

TRAINING PRODUCERS FOR ECOLOGICAL BROADCASTING

Coordinator: Arcada Nylands Svenska Yrkeshögskola, Finland

Partners: University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa; the South African School of Motion Picture Medium and Live Performing Arts, South Africa; Swedish School of Social Sciences of the University of Helsinki, Finland

Study areas: Art and Design, Communication and Information Sciences



South Africa. Photo by Taneli Haro

What are the main aims of your network?

The main goal of the project is to foster ecological broadcasting by supporting cultural sensitivity as a necessary quality in producers' professional profile. By "broadcasting" we mean production of audiovisual media for collective audiences. This includes fiction as well as documentaries and news. By the term "ecological" we refer to cultural diversity in subject matter, in forms of expression, in genres as well as in production routines.

The technological North-South divide in broadcasting and especially the greater competitiveness of the Western media industry threaten the reproduction of local broadcasting cultures while fostering the world-wide spread of standardized forms of expressions and genres. Our project addresses the commitment to the preservation of cultural diversity as an essential condition for a more egalitarian distribution of the costs and benefits of globalization.

What kind of activities are there in your network?

While abroad, exchange students will attend courses, the specific content and structure of which may vary depending on their professional profile (e.g. journalism, cinematography, sound engineering, screenwriting). Students and teachers are also involved in activities that constitute the research dimension of the programme.

A good example of these activities is the project "Beyond Stereotypes" (2004–2006), which covered the following elements: cultural awareness, specific knowledge about Finnish and South African cultures, and development of production skills in a multicultural professional community that operates on foreign ground. The general outcome of "Beyond Stereotypes" consists of four student films, a yet unspecified number of articles in academic journals on topics related to stereotypes and cultural bias in media representation, and tacit knowledge acquired by teachers and students. During this project period (2004–06), a total of 15 teachers and 12 students participated in the exchange.

What sort of successes and challenges have you encountered during your project?

The results from the pilot phase of this programme have been (and continue to be) disseminated in a variety of ways:

- student films shown to a wider audience on the DINA television channel operated by Arcada (cf. www.dina.tv), and in forthcoming teaching modules at the partner institutions
- various publications and papers
- a regional Media Day at Arcada 2006
- a panel at a seminar in Helsinki (Media and Money) in 2006
- a panel at a Nordic seminar (Media and Community) in 2007
- a Conference seminar on Media Rituals, funded by the Nordic Research Network on the Mediatization of Religion and Culture
- a book (Images and Community. The Visual Construction of the Social, Matteo Stocchetti and Johanna Sumiala-Seppänen eds. Helsinki University Press, 2007)

The project has made a big impact on increasing our knowledge, but the most important result has been the change in people's capacity to engage with diversity. Both students and teachers have benefited from this change.

During the project it became clear that to achieve ambitious educational goals we need to address the following interconnected issues: a) support for administrative and logistical efficiency; b) more involvement from teachers in the research part of the project; and c) more efficient coordination between administration, teaching and research.

Your advice to forthcoming networks

You will need a lot of time and patience to complete your project!

