program:

Fr 16.11.18, 19.00 Uhr

Free entry

Exhibition opening

Performances by Francois Knoetze and Marcus Neustetter at the exhibition space

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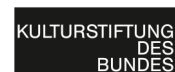
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Sa 17.11.18, 14-16 Uhr
Free entry

Artist talks

with Younes Baba-Ali, Tegan Bristow, Mamadou Diallo, Oulimata Gueye, Francois Knoetze, Marion Louisgrand Sylla, Marcus Neustetter, and Jamal Nxediana, moderated by Julien McHardy, curator of the exhibition

16:30-18 Uhr
Free entry

Guided tour with curators

with presentation of the Spacecraft_ZKM with Oulimata Gueye, Julien McHardy, Bettina Korintenberg, Philipp Ziegler, and DK Osseo-Asare & Yasmine Abbas, Agbobjoshie Makerspace Platform (AMP) as well as students from the Department of Architecture, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) under the direction of Fanny Kranz

Sun 18.11.18, 11:30-13 Uhr
Free entry

Tangana: Maker's Brunch

Presentations, coffee & snacks with Agbobjoshie Makerspace Platform (AMP) (GH), DEFKO AK NIËP (SN), Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct (ZA), WoeLab (TG), and local initiatives

14:30-16:30 Uhr
Free entry

From Beadwork to Coding: Vernacular Algorithms Workshop

Tegan Bristow (Fak'ugesi African Digital Innovation Festival, South Africa) uses the pearl patterns of the Zulu to demonstrate complex mathematical structures in programming

16-17 Uhr
Free entry

Guided tour with the curators

with Philipp Ziegler, Julien McHardy, Oulimata Gueye and Bettina Korintenberg

Wed 21.11.18, 17-18 Uhr
Free entry

Collective Data between Accra and Karlsruhe

Presentation of the results of the Scanopy workshop with Agbobjoshie Makerspace Platform (AMP)

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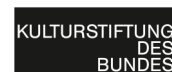
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ANNEX

Africa is radically changing and digitization features prominently in contemporary African imaginaries and realities. The mobile phone boom and the development of mobile-enabled banking services demonstrate that African specific digital practices are very lively and start to shape globalized digital technologies. The diverse digital scenes that emerged in the few well-connected African hubs provide new perspectives, metropolitan pride, and a sense of global participation. The vast potential markets of the world's youngest populations lure youth-obsessed tech investors while several African states, in turn, are pursuing ambitious policy agendas designed to establish digital-driven economies.

One reading of these developments is that Africa is arriving in the global digital sphere. This reading relies on one of the founding digital imaginaries of the Internet as a seamless space that is universalizing modes of access and participation globally. Many contributions to this exhibition, by contrast, challenge the fantasy of the digital as a quasi-universal, global sphere because it obscures infrastructural asymmetries on the African continent and in global digital networks. Digital inequality has mainly been conceived as a divide between those who can and those who cannot easily access the Internet. Now that access is increasing, it is obvious that access alone does not level the playing field. Deeper divisions persist between those who generate and consume data and those who mine, aggregate, manipulate, and derive value from it. In Africa, this resonates with colonial histories because the high-tech nodes that dominate digital infrastructures are predominantly located in the Global North. China's and India's increasing influence is complicating rather than resolving this situation by introducing new asymmetries. Tensions between diverse digital practices from the African continent and the inequalities of digital infrastructures on which they thrive are expressed in the drive to decolonize the digital that informs many of the works in this project.

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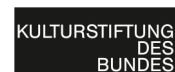
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