Panel V: The Spatial Turn and Mediated Popular Culture (chairs/coordinators: Hilde Arntsen & Ylva Ekström)

This panel addresses two main and interrelated topics: First, the panel seeks papers that investigate mediated popular culture grounded in empirical cultural analysis. Second, the panel seeks to problematise the implications of spatial parameters to cultural analysis in our own research practice. Together the dual aim of the panel addresses various approaches to the study of mediated popular culture in African settings. Within the Nordic research communities, there are a number of researchers who investigate various aspects of popular culture in African countries. How does the geographical setting of either the researcher or the research material impact on the research that is being carried out? How does one conceptualise popular cultural topics when being based in geographical settings far from the research material? How do concurrent processes of globalisation and localisation interact and impact on the research? This panel combines papers which addresses these questions in a critical manner.

1) Hilde Arntsen (University of Bergen, Norway)

2) Ylva Ekström (Malmoe University, Sweden)

3) Ronit Frenkel (University of Johannesburg, South Africa): Time Space South Africa: New Transnational Fictions.

"…the citiness of cities, the ways in which they gather, mix, remix, separate, conceal and display and the ways in which urban life becomes the irreducible product of mixture." (Sarah Nuttall 2004:731) Shifting notions of urban spaces in African literature, new South African writings are changing understandings of the relationship between space and transnational connectivity. South African literatures have often examined questions of physical space due to colonial and apartheid expropriations of land. While much has been written on the historical quagmire of dispossession, little focus has been placed on post-apartheid inscriptions and reinscriptions of the relationship between space and memory. Using the cityscape as a palimpsest to examine ideas of change, I argue that the relationship between space and memory (where the self is defined), becomes one where memory is a space, in post-apartheid fiction. The relationship between 'real' and imagined urban spaces, as unbounded interior landscapes and ambiguous exterior landscapes, is explored through Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow*, Kgebetli Moele's Room 207 and Ceridwen Dovey's *Bloodkin.* The novels I will discuss circle around issues of place, space and power. These texts comprise a set of related perspectives that inscribe meaning across times and spaces. I argue that a palimpsestic reading of this fiction opens up the possibility of reconceptualising the relationship between space, place and transnational connectivity. Each of the texts under discussion writes the space of the city as a type of situated transnationalism where the local and the global exist as coeval discourses of signification. I am not focused on the relationship between here and there, or now and then, but am rather interested in mapping a type of current cultural history through an engagement with matters of place and space, rather than with relations of difference or sameness. The fecundity of a palimpsestic reading lies in the revelation of how one transitional experience is already present in another. By reinscribing one discursive act over another, the ruptures and continuities between textualizations reveals a wealth of mirrorings, reversals, overlays and mismatches that, I argue, define transnational South African literature.

4) Musa Ndlovu (University of Cape Town, South Africa): South African Media's Expansion into African Space: Is the Representation of the Continent Changing?

This paper examines South African media's expansion into the rest of the African Continent's space, particularly the SADC region. In this examination, the focus is mostly on print and broadcast media. The article argues that so far South African media expansion, limited as is, has been examined exclusively within the political economy theoretical framework. Lacking has been an exploration of the manner in which South African media (re)construct imaginations of Africa as a socio-cultural space. In this regard, this paper explores, through content analysis and interviews, how certain South African media represent the African Continent as a socio-cultural space. At the theoretical level, the article identifies some limitations with analytical frame works such as dependency paradigm, media and cultural imperialism in explaining regional expansionism driven by Southern-based national media organisations.

5) Mari Maasilta (University of Tampere, Finland): Mediated stories of war and immigration – opportunities for sharing and distancing

News, fiction films and TV serials about conflicts and wars transmit western audiences images about the reasons for political and economic immigration. However, there are differences in the ways how the stories of suffering are narrated. Could films and other fiction genres offer more opportunities for personal identification than news narrative, which often produces apathy and feeling of outsideness? This paper presents a new research project, which aims to analyze the narration of suffering and violence in relation to immigration in audiovisual media and to explore the reception of these images among different female groups. Women and children are usually the first victims of war, even if they rarely are active participants or initiators in conflicts. But are their experiences depicted in the media? How do women interpret the stories told about different wars? The main research questions are related to the possibilities of different audiovisual genres to create global compassion and sense of solidarity and to mobilize political activism. Is it possible for those who have not themselves experienced the terrors of war to cross ethnic and national borders with those who have by recognizing and sharing common human emotions and values through the media? The study will apply participatory research methods, including interactions, media education workshops and storytelling groups combined with textual analysis and focus group interviews. It will be a systematic in-depth study of a small group of (female) immigrants from selected countries and a group of mainstream Finnish (female) population. Both groups will include women who have either personally experienced and escaped wars and conflicts or who have only mediated experiences about such situations. In my presentation I will focus on the African case. The female participants will most probably be either Somali or Congolese and the fiction material to be analyzed the film *Hotel Rwanda* (2004).

6) Terje S. Skjerdal (Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication, Kristiansand, Norway): Recent developments in Ethiopian media regulation: Liberalization vs domination

Ethiopia has been through a number of changes in communication and media regulation over the past few years. The media proclamation (2008) has received the most attention, but important developments have also been witnessed in the new broadcasting proclamation (2007), the dismantling of the Ministry of Information (2008), the establishment of the Office for Government Communication Affairs (2009), the merger between Ethiopian Television

and Ethiopian Radio (2009), and more. The moves can be read in different terms from a media policy perspective in that there are co-existing trends towards both liberalization/market-orientation and state control/domination. The aim of this paper is to analyse the developments in media regulation in light of internationally recognized theories of state engagement in the media and communication sector. Comparisons will be made against other African countries which have experienced changes in media regulation and media landscapes similar to the Ethiopian. Of particular interest is the overall issue of whether the media in Ethiopia are primarily viewed and employed by the authorities as a prolonging of the political sphere, an instrument for national development, or an opening for the fourth estate.