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Traveling to Audiences: The Decentralization of Festival Spaces at the Festival Films Femmes Afrique in Senegal

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ABSTRACT

As African countries gained independence, filmmakers saw cinema as a weapon for decolonization. With the increasing disappearance of cinema venues following the global economic crisis of the 1970s, however, films were rarely able to reach local audiences. In the twenty-first century, especially since 2010, new audience-centered curatorial and managerial approaches have turned film festivals into key platforms for introducing African cinema to local audiences. This article investigates one of these approaches, namely, the decentralization of festival spaces, using one Senegalese film festival as a case study. Instead of asking audiences to travel to a festival venue, the Festival Films Femmes Afrique—the first film festival in Senegal dedicated to films about women—travels to local audiences, offering a variety of free activities across a wide range of venues and spaces. This study relies on data visualization methods as well as practice-based ethnographic research. The focus on the decentralization of festival spaces seeks to encourage further research on creative curatorial and managerial strategies to build and engage with diverse audiences, by increasing the accessibility of programs and boosting the circulation of films that are often marginalized in global distribution platforms.

1. Lindiwe Dovey, *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); and Odile Goerg, *Un cinéma ambulant en Afrique: Jean/Paul Siviadier, entrepreneur dans les années 1950* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2020).
2. Lindiwe Dovey, "Towards Alternative Histories and Herstories of African Filmmaking: From Bricolage to the 'Curatorial Turn' in African Film Scholarship," in *A Companion to African Cinema*, ed. Kenneth W. Harrow and Carmela Garritano (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), 467–85.

Traveling to Audiences: The Decentralization of Festival Spaces at the Festival Films Femmes Afrique in Senegal

Estrella Sendra

Introduction

The field of film exhibition in Africa remains largely under-explored, especially exhibitions outside of commercial cinema venues, such as film festivals or mobile cinema.¹ The focus on spatial decentralization at film festivals in Senegal in this article seeks to address this research gap. I understand spatial decentralization at film festivals as an audience-centered curatorial and managerial technique that consists in diversifying the film-curated program across multiple festival spaces, moving films and filmmakers to often remote locations with limited or inexistent access to cinema. Most significantly, this strategy involves reversing the usual direction of people at festivals. Instead of asking audiences to travel to a specific festival venue, the festival travels to local audiences, across a wide range of spaces, which allows the festival to be felt and lived by a larger portion of the population, thus increasing its cultural and social impact.



Figure 1. Banner for the 2022 Festival Films Femmes Afrique. Courtesy of the festival's organizers.

I illustrate the decentralization of festival spaces through the case study of the Festival Films Femmes Afrique (FFFA), the first film festival in Senegal devoted to films starring strong women, directed by people of all genders. This festival was founded in 2003, with "Violence against Women" as its initial theme. It was an initiative of Trait d'Union, a Senegal-based association created in 1997 by French women married to Senegalese men with the goal of integrating into local society. The festival was launched as part of the association's cultural program and started with the screening of *Nous sommes nombreuses* (There are many of us) (directed by Moussa Touré, 2003, Senegal). Guided by Lidia, the film features strong women who managed to survive aggressions during the 1993–99 war in Congo Brazzaville.

After a break of thirteen years, the festival resumed in 2016 as a biennale, that is, an event held every other year. Beyond the diversity of its annual themes—"Women and Labor, Women and Migrations" (2016), "Women and Education" (2018), "Women in Resistance" (2020), and "Women, Creators of the Future" (2022)—the festival has been characterized by a consistent focus on "herstories."² In the words of Amayel Ndiaye, co-organizer of the festival and head of

3. Amayel Ndiaye, interview by author, March 4, 2022, Dakar, Senegal. All translations by author.

4. Martine Ndiaye, interview by author, March 31, 2021, Zoom.

5. Lizelle Bisschoff and Stefanie Van de Peer, *Women in African Cinema: Beyond the Body Politic* (London: Routledge, 2020), 110.

6. Sponsors include—with variations every year—the Ministry of Culture and Communication in Senegal, its Fonds de Promotion de l'Industrie Cinématographique et Audiovisuelle, the city town hall of Dakar, the Museum of Black Civilizations in Dakar, the Centre Yennenga in Dakar, the Institut Français in Senegal, the Swiss Embassy in Senegal, the Delegation of Québec in Dakar, the government of Canada, the French Embassy in Senegal, the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the German Foundation Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, the Petrol company Total in Senegal, the Senegalese water brand Casamançaise, Université du Sine Saloum El-Hadj Ibrahima Niass, the French civil engineering company Eiffage, Sana Faces, 7 Jours pour 1 Film, I am a Film, Social Change Factory, and such media partners as Canal +, TV5Monde Afrique, LaSentinelle, A+, and Vibe Radio 102.3.

7. See the [festival website](#).

8. Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 38.

9. *Ibid.*

communications, it is “a festival which tells stories of African women, be the story based in Africa or not, or told by African or non-African people, men, women, or other.”³ However, when doubts emerge in the curatorial process between several films, there is a tendency to favor the work of African women filmmakers.⁴ This is a response to the global underrepresentation of women directors, especially African women filmmakers.⁵ Since 2019, due to consistent growth and a desire to open the festival up to Senegalese men and women in general, the festival has come under the management of an organization called Films Femmes Afrique Association (FFFA), and it is now supported by a range of Senegalese and international private and public sponsors that share resources, such as spaces and services (including media coverage) and funding.⁶

The thematic focus on women and the festival's promotion of African cinema singles out the FFFA as an activist film festival. As reflected in the official communication of the festival—its website in particular—the festival aims to bring African films to Senegalese audiences at a time when barely any cinemas are open in the country.⁷ It thus participates in the dissemination and democratization of African cinema. It also contributes to raising awareness and developing critical thinking, rethinking the place of women in our societies, and fighting for the equality of rights between men and women. This activist dimension translates into the spatial decentralization of the festival venues, offering an entirely free festival in Dakar during the first week (February 25 to March 5 in 2022) and in over thirty different spaces across several regions during the next (March 6 to 12 in 2022). The FFFA thus constitutes an illustrative case study in scholarly discussions on film exhibition in Africa and on audience-centered curatorial and managerial approaches in Senegal, the African continent, and the cinematic world more broadly. This effort is particularly timely, since it engages with a global interest in building audiences and curating inclusive programs to respond to increasingly diverse populations in plural societies.

By examining audience-centered curatorial practices at the FFFA, I argue that the festival, functioning as *engagé* (engaged) cinema, promotes the circulation of African films during and beyond the festival to diverse audiences. On the one hand, the festival forges a discussion-based circuit for chosen films, with several screenings curated across different spaces. It allows diverse audiences to interact with the films, filmmakers, and each other, as the festival travels to audiences. On the other hand, beyond the festival dates, the festival promotes the circulation of films across the range of film festival networks in and beyond Senegal. In other words, the FFFA is a showcase for Senegalese and international curators, offering a range of films on women that inspire both audiences and curators. The festival, operating as a signifier of quality, is the initial point in a “site of passage that function[s] as the gateway to cultural legitimization.”⁸ Being selected for the FFFA adds value to a film, fostering attention at other festivals, as renowned film festival scholar Marijke de Valck has noted, within global festival circuits.⁹ This can be evidenced in the collaboration between the FFFA and the Leeds International Film Festival (LIFF) in 2022, which included a section named after the theme of the latest edition of the FFFA, “Women Creators of the Future,” cocurated by Molly Cowderoy (LIFF) and Amayel Ndiaye (FFFA). This development broadens the spatial decentralization that characterizes the festival, making a number of films travel transnationally to Leeds audiences in the United Kingdom.

10. Françoise Pfaff, *The Cinema of Ousmane Sembène, a Pioneer of African Film* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), 1–10.
11. Olivier Barlet, *African Cinemas: Decolonizing the Gaze* (London: Zed Books, 2000); and Samba Gadjiogo, *Ousmane Sembène: The Making of a Militant Artist* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).
12. David Murphy, ed., *The First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar 1966: Contexts and Legacies* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016).
13. *Dakar-Matin*, April 22, 1966, Cheikh Anta Diop University Library, Dakar.

Moving Images in Senegal

Senegal occupies a central position in the history of African cinema. The country was home to pioneering filmmakers who were concerned with the representation of Africa through an African lens.¹⁰ Cinema was thus conceived by these early filmmakers as a weapon for decolonization, especially in the aftermath of independence throughout Africa in the 1960s, when African filmmakers were finally able to become storytellers after centuries of colonialism.¹¹ By 1966, when the country hosted the Premier festival mondial des arts nègres (First World Festival of Black Arts), a celebration of African cultures worldwide organized under the patronage of the first president of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal boasted a significant number of cinema venues.¹² Press coverage of the festival included several articles reflecting about cinema as the seventh art, listing films, and discussing film director Ousmane Sembène's first feature-length film, *La Noire de...* (*Black Girl*) (1966, Senegal), which won an award during the festival. An April 1966 press clipping revealed the existence of at least sixteen different cinema venues in Dakar—with such names as Plaza, Liberté, Club, Palace, Royal, Roxy, Magic, Lux, Rio, Vox, Le Palais, Rialto, Bataclan, Al Akbar, Vog, and ABC.¹³ These air-conditioned one-screen venues built during the French colonial period exhibited international films, such as *Sunday in New York* (directed by Peter Tewksbury, 1963, United States), starring Jane Fonda and distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer—as shown on the top left corner of the news page in figure 2.



Figure 2. Films shown in Dakar at the time of the First World Festival of Black Arts. *Dakar-Matin*, April 22, 1966, Cheikh Anta Diop University Library, Dakar.

14. Ferdinand de Jong and Brian Quinn, "Ruin d'utopies: L'École William Ponty et l'Université du Futur Africain," *Politique africaine* 135 (2014): 72.

15. Molly Krueger Enz and Devin Bryson, "Introduction: Forging a New Path: Plurality, Social Change, and Innovation in Contemporary Senegalese Cinema," *Black Camera: An International Film Journal* 9, no. 2 (2018): 336.

16. Amadou T. Fofana, "A Critical and Deeply Personal Reflection: Malick Aw on Cinema in Senegal Today," *Black Camera: An International Film Journal* 9, no. 2 (2018): 352.

17. Odile Goerg, *Un cinéma ambulante en Afrique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2020), 13–15.

The cinematic scene changed significantly in the 1970s, when an economic crisis led to the gradual disappearance of theaters. Today, as is the case in many places around the world, some of these closed cinema venues have turned into shopping malls and art galleries. They are "ruins of utopias," anthropologist Ferdinand de Jong and arts scholar Brian Quinn's term for abandoned buildings that "constitute a palimpsest of African futures in ruins."¹⁴ In other words, they are places from the past that articulate ideas about the future or, in the case of cinema, that project dreams fabricated by the camera. Their existence in the present fosters a multi-temporal sense of nostalgia, of the future dreamed of in the past and no longer in the present. Film becomes at times a key site of memory and preservation of those cinema venues, as evidenced by the short film *Samedi Cinema* (2016, Senegal), directed by Mamadou Dia, featuring Cinéma Awa; the documentary film *SenCinema* (2017, Senegal, United States), directed by John Gibson and Amadou Fofana; or, more recently, the Guinean Senegalese documentary film *Au cimetière de la pellicule* (The cemetery of cinema) (2023, France, Senegal, Guinea, Saudi Arabia), directed by Thierno Souleymane Diallo, screened during the latest edition (2023) of the Festival international du film documentaire de Saint-Louis (StLouis' Docs) in Saint-Louis, Senegal. These films bring back to the screen these ruins of utopia, inviting reflection about the importance of cinema venues and addressing the need for the preservation of these sites and film archives.

Promoting cinema is not just a resilient endeavor but also an activist mission. To build African audiences for African cinema, innovation and creativity are crucial. Such strategies have been the focus of a recent section on Senegal in *Black Camera: An International Film Journal*, "Close-Up on Senegal," coedited by scholars of Francophone Africa Molly Krueger Enz and Devin Bryson. Enz and Bryson note that in light of the increasing disappearance of cinema venues, "theatre owners, in collaboration with the government, film producers, and distributors, must innovate in order to maintain viewers."¹⁵ But what does such innovation look like? And to what extent does it contribute to making cinema accessible? I analyze the spatial decentralization at the FFFA as one of the most significant innovative techniques in film exhibition, spreading exhibition spaces across a large number of venues to engage diverse audiences with the festival's mission. This promotes the accessibility and inclusivity of the festival. I also examine the spatial decentralization of festivals as a *caring*, audience-centered managerial and curatorial technique in that, instead of expecting audiences to travel to a main venue to be able to participate, the festival travels to audiences.

First, however, I want to make clear that, as innovative as it may seem, the spatial decentralization of film festivals is merely the extension—although with key differences, as outlined below—of an older innovation in film exhibition, the mobile cinema, which consisted of transporting all necessary equipment to screen a film onboard private cars, usually to remote areas that would otherwise have no access to cinema.¹⁶ During the early 1950s, just after the Second World War, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) encouraged *cinéma ambulante*, considered to be the sole mode of distribution and "the first form of film exhibition for the African population."¹⁷ Within this context, filmmakers engaged in proactive entrepreneurship, often organizing film screenings in remote locations across Senegal, that is, moving cinema to various geographical areas. This practice played a crucial role in building local audiences for a cinema that had not been permitted during centuries of European colonialism, cinema made by Senegalese filmmakers, such as Sembène. Mobile

18. Ibid., 7.

19. Dovey, *Curating Africa in the Age of Film*, 92.

20. Estrella Sendra, "Banlieue Films Festival (BFF): Growing Cinephilia and Filmmaking in Senegal," *aniki: Portuguese Journal of the Moving Image* 8, no. 1 (2021): 245–72.

21. UNESCO, "[MobiCINÉ fait de la magie du grand écran une réalité dans les communautés sénégalaises.](#)" UNESCO, *Diversité des expressions culturelles*, November 29, 2021.

22. For further details, see UNESCO, [Diversité des expressions culturelles](#).

23. Babacar Sall, cited in UNESCO, "MobiCINÉ fait de la magie."

24. Dovey, *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals*, 87.

cinema, however, was conceived in a different way than film festivals, since it did not focus on under-exhibited films, that is, African films.¹⁸ As African screen worlds scholar Lindiwe Dovey notes, "the first African filmmakers and critics were haunted by the audience—or, rather, by the lack of African audiences for African films."¹⁹ Moreover, mobile cinema had a commercial and entertainment purpose, where access was only granted to those able to afford tickets. In contrast, contemporary forms of digital mobile cinema of film festivals offer free entrance to all film screenings and tend to have an educational purpose, both in themes that concern the population and in building African cinephilia.²⁰

More recently, private cars have been replaced with motorbikes, minivans, and bicycles. Most film exhibitions at festivals are now facilitated by MobiCiné, whose slogan is "Cinema near you."²¹ This initiative dates from 2011 and is currently managed by the company Ella Global Solutions and the nonprofit Association Culture WAW.²² Since 2018, the project has received financial support from the French Fonds de la Promotion de l'Industrie Cinématographique et Audiovisuel, the French Ministry of Culture, and, at times, UNESCO. According to its cultural manager, MobiCiné is an "innovative response to a severe problem in Africa: the closure of cinema venues and the large number of African films not accessible to African people."²³

Another initiative of note, Cinécyclo, launched by French cultural actor Vincent Hanrion in 2015 but since managed by Senegalese people, uses bicycles to both transport and exhibit films. The FFFA is one of the cultural projects in which Cinécyclo has been involved. The format is participatory in that audience members are invited to engage in the physical labor of pedaling to make the screening possible. This project is also highly innovative in that beyond bringing African cinema to the people, it does so in a sustainable way, in complete darkness, with the dynamic energy resulting from the collective act of pedaling in shifts.

In spring 2016, Senegal also participated in a mobile film project initiated by two Spanish cinephiles, Isabel Segura and Carmelo López, who created Cinecicleta, traveling in a bicycle across the African continent and organizing pop-up screenings in collaboration with local populations and associations. As with Cinécyclo, Cinecicleta offers an innovative format, promoting the screening of films (not necessarily African, in the case of Cinecicleta) that are not easily accessible in remote locations and doing so in a sustainable and participatory way.

All three initiatives, with MobiCiné a well-established organization at present, share an interest in promoting African cinema for local audiences beyond the capital of the country, Dakar. Since the publication in 2018 of the aforementioned "Close-Up: Senegalese Cinema" in *Black Camera*, Dakar has witnessed a cinematic resurgence, with the opening of four new cinema venues: Canal Olympia (on May 11, 2017), Complexe Cinématographique Sembène Ousmane (on March 31, 2018), Ciné Pathé (on October 6, 2022), and Seacinema (on November 11, 2022). These venues, however, still focus on showing foreign (mostly US) films, which means that festivals continue to be "among the few public arenas in which [Senegalese and African] films are screened." When they first emerged in the 1960s, festivals were conceived as "acts of cultural and political resistance, liberation and self-empowerment."²⁴ In Senegal, most film festivals emerged in the twenty-first century, especially after 2010. They appeared as a response to the limited infrastructure devoted to bringing African cinema close to local audiences, as well as to the marginalization of African cinema in international film festivals and commercial cinema. To

25. I conducted my fieldwork mainly from October 2015 to September 2016, with some additional trips before and after that period.

26. See Estrella Sendra, "Two-Tier Festivals in Senegal between the Local and the International: A Case Study of the Festival International de Folklore et de Percussion in Louga (Senegal)" (PhD diss., SOAS, University of London, 2018), 131, 287–96.

27. Laura Feal and Estrella Sendra, "Nearby the Festival International du Film Documentaire de Saint-Louis: Rethinking Proximity in Times of COVID-19," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 10 (2021): 261–73.

28. On the symposium, see [Humanities Research Institute](#), accessed June 25, 2022. My online presentation can be accessed under pre-recorded presentations on the website, Estrella Sendra Fernandez Presentation, "Curating African Women on Senegalese Screens: The Festival Films Femmes Afrique."

29. De Valck, *Film Festivals*, 39.

overcome these obstacles, Senegalese festivals have favored audience-centered curatorial and managerial approaches that are discussed below. These practices aim to place audiences at the very center, considering and caring for them from the preproduction stage (selecting films and venues) to the postproduction stage (mediating film screenings through introductions and discussions with filmmakers or experts either on film or on the themes addressed in the films). In Senegal, to increase accessibility, these discussions happen in two languages: Wolof, the most widely spoken lingua franca in the country, and French, the official language.

Research Methods: Traveling with the FFFA

This study sits at the crossroads of practice and research. During my PhD fieldwork, which focused on local and international festivals in Senegal, I became aware of the importance of decentralization in festival management.²⁵ Festivals routinely offer an official and an alternative program, the latter being a sort of fringe festival, located in different regions, and with a calendar of events often longer than the former. In my doctoral thesis, I suggest that it is usually the "fringe" festival that fosters the most excitement among audiences. My main case study is the Festival international de folklore et de percussion, also known as FESFOP, held in Louga, a rural region in northern Senegal, where cultural infrastructure is scarce. The festival was designed as a "project of territory," meaning that it was created for and by the population of Louga.²⁶ To avoid spatial hierarchies, its program makes no distinction between official and alternative events. While people are invited to attend the evening performances at Place Civic—a public square adjacent to the town hall—the festival also offers afternoon performances in different neighborhoods and regions for people who would have otherwise struggled to travel to the festival.

During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2019–21, I became interested in studying the many ways festivals foster audience participation. Being based in London and unable to travel to Senegal, I started following social media more actively and teamed up with a Gandiol-based journalist, independent researcher, and cultural actress, Laura Feal, to review the 2020 StLouis' Docs, hosted from December 15 to 19, 2020.²⁷ It was in this context that I first interviewed Martine Ndiaye, the founding director of the FFFA. Our conversation, which focused on the 2020 festival that took place from February 21 to March 7, 2020, just before the first wave of the pandemic, provided the basis for an academic presentation at the "Transnational Screen Media Practices: Safeguarding Cultural Heritage" symposium organized by the University of Regina in June 2021.²⁸ In my presentation, I focused on the curation of representations of African women on Senegalese screens, and once more, attention to space became crucial.

De Valck had already alerted us to the importance of space when stating that "although both spatial and temporal dimensions are indispensable to the theoretical understanding of the festival network, we need to pause for a moment to elaborate on the incorporation of the spatial dimensions into our theoretical framing."²⁹ This article does precisely that, offering an analysis of a trend and practice in Senegalese festivals, through the case study of the FFFA, with the hope of inspiring festivals worldwide.

One of the most pertinent statements by Martine Ndiaye, in this respect, was: "We go to the public because, following the abandonment of cinema venues at the end of the twentieth century,

30. Martine Ndiaye, interview.

31. Souleymane Kébé, personal communication, Zoom, January 27, 2021, in Feal and Sendra, "Nearby the Festival International du Film Documentaire de Saint-Louis," 263.

32. See the [ScreenWorlds](#) website. The collaboration with FFFA in 2023 received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 819236-[AFRICANSREENWORLDS](#)).

33. On Wakh 'Art, see [the website](#). On Wiriko, see [the website](#).

34. On the roundtable, see [Screen Worlds](#).

people have lost the habit of going to the cinema."³⁰ This statement echoed words I had already heard from festival organizers in Senegal, in the context not just of FESFOP but of other film festivals as well. For example, Souleymane Kébé, a film producer and co-organizer of StLouis' Docs, when reflecting about the choice of festival spaces as part of the curatorial and managerial structure, claimed: "We decided to focus on the local people from the neighborhoods. We would go to them."³¹ I therefore decided to apply a data visualization method and created a Google Map marking the range of locations in the 2020 edition of the FFFA.

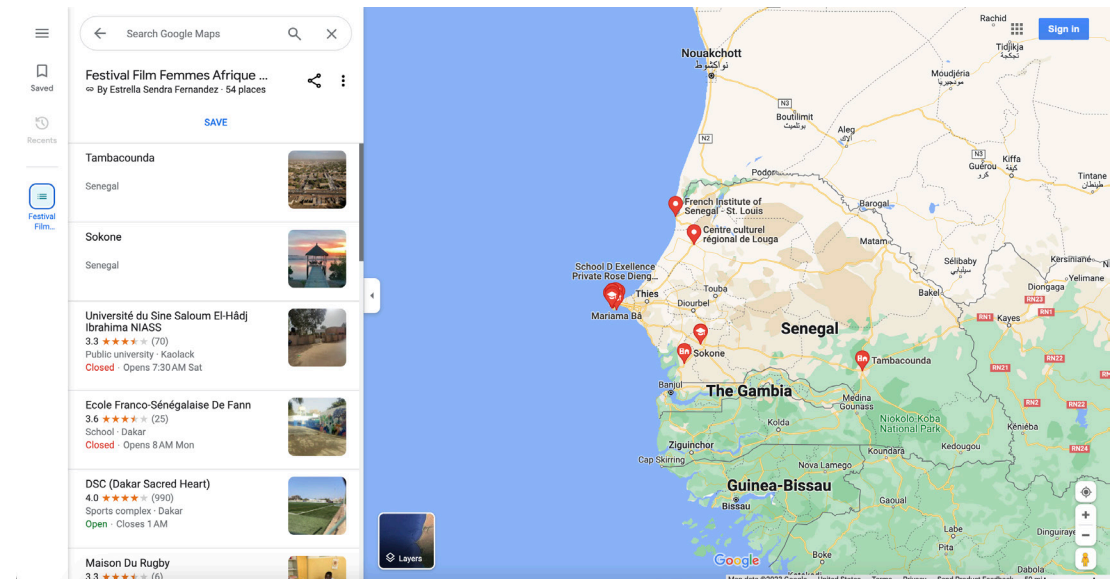


Figure 3. Google Map with locations of the 2020 FFFA .

In December 2021, I was finally able to travel back to Senegal after over two years. I reconnected with Martine Ndiaye and suggested a cocurated hybrid event during the festival, in collaboration with the European Research Council–funded project "Screen Worlds: Decolonising Film and Screen Studies," led by Dovey, my colleague at SOAS, University of London, and on which I serve as an advisory board member.³² This involved the screening of two debut short films by Senegalese women filmmakers, followed by a roundtable with them, in conversation with me and Ken Aïcha Sy, a cultural promoter, researcher, and founder of Wakh 'Art, with whom I collaborate through my media work in Wiriko.³³ The roundtable was curated as part of a focus on women filmmakers in Screen Worlds, preceded by an online roundtable, "Shaping the Conversation: Decolonising Film with Nigerian Women Filmmakers," curated by Nigerian film scholar Añulika Agina and cochaired by both of us.³⁴ The Senegalese roundtable, titled "La Voix des Réalisatrices/Decolonising Film with Senegalese Women Filmmakers," was hosted on Wednesday, March 2, at Centre Yennenga in Grand Dakar and screened live via the YouTube channel of Screen Worlds. The invited filmmakers were Fama Reyane Sow, director of *Anonymes* (2020, 14 min., Senegal), and Dieynaba Ngom, director of *Fissures* (2021, 23 min., Senegal), and their films were screened just before the roundtable. As part of this partnership, I was able to travel again for the FFFA in Dakar and to participate in a range of festival screenings, discussions, and activities beyond the cocurated roundtable.

35. Toby Lee, "Being There, Taking Place: Ethnography at the Film Festival," in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist (London: Routledge, 2016), 124.

36. Skadi Loist and Evgenia (Zhenya) Samoilova, "[How to Capture the Festival Network: Reflections on the Film Circulation Datasets](#)," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 12 (Spring 2023): 363–90; Brian J. Hracs, Roberta Comunian, and Lauren England, *Developing Creative Economies in Africa: Spaces and Working Practices* (London: Routledge, 2022); Skadi Loist, "[Workshop 'Visualization in/as Digital Media Studies'](#)," online workshop, November 18–19, 2021, Film Circulation; and Research Outputs, [Understanding and Supporting Creative Economies in Africa](#).

37. Martine Ndiaye, interview.

38. Amayel Ndiaye, interview.

39. Obioma Nnaemeka, "Negofeminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way," *Signs* 29, no. 2 (2004): 360–61, 378.

40. Amayel Ndiaye, interview.



Figure 4. Panoramic view of the roundtable "La Voix des Réalisatrices" at Centre Yennenga, featuring Fama Reyane Sow (left), Dieynaba Ngom (on the microphone), audience, and Ken Aïcha Sy (right).

What follows is an analysis of the 2022 edition of the FFFA, based on practice-based research, as a collaborator and cocurator of one of its activities (the aforementioned roundtable), and ethnographic fieldwork, "being there" and "deep hanging out" with festival participants.³⁵ Due to a focus on the decentralization of festival spaces, the key research method is data visualization. This method was inspired by work led by film festival scholar Skadi Loist on film circulation and the research project "Understanding and Supporting Creative Economies in Africa," which identifies cultural spaces and practices beyond institutions.³⁶ I created a virtual map of the different screening spaces during the FFFA, including in these maps moving and still images, as well as written articles associated with the venues, some of which I have produced. This interactive map, created through Padlet, serves as the basis of the critical analysis of the festival and understanding its ability to promote the circulation of African women-led films in and beyond Senegal.

Analyzing Spatial Decentralization at the FFFA in Senegal

As stated above, the FFFA is a festival showcasing African films whose stories are led by women, with an emphasis on resilience and agency. The main curatorial criterion, according to festival director Martine Ndiaye, is that "the film must be about a story of women's struggle ... the message it disseminates."³⁷ The inclusive dimension of the festival, which accepts films directed by filmmakers of all genders based in or beyond Africa, allows the festival "to offer different points of views concerning the same subject."³⁸ It is thus a "negofeminist" festival, that is, a "no-ego feminism" or "feminism of negotiation," as defined by Nigerian scholar Obioma Nnaemeka. This refers to intersectional understandings of feminism as able to "negotiate with or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts."³⁹

As a matter of fact, the FFFA is a locus for an intertextual and extra-diegetic negotiation of what "feminism" means. On the one hand, films from different African contexts enter into dialogue with each other, through their very inclusion in the festival. On the other hand, and at the same time, there are dialogues that happen between the diverse realities represented on screen and the various audiences encountered off screen, facilitated by mediators, such as festival hosts and guest speakers. These result in a continuous negotiation of what "feminism" means, with reference to women's stories. Amayel Ndiaye highlighted the festival's interest in "creating spaces to have a debate, criticize a bit the society ... in short, to open a space for the spoken word."⁴⁰

41. Dina Iordanova, "Film Festivals and Dissent: Can Film Change the World?," *Film Festivals and Activism*, ed. Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 13.

42. Amayel Ndiaye, interview.

43. Iordanova, "Film Festivals and Dissent," 14.

44. Cheikh Ndiougue and Mamadou Oumar Kamara, "Sénégal: Festival Films Femmes Afrique 'Papicha,' un gros plan sur la résistance des Algériennes," *Le Soleil*, March 2, 2020.

In other words, the curatorial approach at the FFFA becomes a nego-feminist space, favoring diverse viewpoints about the same subject, African women.

Discussion is thus a crucial component of this festival, as it is in other activist film festivals, because the festival is driven by the organizers' intentionality, be it to increase awareness, to expose, to warn, to prevent, or sometimes to change the course of events. Activist film festivals "embody the belief that film is powerful enough to have an impact."⁴¹ This is largely due to the accessible dimension of audiovisual language, particularly in a context of high rates of illiteracy and a long history of oral tradition. Such optimism is apparent in Amayel Ndiaye's reflection on the potential impact of the festival program, when she stated: "We choose films where women fight for their choices. They fight in order to live the lives they want. So it is very empowering to see that. It is inspiring. For us it is very important that young, older women and men alike see strong women on screen."⁴²

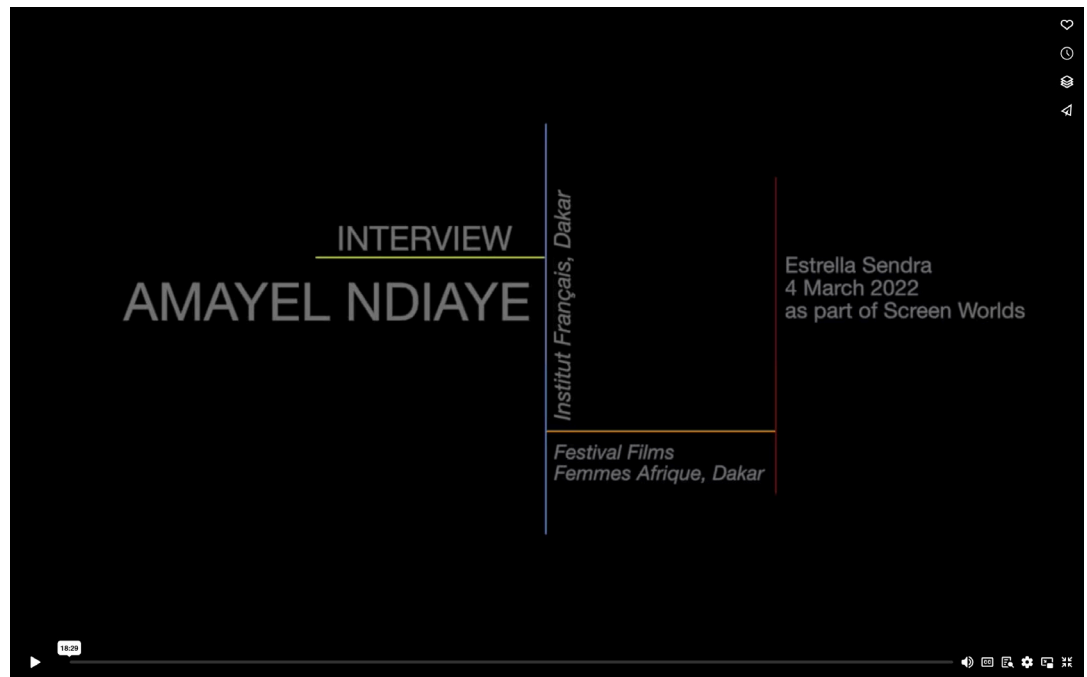


Figure 5. My interview with Amayel Ndiaye, March 2, 2022, Dakar .

As a result, the FFFA is an emblematic mobile platform to raise awareness about women's rights through presenting women-led stories on screen in an accessible way. This resonates with film festival scholar Dina Iordanova's comment that "films make the highly abstract categories of human rights discourses easier to grasp and understand."⁴³ As summarized in the local press, it is "a feminist film festival that raises awareness of women's rights, their liberation from the sexist obscurantism and emancipation from stereotypes."⁴⁴

The 2022 edition, the fifth since the festival's inception, revolved around the ideas of agency and change, with the theme of "*Femmes créatrices d'avenir*," later translated as "Women Creators of the Future" in the program cocurated in collaboration with the LIFF. This theme highlighted both women's emblematic role in creativity and creative economies and women as key agents for change, consistently pushing forward. The festival included 63 films (out of the 450 viewed by the curatorial team), screened several times across different locations (including schools)

and divided into five sections (competing short films, noncompeting shorts, competing feature-length films, noncompeting feature films, and one film category focused on Senegal specifically). The festival also paid tribute to Safi Faye, a pioneering Senegalese filmmaker considered to be the “mother of African cinema” and who passed away just twelve months later, on February 22, 2023.⁴⁵ The program included parallel activities: two master classes and a nine-day intensive film training program called Kino Linguère, done in partnership with the association Esprit Ciné, which provided training to fourteen women. These activities were responsible for making two short films to be screened at the closing ceremony at Canal Olympia Teranga, one of the recently opened cinema venues in Dakar. Finally, the festival program included an international meeting of women working for film festivals, in which they shared practices and explored synergies.

Every film screening was followed with a debate, either with the invited filmmaker or with someone with a certain connection to the film’s topic or its production. Despite its recent decentralization, the festival proved to be a magnet for the cinephile community and a key networking and communal space. The judging panel was carefully and strategically curated, involving key figures in the production and promotion of Senegalese cinema. The 2022 edition, for instance, included Baba Diop, a Senegalese cultural journalist, film critic, and former president of the African Federation of Film Criticism (2009–13); Diabou Bessane Diouf, a Senegalese journalist, filmmaker, and producer; Cornélia Glele, a filmmaker from Benin and the founding director of the Festival International des Films de Femmes de Cotonou; Amélia Mbaye, a Senegalese American actress; and Souleymane Kébé, producer and co-organizer of StLouis’ Docs. These judges attended the festival, watching all public screenings of the feature-length films in competition and leaving during the post-screening discussions, in order not to be influenced by the audience’s feedback, questions, and discussions.

In the following section, I present the results of a data visualization method highlighting the range of locations used in the 2022 FFFA. By detailing the many ways films and filmmakers traveled to audiences and engaged with them that year, this interactive map will hopefully convince practitioners of the benefits of a more decentralized approach to film festivals.

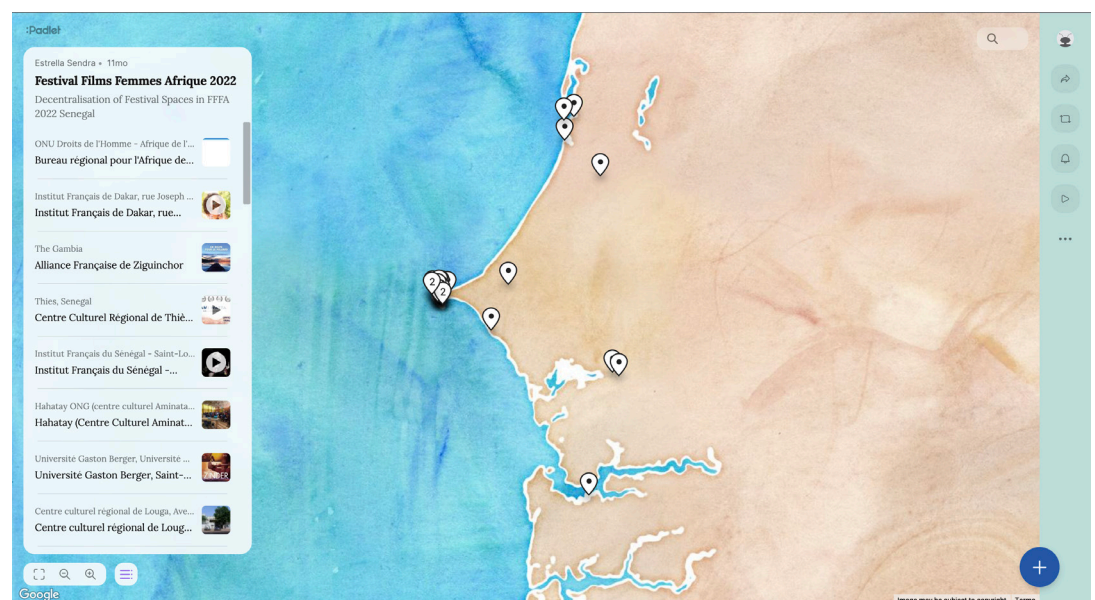


Figure 6. Interactive map of the range of venues in the 2022 FFFA.

46. Anupama Sekhar, "Chapter 5: Re-imagining Mobility for Artists and Cultural Professionals." In *Re/Shaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good* (Paris: UNESCO, 2022), 143.

47. The Care Collective, *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence* (London: Verso, 2020), 5.

48. On our call for decolonization, see Lindiwe Dovey and Estrella Sendra, "Towards Decolonized Film Festival Worlds," in *Rethinking Film Festivals in the Pandemic Era and After*, ed. Marijke de Valck and Antoine Damiens (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 269–89. On the precarity, hierarchy, and inequality in the field, see de Valck, *Film Festivals*, 39, 77; and Skadi Loist, "The Film Festival Circuit: Networks, Hierarchies, and Circulation," in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist (London: Routledge, 2016), 49–64.

49. Amayel Ndiaye, interview.

50. Fatou Kiné Sene, interview by author, March 3, 2022, Dakar.

51. Estrella Sendra, "Bringing Cinema Experiences Back: A Conversation with Armand Fall, Complexe Ousmane Sembène," streamed on March 23, 2022, Vimeo, 14:56.

One of the key findings of the 2022 UNESCO global report on cultural and creative industries was that mobility is "a fundamental part of the professional trajectory of artists of cultural professionals." And yet "global inequality in freedom of movement persists due to unequal distribution of funding and burdensome visa regulations." During the COVID-19 pandemic, with increased restrictions on freedom of movement, there was a continuous reflection on the need to "re-imagine mobility in more digitally accessible, sustainable and environmentally friendly ways."⁴⁶ An activist group formed in 2017, the Care Collective, whose members wrote a Care Manifesto during the pandemic, noted that "the global lockdown has paradoxically given us sudden, fragmented glimpses of how we could create better worlds." They thus issued a call to "put care at the front and centre," which entailed "recognising and embracing our interdependence."⁴⁷ In a similar spirit, Dovey and I issued a call to decolonize the world of film festivals, a field notorious for its precarity, hierarchies, and inequalities—including unequal access.⁴⁸ We invited film festivals across the world to rethink their ways of operating, to engage in anti-racist activism, and to look at creative curatorial and managerial strategies in Africa, such as the decentralization of festival locations.

As the map above shows, the FFFA has expanded across a wide range of locations. The festival now travels to the nineteen different districts of Dakar and to several Senegalese regions, with the goal of "bringing back love for cinema."⁴⁹ This mission has already been achieved, at least to some extent, according to one of the festival collaborators, Fatou Kiné Sene, president of the African Federation of Film Criticism, who features in the map in a video-recorded interview during the festival: "Festivals like Festival Film Femmes Afrique give people an opportunity to see many African films and to talk about them. There are also several events that show that there is a return to cinema venues."⁵⁰ Despite their disappearance in the 1970s, cinema venues are reopening in Dakar, with a project to expand to other regions. This is the case of the Complexe Cinématographique Ousmane Sembène, launched on March 31, 2018, and the CanalOlympia Teranga, inaugurated on May 11, 2017, both home to the festival.⁵¹ These, however, are not the only screens showcasing women as creative agents of the future.

The festival offers an alternative itinerary in public space, a women-led discovery or reappropriation of spaces that may not often be part of audiences' everyday lives. This can be navigated in the map, clicking on each of the points that locate the various festival spaces and venues, including some still and moving images of the events hosted there. In Senegal, while the festival travels to audiences across the capital and regions, audiences are invited to also engage in such circulation by attending screenings in different spaces. As the director and festival organizers introduce the screenings, they acknowledge such accompaniment and endorsement by loyal audiences, referring to them as *festivaliers* (festivalgoers). The repetition of festivalgoers, seen several times across several venues during the festival, represents a caring engagement that fosters the kind of engaged mobile cinema performed at this festival.

The specific locations the festival travels to include cultural associations that have an annual program of cultural activities and training, such as the Maison des Cultures Urbaines, the Centre Socio-culturel de Hann, Centre Socio-Culturel de Sacré-coeur, the Centre-Culture Blaise Senghor, the Centre Culturel Léopold Sédar Senghor in Bountou Pikine, the Centre de Bopp, and the Maison de la Culture Douta Seck, a large space that is home to many festivals and cultural activities in Dakar. It travels to European institutional cultural spaces with physical presence in

52. María Paz Peirano, "Connecting and Sharing Experiences: Chilean Documentary Film Professionals at the Film Festival Circuit," in *Documentary Film Festivals*, vol. 2, *Changes, Challenges, Professional Perspectives*, ed. Aida Vallejo and Ezra Winton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 64.

53. Amayel Ndiaye, interview.

54. Martine Ndiaye, interview.

55. FFFA, *Festival Films Femmes Afrique: Édition 2024, 26 avril-10 mai*, accessed October 17, 2023.

the country, such as the Institut Français or Aula Cervantes. The itinerary includes film-specific spaces, such as Cinéma Empire, one of the few, if not the only, open-air cinema venues from the 1950s–60s still standing in Dakar; the Centre Yennenga, a film hub that has made its mark on the city of Dakar despite its recent establishment; Ciné Banlieue Unité 18, in Parcelles Assainies, a volunteer-run free film school that makes training accessible to young people from the outskirts of Dakar; Ciné Banlieue-UCAD 24, also in Parcelles Assainies, which collaborates with Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar; Keur Yaadikoone, a film club located in Ngor Island; SUP'IMAX (Institut Supérieur des Arts et Métiers du Numérique); Ciné UCAD, at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) in Dakar; the Université Virtuelle du Sénégal; the West African Research Centre; and hotels, associations, and spaces in and beyond Dakar.

The organization of film screenings in these spaces is understood as a reciprocal collaborative practice in that it is beneficial to both parties involved.⁵² On the one hand, it allows the festival to spread its program to audiences with an interest in culture, thanks to the work done by the cultural association in that area. On the other hand, it honors the cultural work led by the cultural association and boosts its visibility among local communities, thus contributing to audience development for both. This collaboration also demonstrates an inclusive and caring managerial strategy, creating a festival for the population, involving cultural actors as chairs, speakers, and hosts while caring for the films that are screened across such spaces, often screened several times during the same festival.

Choosing films to be screened is carefully curated collectively with audiences at the center of the decision-making process. Amayel Ndiaye shed light on how the collaboration works:

We suggest some of the films in our program and most of the time, they choose. In high schools, sometimes, students vote, or a particular teacher selects it. In cine-clubs, for example, they choose a film whose director is someone they have heard of many times, but they have never managed to watch a film by them.... We try to leave, as much as possible, the choice for the films to people who are coming to see them. And they are also accessible for free.⁵³

The festival's complementary nature is crucial to understanding the audience-centered curatorial approach and the goal to make the festival as accessible as possible. Martine Ndiaye further stressed the involvement of women associations in including this festival in the broader negofeminist agenda of the city and country.

We partner up with the women associations in different neighborhoods, so that they take the lead in the organization the evening in their local area.... We give them five or six films and they choose the film and theme. That is a way of mobilizing them. Otherwise it would be hard to make them come to a cinema venue in the center of Dakar. And also, it is a way of allowing filmmakers to meet and connect with those women in different neighborhoods.⁵⁴

Audience figures confirm such an endorsement, with a jump from 3,500 in the first edition in 2003 to over 12,000 people in 2022, according to the festival organizers.⁵⁵

Audience members are not invited as silent passive viewers but, rather, as active interpreters. Discussions often start during the film screening in a collegial environment surrounded by

56. Martine Ndiaye, interview.

57. Iordanova, "Film Festivals and Dissent," 14.

58. Martine Ndiaye, interview.

59. [Rapport sur la Rencontre Internationale des Festivals de Films de Femmes](#), February 26, 2022

practices of care. This became evident in 2022, when the festival took place in a period of unexpected cold weather in the evenings (most screenings take place in the evenings). In Cinéma Empire, for example, after having had to shorten the discussion following the film screening of *Zinder* (directed by Aïcha Macky, 2021, Niger, France, Germany, South Africa)—winner of the Best Feature-Length Film award at the festival—due to the low temperatures (around 21°C, quite rare for the Dakar spring season), blankets were provided for the screening of *En route pour le Milliard / Downstream to Kinshasa* (directed by Dieudo Hamadi, 2020, Democratic Republic of Congo) a couple of days later in the same venue.

Beyond the cracking sound of chairs in which once sat cinephiles of the postindependence period, there is also the added murmur of voices, eager to express themselves, triggered by the stories represented on screen. A dialogical and multilingual active viewing experience is created, prompting another form of movement through the circulation of words. As Martine Ndiaye noted:

In Senegal cinema venues are not characterized by silence. People translate [from French] to the "neighbor" [into a local language, such as Wolof]. There won't be the problem of being "shhh." We can translate. There is a very detailed presentation of the film [in Wolof] so that people can understand the stories. And the debates following are also in Wolof.⁵⁶

Some of the most carefully curated and moderated discussions happened at educational institutions. This is, as Iordanova notes, "a special feature of activist festivals," which aim to "mobilise public opinion and nurture committed cultural citizens."⁵⁷ Martine Ndiaye expressed a high degree of satisfaction at the feedback she received from the high school principals and teachers involved in these screenings: "Whichever high school we went to wanted us to come back in the following festival edition. And we realized that most of these high schools were directed by women. It is no coincidence."⁵⁸ Looking forward, Amayel Ndiaye expressed a desire to decentralize the festival further, not just through space but also through time, by establishing a long-term partnership with the schools in order to host screenings outside of the festival's dates.

This has been somewhat already achieved through the decentralization of the festival with screenings in regions outside of Dakar, an opportunity to engage with the film community beyond the capital. This is why, while I was not able to stay in Senegal during the festival in the regions, I have still mapped these festival spaces. I have in fact intentionally made this map open access and collaborative, with the desire of seeing contributors add festival audiovisual experiences to the map. This collaboration could bring another opportunity for the circulation of these stories, in a dynamic archive, accessible digitally. This approach aligns with the observed decentralization of the festival through digital space. When I was in Dakar, it was common to see WhatsApp and Facebook stories and posts of audience members identifying as "feminist" or "cinephiles," through which they provided visual evidence of their participation in the festival.

The important role of collaboration and decentralization was also evident in one of the events included in the map at the headquarters of the United Nations in Dakar: the first Rencontre internationale des festivals de films de femmes (International Meeting of Women Film Festivals), hosted on Saturday, February 26, 2022.⁵⁹ The meeting was a first step toward sharing practices and thinking of more efficient and productive ways of collaboration among festivals sharing the same theme of women. Participants included Karin Osswald, from the Rencontres

60. Ibid.

61. De Valck, *Film Festivals*, 35.

62. Shekhar Deshpande and Meta Mazaj, *World Cinema: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2018), 135.

Films Femmes Méditerranée, founded in 2006 in Marseille; Hicham Falah, from the Festival international du film de femmes de Salé, created in 2005 in Salé; Cornélia Glele, from the Festival international des films de femmes de Cotonou, launched in 2019 in Cotonou; and Martine Ndiaye and Amayel Ndiaye, from the FFFA.



Figure 7. Panoramic view of the February 26, 2022, Rencontre internationale des festivals de films de femmes at the UN headquarters in Dakar.

Other participants included filmmakers, film critics, journalists, educators, and managers of cinema venues who shared ideas around the potential ways of collaborating and the important educational role of festivals in a context of structural marginalization, through limited access to funding opportunities and global distribution networks. During this one-day *rencontre*, participants discussed four main themes: the creation of a network of women film festivals; audiovisual education through cinema and for our societies; the female gaze in cinema in our societies; and independence, sustainability, and private and public funding. The final aim of all sections, according to the FFFA, was to “create and consolidate, with all the festivals, an international collective of women’s film festivals in which we will subsequently invite all the women’s film festivals people to join us.”⁶⁰ The event was an opportunity to reflect on the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities faced by all festivals. In this case, the exchange was a form of decentralizing the specific work by the FFFA to other regions where more women film festivals are hosted. At the same time, the *rencontre* was a crowd-sourced public reflection on what such a network could entail. Some of the aspects considered included the cocreating of a shared festival calendar, so that no festival clashes with another, broadening collaboration between Anglophone and Francophone Africa, sharing films and enjoying localized networks in each of the festivals, accessing funding collectively, and sharing the costs of subtitle production. These discussions demonstrated the need to build new, localized circuits in Senegal, able to respond to the increasing number of film productions.

Forging Fruitful Circuits for Senegalese Films: The Example of *La Danse des Béquilles* (The dance of the crutches) by Yoro Lidel Niang

As de Valck notes, “by travelling the circuit, a film can accumulate value via the snowball effect. The more praise, prizes and buzz a film attracts, the more attention it is likely to receive at other festivals.”⁶¹ As mentioned above, being selected for a festival legitimizes a film and gives it cultural value. This value is enhanced through the existence of a competitive section, with awards. Award-winning films can experience longer circulation. Festivals thus become “a key force in the film business, and a central platform for the exhibition and distribution of international cinema.”⁶² This is even more so the case within the context of films that could be marginalized from two perspectives: being African and women-led.

63. Estrella Sendra, "La Danza de las Muletas, Mejor Cortometraje en el Festival Films Femmes Afrique en Senegal," *Wiriko*, March 9, 2022.

64. Yoro Lidel Niang, interview by author, March 8, 2022, WhatsApp.

65. The film director was also present at the Brussels International Film Festival, on behalf of a friend, a Togolese filmmaker.

Some of the films screened and awarded at the 2022 FFFA added a further intersectional approach to women's stories, receiving great criticism from audience and jury members alike. An illustrative example is *La Danse des Béquilles* (The dance of the crutches) (directed by Yoro Lidel Niang, 2021, Senegal), awarded the Best Short Film among the thirteen short films in the competitive short film section. The judging panel differed from the panel for the feature-length film screenings in that, for the first time, it was composed of several Dakar-based high school students. *La Danse des Béquilles* is a remarkable story of feminism and ability, led by Penda, a woman who dares to challenge all stereotypes associated with her physical impairment.⁶³ A lover of dance, she decides to join a dance group. Over the course of the film, she is able to take life into her own hands, sustaining herself as a professional dancer and providing for her mother. The director, Yoro Lidel Niang, was inspired by his own personal experience, having faced continuous social obstacles due to his physical impairment. When interviewed about the significance of the award, he stated: "For me it is important, due to the level of the festival and the quality of the films. A prize like this motivates us to keep working even harder. Already participating is an honor, so even more so to have been awarded."⁶⁴ His statement confirms the value added to films earning awards at festivals and the long-term impact these awards can have on film careers, decentralizing them also over time and not just in terms of space.

The film, which was a debut short film by the Senegalese filmmaker, had already received the Best Actress Award at the Festival Dakar Court in December 2021. During the festival, it was screened twice, in the Museum of Black Civilizations and in Centre Culturel Léopold Sédar Senghor in Bountou Pikine, also known as ARCOTS Pikine, on the outskirts of Dakar. Its circulation had been growing beyond the festival dates, accumulating additional awards along the way. Later in March, the film was seen at the DC Francophonie Festival in Washington and at Keur Yaadikoone (a film club), in Ngor Island, in Dakar, along with a master class. The following month, from April 1 to 10, 2022, the film and director traveled to Canada for the 38th Festival International de Cinéma Vues d'Afrique, where the film received the Special Mention for the Best Medium/Short Fiction Film. In June and July 2022, the film traveled to the Dakar-based Festival de cinéma Les Téranga, accumulating two more awards: for Best Short Film and Best Actress.⁶⁵ As I wrote this article, the film had just been nominated in three categories (Best Short Film, Best Script, and Best Actress) at the Congo Filmz Awards, hosted in August 2022.

Alongside this circulation, the film has also mobilized audiences around a debate on working as a professional dancer; on the importance and real possibility of being self-sufficient as a woman; and on accessibility issues in contemporary public spaces, institutions, and societies. These are the reasons why it is possible to speak of festivals as a form of engagé mobile cinema, in continuity with the efforts by pioneering Senegalese filmmakers to bring African cinema to African audiences. This engagé mobile cinema raises awareness about key issues concerning Senegalese society and African people in the world, while promoting national and African cinema.



Figure 8. Filmmakers Yoro Lidel Niang (left) and Mamanding Kote (center) with festival director Martine Ndiaye (right), during the discussion following the first screening of *La Danse des Béquilles* on February 27, 2022, at the Museum of Black Civilizations in Dakar.

Conclusion: Boosting Circulation through Festivals

This article has offered an analysis of a key audience-centered curatorial and managerial strategy, namely, the decentralization of festival spaces. It has examined how festivals can be perceived as a form of engagé mobile cinema, in continuity with mobile cinema initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s and postindependence efforts by pioneering African filmmakers to find audiences for African cinema, as a way of decolonizing the gaze. By creating an open access crowd-sourced map of festival spaces in Senegal, I have sought to intervene not just theoretically but also methodologically, outlining the opportunities offered by data visualization methods in the production of knowledge. The ever-unfinished map boosts the circulation of words and audiovisual accounts of festival experiences by diverse participants, thus adding multiple directions in the range of journeys favored by this festival. I have specifically referred to how the decentralization of the festival spaces initiates a circuit for films screened at the festival, viewed and interpreted collectively at several venues. This favors the circulation toward festivals internationally, increased through the accumulation of awards and critics. Film is a medium embracing orality, inspiring filmmakers and scholars alike to refer to filmmakers as “screen griots,” that is, storytellers responsible for preserving and transferring heritage through the screen.⁶⁶ Film festivals thus are naturally responsible for opening up spaces for the spoken word, as claimed by Amayel Ndiaye. With this article, I hope to open up further space for discussion and practice, by contributing to the circulation of the audience-centered strategy of the decentralization of festival spaces. This may not just encourage further research on festival audiences but also become inspiring, as festivals rethink their formats toward more inclusivity, diversity, and sustainability.

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