CALL FOR PAPERS
URBAN CULTURES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (19ᵗʰ-21ˢᵗ centuries)

Sophie Dulucq
Noor Nieftagodien
Matthieu Rey

African Jim (*Jim Comes to Jo'burg*), the first South African film with an all-black cast and intended for a black audience in 1949, tells the story of a rural man arriving in Johannesburg and the attraction he feels for this enticing city, where it is possible to sing in the evening in nightclubs, to wear a bow-tie or a low-cut dress, and to "distinguish" yourself from rural people. While this film is obviously rooted in the racist context of the early days of apartheid, it is nevertheless a historical document that can be read in many ways, highlighting Johannesburg's distinctiveness at the turn of the 1950s, the fate of black workers and a wide range of themes specific to all the new "Afropolitans", such as migrations across the region and the ensuing cross-cultural exchanges that produced new urban cultures. More generally, the movie brings up the question of the mutual impacts of culture and city.

For this special issue of the *Revue d'Histoire contemporaine de l'Afrique*, the journal wishes to address the **cultural history of urban societies** in Southern Africa (19ᵗʰ-20ᵗʰ centuries) that was first shaped by encounters between various African societies and European settlers, imperial diasporas (Indians, for instance) and other immigrants (e. g. Chinese, Greeks), between repulsion and attraction, domination and resistance, invention and accommodation. It insists on the relationship between a specific place and stage – cities and towns – and the cultural forms that developed therein.

For many decades, historiography has given rise to a rich and dynamic body of research in the field of urban history or of the history of colonization and segregation, *per se*. Several historiographical trends draw upon the background of the present issue. First, multiple studies deal with the urban political history, particularly in South Africa. As Susan Parnell and Alan Mabin reminds in the introduction of the special issue of *South African History Journal*, a new concern about towns and cities as political stage has arisen during the last decades of the Apartheid, during which urban riots paved the way to defeating the regime. These studies explain how the city became the centre of the political struggle, triggering political awareness and providing tools for newcomers to belong to the fight. This scholarship nevertheless does not question the relation between a *place* and a *way* of doing, practicing, behaving, and does not detail the cultural dimension of urban areas. It is this gap that we would like to fill in part by focusing on the multiple facets of **urban cultures**. How did the "city" affect people's behaviour, consumption and habits? An investigation of cultural means may lead to a better understanding of what constitutes "urbanity".

From the colonial era to post-colonial times, urban cultures have emerged and shaped particular types of sociability and specific worldview, whilst urban stages have provided the setting for artistic creation, leisure activities (music, photography, cinema, sport, etc.) and the development of a certain food practices. Urban stages have given birth to novel ways of dressing, moving, staging oneself — all this being differently shaped by gender —, in short, to a whole new, very specific relationship to society and the world in general. For instance, from Lourenço Marques to Maputo,

from *assimilados* and "natives" in the colonial era to neo-urbans in the late 20th century, urban dwellers have experienced both subtle and dramatic changes, which have produced specific cultural traits even through everyday, modest practices and behaviours.

Urban cultures have also been marked by high tensions and have sometimes been threatened with suppression even. In some Southern African countries, their destruction was justified, in the eyes of the rulers, by the social and political threat they might represent, but also, from rulers' perspectives shared by some communities themselves, by the fear of a cultural peril in certain contexts — such as the rejection of all forms of acculturation incompatible with segregationist politics; the horror of "mixing" lifestyles, music and languages; the fear of ideas circulating; the fear of innovations brought by migrant populations.

Everywhere, urban spaces in the 19th and 20th centuries had been the subject of in-depth study. In world history, Osterhammel and Bayly have demonstrated how the nineteenth century witnessed the ascendency of urban living over any other form of settlement, and how urbanity participated in a new world of technical progress, which experienced the advent of capitalism and the rise of nation states. This concept of urbanity refers to spatial characteristics, to particular types of buildings, to mostly tertiary economic functions and to specific modalities of appropriation of the space by inhabitants, whose links with rurality have become progressively more distant. Southern Africa, which was integrated into globalized economic circuits, also experienced significant and uneven urban growth from the 19th century onwards. 'Mushroom cities' with a vocation for mining such as Johannesburg, administrative capitals such as Lusaka or Livingstone, harbors and commercial cities such as Durban or Luanda have quickly developed under colonial domination. In the process, these towns and cities have been adapted by the population who changed the meaning of urban customs, practices and architecture, through the actions of their daily lives.

While political historiography has often divided southern Africa history into two or three period (pre-colonial until 1885; colonial until the 1960s, post-colonial), the present issue might help to deconstruct this approach and to show how dynamics overlapped and reframed the Southern African stage. What would be pre-colonial? Native towns such as Bulawayo before 1800? A clear shift occurred in the urban setting during the 1880s when there was an urban settlement boom. What, then, should be considered as the post-colonial time? Post-1953 for Zambia? 1968 for Botswana? 1995 for South Africa? How should we qualify the intermediary period?

It is also essential to bear in mind the very important contribution made by migrant workers — so numerous in the area — to the sometimes-spectacular cultural intermingling that unfolded over a long period. Cities were of course not closed worlds, but on the contrary, the products of various movements, demographic dynamics, and changes.

Objectives
The objectives of the special issue are manifold:
- This special issue aims to examine the effect of urban living on individuals and groups, how their material, symbolic, and mental frameworks have been disrupted by their culture(s).
- We are eager to shed light on a new trend of scholarship about urban life and culture in Southern Africa (with topics such as urban experience, food, fashion, sexual and sentimental encounters night life, public lighting, etc.).
- A consideration of the "cultural" dimension of urbanity will deepen our understanding of the articulation between space, inhabitants, and identities.
- We would like to incite multi-scale approaches, including secondary urban centers in the analysis of urban cultures. Case studies are of course expected, but comparative studies will be highly appreciated.
- Papers considering the gender dimension of the topic will also be welcome.

Axis 1. Everyday life urban experiences and cultural practices

Some studies have focused on understanding cultural activities, such as sport, food, clothing, cinema, photo, and music. Historians like Coplan, Ballantine, Ansell, Nativel have provided precious studies on music, while Khumalo, Nunn, and Goldblatt have underscored the importance of photography both as an economic activity and as a social self-staging medium for urban-dwellers. Domingos has studied football in colonial Mozambique cities. Burns and Goerg have focused on cinema and on African audiences. If they encapsulate cultural activities in particular places, all of them have not systematically explored the relationship with emerging 'cultural urbanity' or 'urban identities'. But these studies are very compelling and offer a very good incentive to explore more situations and cases, including the most mundane and modest activities that weave the web of urbanity.

The topic of urban cultures also encompasses the sensitive, even sensory, experiences of urban residents, well-documented in the case of Western cities by authors, for example about the transformations timeframe in nineteenth century Paris (Corbin) or about the influence of street lighting on popular cultural practices (Csergo). Comparatively, the subject has so far been little explored in an African context: public lighting, the distorted relationship with the rural world and time frame, ease of access to different food and housing options, all had a tremendous impact on the physical and sensory existence of urban populations and the rhythms of their daily lives, their way of going out and eating for example (see for instance Almeida-Topor, on the diffusion of bread in West African colonies). The nocturnal life in these cities exemplifies how culture homogenizes certain generational practices across the continent.

Axis 2. Urban cultures, mobility and migrations

In his famous 1958 film *Moi, un Noir [I, a Negro],* Jean Rouch focused on the urban experiences of Nigerien migrants settling in Abidjan in the late fifties. From this perspective, urban cultures echoed several sensorial dynamics triggered by the encounters between a space (the town) and newcomers. What did the arrival in town mean? How did the transformation of the urban settings and consumption patterns (electricity, pavements, nightclubs, spectacles of boxing competition or football) modify the perceptions of migrants and new urban dwellers? And finally, what do migrants bring to urban cultures (frameworks of thought, eating habits, language intake)?

Scholarship addressed several issues on the urban and rural migrations, on inter-cities movement, on their consequences for the emergence of new eras. Moorman (Luanda), Bonner & Segal (Soweto), Kaarsholm (Bulawayo) and Bickford-Smith (Cape Town) among many others have focused on cultural histories of the main cities. Our attempt is to shift the attention towards the relation between urbanity and culture through the lenses of migrations and mobility. How did cultural models or patterns circulate between urban and rural areas, between secondary and main cities?

We encourage comparative works on several case studies to bring a better understanding of cultural circulation. In addition, this special issue is also interested by cultural flows and contributions from abroad (one example among others: the circulation of American/European records and artists in Southern Africa in the interwar period).

Axis 3. Urban culture and memories: facing the transformation of the city

Urban cultures had been deeply affected by the urbanistic stage. An important historiographical tradition raised the question of social building and fabric of the Southern Africa cities or neighbourhood (Alexandra or Windhoek, for example). However, this scholarship did not

necessarily address the urban cultures as a threat or a product of the new layout. The apartheid regimes ordered the violent removal of entire neighbourhoods that not only displaced populations, but also engulfed (at least partially) parts of local cultures (see Sophiatown in 1955, Old Location in Windhoek in 1959, District Six in Cape Town in the 1960s and 1970s). Often, the last remaining witnesses now carry a nostalgic memory of these places, and of the social and cultural practices that flourished there; sometimes their descendants or certain institutions (such as the District Six Community Museum) have become repositories for these memories. The present issue will question the importance of construction and destruction for the emergence of urban cultures but also the specific memory formed by traumatic events which reframed the city.

Conclusion

It is therefore with a broad conception of the terms in mind (the word culture is used here in the plural to refer to both "noble" and everyday practices), and in a broad chronological perspective, that the *RHCA* invites historians to examine the dynamism of urban cultures in Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries. We also encourage researchers working on the post-colonial era to submit proposals, as well as those studying the "very contemporary" period, on the condition, however, that an historical approach remains central.

References

Almeida-Topor (d'), Hélène, « La diffusion du pain en Afrique Noire », in Riesz, Janos & d'Almeida-Topor, Hélène, *Échanges franco-allemands sur l'Afrique*, Bayreuth African Studies, 1994, p. 9-15.

Ansell, Gwen, *Soweto Blues: Jazz, Popular Music, and Politics in South Africa*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2004.

Ballantine, Christopher, *Marabi Nights: Jazz, 'Race' and Society in Early Apartheid South Africa*, Pietersmaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2nd edition, 2012.

Bayly, Christopher, *The Birth of the Modern World: Global Connections and Comparisons, 1780–1914*, Oxford, Willey-Blackwell, 2004.

Bickford-Smith, Vivian, Van Heyningen, Elizabeth and Worden, Nigel, *The Social History of Cape Town: The Making of a City: An Illustrated Social History*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1998.

Bickford-Smith, Vivian, *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis: Cities and Identities in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Burns, James M., *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe,* Ohio University Press, 2002.

Bonner, Philip & Segal, Lauren, *Soweto. A History*, Cape Town, Maskew Miller Longman, 1998.

Bonner, Phillip & Nieftagodien, Noor, *Alexandra, a History*, Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2008.

Coplan, David B., *In Township Tonight: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2008 (2nd edition).

Csergo, Julia, « Extension et mutation du loisir citadin. Paris, XIXe – début XXe siècle », in Corbin, Alain (ed.)., *L'Avènement des loisirs. 1850-1960*, Paris, Aubier, p. 132-145.

Corbin, Alain (ed.)., *L'Avènement des loisirs. 1850-1960*, Paris, Aubier, 1995 (1st ed.).

Domingos, Nuno, *Football and Colonialism: Body and Popular Culture in Urban Mozambique*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2017.

Feyder, Sophie, *Portraits of Resilience. Writing a Socio-Cultural History of a Black South African Location with the Ngilima Photographic Collection Benoni, 1950s-1960s*, Brussels, Druks, 1983.

Fouquet, Thomas, « Paysages nocturnes de la ville et politiques de la nuit. Perspectives ouest-africaines », *Sociétés politiques comparées*, 38, jan.-avr. 2016.

Goerg, Odile, *Fantômas sous les Tropiques. Aller au cinéma en Afrique coloniale*, Vendémiaire, 2015. (English translation: *Tropical Dream Palaces. Cinema in Colonial West Africa*, Hurst, 2020.)

Kaarsholm, Preben, "Si Ye Pambili. Which way forward? Urban development, culture and politics in Bulawayo", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 21 (2), 1995, p. 225-245.

Martin, Denis-Constant, « Musique dans la rue et contrôle de l'espace urbain : Le Cap (Afrique du sud) », *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, 2005/2 (n° 119), p. 247-265.

Moorman, Marissa J., *Intonations: A Social History of Music and Nation in Luanda, Angola, from 1945 to recent times*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2008.

Nativel, Didier, « Dissidences culturelles et spatiales de jeunes citadins colonisés au Mozambique (1945-1975) », in Bois, Dominique, Rajaonah, Faranirina & Tisseau, Violaine (dir.), *Jeunesses et dynamiques générationnelles, XIXe-XXIe siècles (Madagascar, Mozambique, Afrique du Sud)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2017, p. 219-246.

Nativel, Didier, « Mondes sonores et musiciens des quartiers périphériques de Lourenço Marques (1940-1975) », in Rajaonah, Faranirina (dir.), *Cultures citadines dans l'océan Indien occidental (XVIIIe-XXIe siècles). Pluralisme, échanges, inventivité*, Paris, Karthala, 2011, p. 235-255.

Osterhammel, Jürgen, *The Transformation of the World. A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015.

Parnell, Susan and Mabin, Alan, "Rethinking Urban South Africa", *South African History Journal,* Volume 21, 1995, p. 39-61.

Calendar:

15 April 2020: submission deadline for proposals for original articles, one page maximum in French or English to be sent to the following addresses: sophie.dulucq@univ-tlse2.fr; rey_matthieu@yahoo.fr; noor.nieftagodien@wits.ac.za

30 April 2020: authors of the selected abstracts will be notified

31 July 2020: deadline for the submission of complete articles (maximum 7000 words)

Revue d'**HISTOIRE CONTEMPORAINE** de l'**AFRIQUE**