

Applied Cinema and Social Cohesion: Promoting Gender Equity through Film for Development among the Kom of North West Cameroon

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Abstract

Angewandtes Kino nutzt das Filmemachen als Mittel zur sozialen Intervention in verschiedenen Gemeinschaften. Der Ansatz „Film for Development“ (FfD) bringt benachteiligte Menschen zusammen, gibt ihnen Raum zur Reflexion ihrer Lage und zum Brainstormen von Lösungen und ermöglicht so neue Narrative und ein partizipatives Filmemachen, das die Öffentlichkeit für ihre Erzählungen sensibilisiert. Diese Forschungsarbeit nutzt den FfD-Ansatz, um Geschlechtergerechtigkeit in der Gesellschaft der Kom im Nordwesten Kameruns zu fördern. Folgende Fragen sucht die Arbeit zu beantworten: Durch welche soziokulturellen Praktiken der Kom-Gesellschaft werden Frauen ausgeschlossen? Wie kann aus Sicht der Frauen ihre Einbindung in die Kom-Gesellschaft gefördert werden? Wie können Strategien zur Einbindung von Frauen in einem Film dargestellt werden, der die Gemeinschaft sensibilisieren soll?

Durch den Einsatz von teilnehmender Beobachtung, Gruppendiskussionen und Interviews mit Schlüsselpersonen hat diese Studie zwei Kategorien von Praktiken, die Frauen ausschließen, aufgezeigt: Die erste schließt Praktiken mit ein, die von den traditionellen Führern der Gemeinschaft befürwortet werden, die zweite jene, die von diesen Führern aktiv bekämpft werden. Weiterhin wurden Vorschläge von Gesprächspartnern zum Empowerment von Frauen mit den Mitteln teilnehmender Dramaturgie in einen gemeinschaftlichen Film eingebracht. An diesem Punkt findet diese Arbeit auch Übereinstimmungen mit kultureller Bildung auf informeller Ebene, besonders aus funktionaler und lerntheoretischer Perspektive.

Der Artikel basiert auf den Ergebnissen einer Dissertation im Rahmen des Graduiertenkollegs „[Performing Sustainability. Cultures and Development in West-Africa](#)“ der Universität Hildesheim (Deutschland), der Universität Maiduguri (Nigeria) und der Universität Cape Coast (Ghana). Die Stipendiat*innen untersuchen aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive die Rolle von Kunst und Kultureller Bildung in Konfliktsituationen in Westafrika. Das Graduiertenkolleg wird von 2016 bis 2025 vom DAAD aus Mitteln des Bundesministeriums für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) gefördert.

Abstract (Original)

Applied Cinema uses filmmaking as a means of social intervention in communities. The Film for Development (FfD) variant first brings together disadvantaged people to reflect on their predicaments and brainstorm on solutions, resulting in story creation and the making of a participatory film that sensitizes the public for their stories. This study used the FfD approach to promote gender equity among the Kom Society of North West Cameroon. The study sought to answer the following questions: Which socio-cultural practices in Kom Society exclude women? What are women's views on how to foster their inclusion in the Kom society? How can strategies for the inclusion of women be presented in a community sensitization film? Using participant observation, focus group discussions and key informant interviews, this study revealed two categories of practices that exclude women. The first includes those endorsed by the traditional leaders (institutional practices), while the second includes those actively fought against by the traditional leaders. Suggestions from respondents on how to empower women in Kom were further woven into a community film through participatory dramaturgy. It is at this point that this work tallies with Arts Education, especially from a functional and learning perspective, at the informal level.

Introduction

The Kom tribe is one of several Tikar tribes of the western highlands of Cameroon, said to have originated from Tikari, Ndobu, Kimi or Rifum, somewhere between present day Adamawa State of Nigeria and the North Region of Cameroon (see Neba 1987:53). Today, the Kom are located in Boyo Division of the North West Region of Cameroon, some twenty-five kilometers west of Bamenda, the North West regional capital. Although Kom is matrilineal, the traditional ruling authority is vested in men. The paramount ruler (the *Foyn*), his advisors and judicial arm (the *Kwifoyn*), continue to be the most respected leaders in the community despite the existence of District Officers who represent the central Cameroonian government.

Women in Kom have limited access to land, property and decision-making positions. This is as a result of socio-cultural practices that have presented the women as a piece of property, an asset and second-grade members within family circles and the community at large. Males hold the vast majority of power and privilege, while females labor mostly in domestic roles in kitchens and on farms (see Nsom 2015:1). This exclusion is also seen in the family succession system which does not permit women to inherit property, but rather places the woman and her children as part of the deceased' estate

Theoretical Perspectives: Liberal Feminism and Apparatus Theory

Feminism is a societal theory on gender whose objective is to generate support for social equality between men and women, while working against sexism and patriarchy. According to Macionis (see Macionis 2010) feminism has three groups in theory: radical Feminism - which advocates for family systems to end; liberal Feminism - defends the equality of opportunity; and Marxist/Socialist Feminism - which advocates for gender roles and social classes to end. In the context of this work, the liberal feminism perspective has been adopted, given that this work seeks to negotiate avenues for equal opportunities for men and women in the Kom society through applied cinema approaches, which will enable women to be in control of their own lives. From the premise that society is patriarchal, structured in a way that favors men (Macionis 1989:21), traditional ways of thinking as have been analyzed in this work culturally support the subordination of women, leading to the neglect or unserious consideration of issues affecting women.

Jean-Louis Baudry developed the mirror analogy as a way of revisiting perspective in cinema and its ideological implications (see Baudry 1970). In *Effets idéologiques de l'appareil de base* ("Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus") Baudry observes that through the adoption of greater realism, more secular subject matter, and an increasingly marked individualism of style art has conditioned the perspectives of the general spectators. This conditioning of perspective gets adapted to theories of the cinematic apparatus by offering the film spectator an omniscient unitary point of view, thus reinforcing the notion of subject as a free individual. Apparatus theory thus combines aspects of Marxist film theory, semiotics, and psychoanalysis; maintaining that cinema is by nature ideological because its mechanics of representation are ideological. The meaning of a film plus the way the viewing subject is constructed and the mechanics of the actual process and production of making the film affect the representation of the subject. To this effect the cinematic experience affects the viewer on a deep level. These viewers identify with the characters on screen so strongly that they become susceptible to ideological positioning. It is this capacity of film to influence ideological positioning that guided the production of the community film of this study, as strategies for women's inclusion discussed were carefully constructed in the film with the objective to make more conscious of the challenges faced by women in the society.

Qualitative Methodological Approach

This research was essentially qualitative, from a constructivist episteme, using the ethnographic approach. This approach was suitable because it is designed to examine groups with "shared patterns of behavior, beliefs and language with much larger units of analysis" (Creswell 2014:90). Specifically, this work also falls within the parameters of critical ethnography. This refers to an ethnographic approach in which the researcher seeks to "emancipate marginalized groups in society, or speak out against inequality and domination" (Creswell 2014:93). Participant observation, focus group discussions with women's groups, and key informant interviews with traditional leaders and elites enabled me to gather the necessary data on women's exclusion in the Kom society.



Abb. 1: Focus Group Discussion with ABADU (Abassakom Area Development Union), one of the regional associations of Kom land



Abb. 2: Focus Group Discussion with BADU (Belo Area Development Union), one of the regional associations of Kom land

Socio-Cultural Practices That Exclude Women in Kom

Globally, communities interpret biological differences between men and women to create a set of social expectations that define the behaviors that are "appropriate" for men and women and determine women's and men's different access to rights, resources, power in society and health behaviors (see Galdas et al

2010:12). Others think that although gender and sex are separate concepts, they are interlinked in that gender discrimination often results from stereotypes based on what is expected of members of each sex (see Greenberg 1999:31).

In the discussions with women's groups, traditional leaders and elites of Kom, practices that exclude appeared to be in two categories, which are classified here as institutional and non-institutional. While the institutional practices benefit from the public endorsement of the Kom traditional leadership, the non-institutional ones emanate from the wrong or egoistic implementation of some of the customary laws and traditions by selfish individuals for personal gains, hence not endorsed by the Kom traditional leadership.

Institutional Socio-Cultural Practices that Exclude Women

One of the most glaring practices of women's exclusion in Kom society is their exclusion from political positions. Unlike with most of the grievances expressed by the women, when it came to political positions in Kom the women usually talked in a resigned manner, which seemed to suggest that they have come to accept their fate. One of the respondents in the Njinikom Area Development and Cultural Organization (NADECO) women's group put it this way: "Actually, the Kom tradition does not give any place to the woman, because in terms of hierarchy you have the *foyn* (ruler), the *Nchisido* (palace guards) etc but you won't find women at any level. I don't really know how women can be fitted in because it comes from the top" (NADECO FGD, personal communication, 22/09/2018). However, what the respondents were really uncomfortable with is not having a say even at the family level: "As a woman, even in your marital home your husband will not even give you space to have a say. He will keep oppressing you under the pretext that he is the head of the household." (NADECO FGD, personal communication, 22/09/2018). This subjugation of the woman at home may not be endorsed by the traditional leadership in Kom, but it is inspired by the public policy that seems to underscore that women are supposed to be seen and not heard.

Another prominent aspect of women's exclusion in the Kom society is exclusion from land ownership. The traditional land tenure system in Kom is based on two main principles: that the *foyn* is the titular owner of land, and that "the defacto control of land, both arable and residential is exercised by the village and lineage heads" (Nkwi 1976:59). Real owners of land in Kom are thus the village, lineage and family heads. The custom is for a man to give land to his sons to settle on, and if a man does not have land to give his sons, he would assist them to acquire elsewhere. If this does not happen, the sons turn to their matrikin for parcels of land. What this clearly suggests is that women in Kom cannot lay claims to ancestral lands since they do not have rights to inheritance.

Also, successors are expected to have sexual relationships with the widows. Following the matrilineal system in Kom, when a man dies, his brother or nephew (sister's son) takes over as family head, taking over the deceased's estates; widows and children inclusive. One of the younger women in the Abassakom Area Development Union (ABADU) complained: "I think the whole issue of brother or nephew succeeding is because the successor is expected to have a sexual relationship with the widow(s) but this should not happen in the modern world. It should depend on whether the widow accepts it or not" (ABADU FGD, personal communication, 21/09/2018). This indicates that although the customs allow it, the women themselves would rather want to decide for themselves with who to continue their lives with after the death of their husbands. But unfortunately, since the customs permit it, failure to comply sometimes attracts

negative consequences, as one of the ABADU women explains: “[...] the successor may meet a widow and start sleeping with her, against her will. When you refuse his advances, he will start maltreating you.” (ABADU FGD, personal communication, 21/09/2018).

Furthermore, for any marriage to become effective in Kom, the man has to meet certain requirements as laid down by the Kom tradition. He must pay a bride price to the family of the girl. However, some men have transformed the bride price from a simple exchange of gifts to an actual market scenario where money invested in the mother has to be recouped through the daughter(s), like one of the women in the Belo Area Development Union (BADU) focus group discussion admitted: “[...] there are specific prices in some families. The bride price of the mother determines what the bride price of the daughter would be.” (BADU FDG, personal communication, 18/09/2018). Perhaps, this practice might not have posed a social problem if it did not provide loopholes for unscrupulous men to exaggerate the amount to be given as bride price, since the bride price value for that family is only known to the family.

Non-Institutional Socio-Cultural Practices that Exclude Women

Discussions with Kom traditional leaders revealed that some of the sociocultural practices decried by the women are equally frowned upon by the traditional leaders. In all three FGDs with the women, the most recurrent such complaints was the poor treatment of widows by successors, especially their eviction from their late husband's estates. One of the *Nformeis* (Inspector of warrior groups) was very categorical on the subject: “[...] the Kom tradition does not ask people to treat widows poorly. That's why there are successors - to indicate that the father of the compound is still there. But people come and put more value to material things. Things that do not speak” (Interview: personal communication, 18/12/2018).

This remark shows that dispossessing a widow of her husband's estates is not a dictate of the Kom customary laws. Unfortunately, there seems to be an increasing number of such cases, as this NADECO woman explained:

Some nephews just come because of property. He would send away the widow and even the children. He won't even bother whether the kids are going to school or not. Then he would take the lands on which the children could build and sell. Some would even send away the widow from her farms then give them out on rent. (NADECO FGD, personal communication, 22/09/2018.)

This excerpt suggests that some successors now use the inherited estates as a source of income for themselves to the detriment of the widows and children and prefer to put the deceased farms on rent so as to raise money.

Another non-institutional practice is the neglect of widows and children by successors. Succession in Kom is not just about rights, but mainly about responsibilities. The widow and children are not supposed to feel the absence of the deceased, as the successor is expected to provide for their needs. Unfortunately, some successors neglect their material and spiritual responsibilities in the inherited estates. A widow and children may struggle on their own to meet material needs but the spiritual leadership will be impossible without the father since it can only be provided for the family by a father. This spiritual leadership intervenes at three levels: healing, blessing and intercession with the ancestors. In Kom, it is believed that a father is the direct

representative of God, so children need regular blessings from their fathers to succeed in life, or to get well when afflicted with illness.

On healing:

A father can use wood ash collected from where fire is made in Nawain's (mother's) house to bless a child "*si chiti wayn*". This act will be performed when the child is sick or experiencing some threats, and in the act the father is pleading to the ancestors for a quick recovery of the child. The act can also be performed when the child has an important mission to accomplish, and in this act the father will be pleading to the ancestors to bless the child with wisdom and courage so as to accomplish the awaited task (see Nsom 2015:91).

On blessing:

The father can use his traditional cup to sip wine for the child. This will be in a situation where the father is happy with the general behavior of the child or when the father is unhappy. In the first situation, the father will sip wine to the child as a sign of love. The father is by this act approving the conduct of the child and encouraging him to work harder. In this case the act is referred to as "*si mu'miluh*". In the second case the father will sip as a sign of reconciliation with the child. In this case, the sipping act is referred to as "*si chu'miluh*" which means washing away the bad thoughts focused on the child (see Nsom 2015:91).

On intercession:

The father can offer the necessary sacrifices needed by the ancestors if certain things are going wrong in the compound such as illness, deaths or disturbances from evil spirits. In all such situations it could be required that the father offers some sacrifices to the ancestors in some specific manner (see Nsom 2015:91).

These excerpts clearly outline the spiritual roles of fathers in compounds in Kom, and successors are expected to play these roles to make sure that persons living in that compound live healthily and that the children are progressing in their daily lives. By not performing their spiritual tasks, successors thus fail to ensure the survival of individuals in their new families.

Another non-institutional practice that excludes women in Kom society is forced marriages. According to Kom tradition, marriage is a union between two people of the opposite sex. At the level of the bride's family, the decision to endorse the marriage is an inclusive one mostly led by the women:

The middle person will address the mother of the girl in a low soft tone of voice. "Nini, I have come to beg a kola nut". This simply means, seeking for their daughter's hand in marriage. The mother with head bowed in deep meditation will listen to these words. The mother after much thought and reflection will request for a second visit. The middle person can be told to pay a third or even a fourth visit when she comes for the second visit, just to test her patience and the young man's love for the daughter. If the girl persists in her willingness to marry the man in question then the opinion of the other family members is sought, and should any of them give a contrary view with solid reasons the whole affair has to be suspended, for further investigations

(Nkwi 1986:5).

This explanation reveals two key issues. The first is that the girl has to be willing to marry the man, and the second is that the opinion of other family members is sought before finalizing the union. Some men in Kom simply force their daughters to marry their friends, friends' children or creditors as a means of repaying their debts. In such cases, neither the opinion of the girl, her mother nor the other family members is sought, contrary to the traditions in force.

High bride price is another issue in Kom that oppresses women. The giving of a bride price in Kom serves the role of acquiring the woman's fertility. Consequently, when a woman accepts that bride price be collected by her father, it means that she has somewhat surrendered some of her fertility rights to the husband. "If she decides to abandon the husband thus putting an end to the marriage union, she goes alone and leaves the children with the husband" (Nsom 2015:113). It is thus believed in Kom that a woman taken without any bride price paid may develop fertility issues in her marital home, especially if the woman's father is discontented with the union. This is what most greedy men use to forcefully collect high bride prices on their daughters. Cases abound of men who treat their wives as slaves claiming they "bought" them, due to the high bride prices they paid. Fathers tend to charge higher over girls with a higher level of education, which suggests that Kom men do not educate their daughters because they want to give them chances for a better life, but rather feel that they are investing money which must be recouped in future.

This also indicates that girls are considered as assets to the family because they would bring fortunes to the family when they eventually get married, so investing in their education is optional.

Community Filmmaking Workshop - A Practical Research Approach

The approach adopted for this work aligns with that of Samba (2016), Tume (2015) and Chinyowa (2014). While Samba followed the footsteps of Bretch and Boal to tackle situations of dictatorial socio-political systems to demonstrate that the idea is not just to serve as the voice of the voiceless, but also to educate on strategies for an alternative life, Tume (2015) emphasized on how People Theatre practice appropriates new information and communication technology into local settings as an expressive and affirmative medium. This is the same rationale behind the community film that is associated with this work.

From the initial contact with the respondents (women's groups, traditional leaders and elites) it was made clear that at the end of the research exercise there was going to be a joint presentation of suggestions raised during the focus group discussions and discussions in a community film.

Preliminary Motivations about Film as a Sensitization Tool

There was need to know if the participants were conscious of the potentials of film as a sensitization tool, so as to determine if they actually believe in the underlying reasons behind the making of the film. To kickstart the workshop, a discussion point was articulated as follows: What are your views and experiences on film as a means of sensitization?

The women were very convinced that a film would be an interesting and effective way to make their voices heard. One woman put it this way:

I love Nigerian films till date because of my father. You know how Kom men are. When he saw a film in which children are obedient, he would rent it and bring it to the house. Then he would play it for us. [...] When he saw an educative film, he would rent it for me, since I am the only girl among my siblings. Then he would keep asking: "Have you seen? Be careful with what your mother says". Not that my mother is a bad woman, he just thought that women spoil children. So, I think films can be educating. (Film workshop, personal communication, 18/09/2018)

The above experience also brings out two main issues related to this work. The first is that even the men in Kom had long since understood the power of film as an educative medium, as can be seen through the attitude of the respondent's father. The second issue raised is the lack of communication and harmony that sometimes characterize Kom married couples, as well as the tendency of Kom men to underestimate the competence of women in disciplining their children.

Another woman put it this way:

Sometimes you watch a movie and you have the impression that it was made for you. Sometimes you watch a movie and you cry because you saw something that was within you and you did not know how to voice it out. That's when you know that film is reality, the lives some people live; though presented in the form of a film. (Film workshop, personal communication, 18/09/2018.)

Here, we see a woman talking from a consumer perspective. She is convinced that films often capture issues in real life that engage and educate the audience. Most importantly she thinks that film gives voice to the voiceless as it expresses "something that was within you and you did not know how to voice it out". This understanding therefore explains the women's enthusiasm in participating in the film from this study, which they believe would make their voices heard in the Kom community.

The traditional leaders and elites were equally very receptive to the idea of using film as a tool for mass education in the Kom community. One of them put it this way:

I think film is a very powerful medium for social change. I mentioned the strange way couples dress during traditional weddings in Kom today. I think they have been heavily influenced by Nigerian films which have flooded our society. If some of you filmmakers from Kom can do films even in the Kom language that emphasize certain salient aspect of the Kom culture, the pivotal place of the woman in the Kom traditional setting and how to be truly Kom in our daily lives, women will regain their power in the Kom society. They will know that the camwood that holds the Kom society is in the hands of the woman. They will know that the calabash, water and the peace plant that keep Kom together are all in the hands of the woman. All these things, if brought to light through film, will enable the Kom society to come back to terms with the real place of the woman in the Kom society. (Interview: 10/01/2018, personal communication)

This testimony reflects the increasing discomfort of elites and traditional leaders in Kom and elsewhere in anglophone Cameroon where the influx and availability of Nollywood films (major film industry in Nigeria) is beginning to have a heavy toll on the customs of the people. This elite for example points out the fact that traditional weddings in Kom nowadays mostly reflect what obtains in Ibo land (a community in South-East

Nigeria, who are the majority in Nollywood), rather than Kom culture, and this is because of the influence of Nollywood films.

The Story Creation Process

It was practically impossible to get all the suggested solutions to women's exclusion into the 36 minutes film to be produced, so there had to be a prioritization of suggestions. The first exercise was to outline general orientations that define the skeleton or spine of the story before going into the specifics.

At the level of the story line, consensus was on creating a central female character that pulls the film from the beginning till the end. The women expressed the wish for a female super hero who defies the odds against her to defend the truth and protect her rights. Theoretically, this reflects, to a greater extent, the assertions of De Lauretis, who specifically poses the question of how to theorize gender beyond the limits of *sexual difference* (De Lauretis 1987). Drawing from Foucault's theory of sexuality as a *technology of sex*, De Lauretis thinks that gender, both as representation and as self-representation, is the product of various social technologies, such as cinema, as well as institutional discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices; which means it is not only academic criticism, but more broadly social and cultural practices.

This adopted, the next step was to map out the most important issues to be handled. Emphasis was to be on solutions, not the problems, because, as one woman put it: "Everybody knows about the problems already. We need to give them the solutions" (Film workshop, personal communication, 18/09/2018). Some suggested solutions were thus adopted for the story, notably; girls should not be forced into marriage, and a few others.

The story created was to be anchored on these points. As brainstorming continued with members acting out past experiences related to the points highlighted above, a simple story was developed: **Nange**, an educated woman, intends to defend her rights despite all the odds against her. She won't surrender her lands to her father's successor and wins the case at the village court. This simple story was further expanded, then the group agreed on how the events were to be arranged from beginning to end, which constituted the plot. Next, they inserted plot points that usher in change of action within the story. After the plot points were determined, the scenes were mapped out - giving a brief outline of what was going to happen in each scene as the story progressed.

After outlining the plot, plot points and scenes, the facilitator took off some days to write the script in order to save time, paying particular attention to the message of each scene or group of scenes, the circumstances around the scenes as discussed with the participants, as well as the various needs of the scenes like locations, costumes and accessories. The script was then read out to the hearing of all in the next session, and necessary adjustments were affected as members chipped in further contributions before the production phase started.

The Film Production Process with the Community

After the final script was read and adopted, the film production itself had to begin. To bring the script to life, the first step was staging, and with people who do not usually participate in filmmaking, it is a particularly daunting task. As the women progressively received positive comments on their performance during

rehearsals, it boosted their self-confidence. The staging period also helped us to confirm the cast for the most important roles, based on ability to perform. There was no problem here because during the rehearsals, everyone could see who is doing better, so the confirmation of the major cast was a collective responsibility.

Once the staging was fairly satisfactory, the shooting phase began. Principal photography took five days. The major challenge was with crowd scenes, as it was difficult to get people to leave their daily activities that helped them earn a living in the capital city to come for crowd scenes. Also, some 'actors' would not come on time or not show up at all due to unexpected calls for business opportunities. Principal shooting was completed successfully in five days and editing followed.

Implementing Community Empowerment through Film making and Arts Education

At the end of the shoot, many of the participants expressed excitement at having learned a lot on the process of making a film. This was an indication that the research project achieved the objective of empowering the community on how to mobilize themselves and tell their own stories. It should be noted that what links all Theatre for Development (TfD)/ Film for development (FfD) approaches is community empowerment, and this study could not be an exception. Some of the elites were even proposing that they could sponsor a film group that is dedicated to putting the Kom culture on screen for the younger generation to see, especially at a time when many Kom children are growing up in the urban areas and have very little touch with their roots. It is therefore evident from the reactions captured above that the Kom people understand the strategic role of filmmaking as a means of cultural mediation and reinforcement. The reactions also suggest that community mobilization through film is a crucial aspect of Arts Education to consider.

A few weeks after the production, the researcher brought the community together to show them the film and get their reactions. The objective was to measure the susceptibility of the community to change, especially the traditional leaders and elites. As expected, the "actors" were very excited to see themselves on screen, as all of them had never acted even in a sketch before. Other spectators were equally marveled at seeing regular persons they meet daily on screen, a sort of demystification of the screen amongst the audience. The watching session was consequently very far from the conventional silent viewing with popcorn and all. It was rowdy, more like the watching of a live comedy on a stage as viewers laughed, commented and hailed "actors" present.



Abb. 3: Movie screening for the Kom community

The major worry was if the traditional leaders and elites present would be able to get the main issues proposed by the film in the midst of such excitement. The feedback session that followed was quite satisfying as comments spanned across all the issues that were raised in the film. The women from the focus group discussions were generally satisfied with how the issues they raised during the previous focus group discussions were presented in the film. This was quite understandable, given that the idea prioritization process during the production phase was quite inclusive, as well as the shooting itself. They therefore raised no concerns about some issues discussed not appearing in the film. Another observation was that the women were eager to get the reaction of the elders and traditional leaders present. Since the men were interviewed separately, and the focus group discussions involved only women, the feedback session offered the first opportunity for the traditional leaders and the women to have direct and genuine debates on socio-cultural practices of women's exclusion in Kom; as raised during the FGDs. The women therefore mostly listened to observations from the men and their interventions were mostly in form of answers to the men in an effort to defend or further explain certain issues pertaining to their frustrations with certain socio-cultural practices in Kom.

Applied Cinema as a Tool to Deconstruct the Socio-Cultural Practices of Women's Exclusion

This study had as objectives to identify the socio-cultural practices that lead to the exclusion of women in Kom, collect suggested solutions from women on how their inclusion in the socio-cultural life of the Kom community can be better negotiated, then make a community film which presents alternative ways in which women can be better integrated into the socio-cultural life of the Kom people. The findings suggest that gender profiling plays a vital role in the exclusion of women in the Kom community. Women in Kom have been summarily excluded from certain rights and activities, based on faulty assumptions on what they are capable of doing. This became very apparent as women in the different focus groups discussions pointed to a glaring chasm between their actual level of participation in the socio-political and cultural life of the Kom community, and the level of participation they hope for.

After triangulation with perceptions from the traditional leaders and elites, practices were classified into two categories. The first, referred to as 'institutional' was a result of the direct application of the customs and traditions of the Kom people, thus benefiting from the endorsement of the traditional leaders. The socio-cultural practices of women's exclusion identified as 'non-institutional' were simply arising from deviant practices by individuals in Kom, also condemned by the Kom traditional leadership. This clarification shed more light on points of divergence and convergence between the Kom women on one hand, and the Kom traditional leadership on the other, as it further became clear that while both the Kom women and the Kom traditional leadership frowned at "non-institutional" sociocultural practices of women's exclusion arising from deviant individuals; only the women frowned at those that are endorsed by the customs in place. This fact also served as an indicator for the eventual solutions that were more likely to receive an unanimous acclaim in the Kom community and those that were apparently going to face stiff resistance from the traditional leadership; a tip off that orientated the choice of suggested solutions to be considered for the community film. The overall message of the film was geared towards making the viewers understand that some of the practices in the Kom society that exclude the women are deviant acts, and not a reflection of the Kom culture, with suggestions on how the women could gradually be included in political life in Kom.

With the short movie „**NANGE**“ Alasambom Nyingchuo presents the outcome of his research project.

Available at: <https://1drv.ms/v/s!Am4aKfVFiu0IgYEZweuplqax0FyS2w>

In einem partizipativ erarbeiteten [Video „NANGE“](#) präsentiert [Alasambom Nyingchuo](#) die Ergebnisse seines Forschungsprojektes:

Benannt nach dem weiblichen Hauptcharakter *Nange* beleuchtet der 26-minütige Film Herausforderungen, denen Frauen der Kom Community (Nord-West Kamerun) aufgrund sozialer und institutioneller Ausschlüsse begegnen. Diese Herausforderungen beinhalten die Diskriminierung von Mädchen hinsichtlich der schulischen Ausbildung, Zwangsheiraten, Ausschluss aus politischen Entscheidungsprozessen und von Landbesitz. (Online unter: <https://1drv.ms/v/s!Am4aKfVFiu0IgYEZweuplqax0FyS2w>.)

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Anmerkungen

Der Artikel basiert auf den Ergebnissen einer Dissertation im Rahmen des Graduiertenkollegs „[Performing Sustainability. Cultures and Development in West-Africa](#)“ der Universität Hildesheim (Deutschland), der Universität Maiduguri (Nigeria) und der Universität Cape Coast (Ghana). Die Stipendiat*innen untersuchen aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive die Rolle von Kunst und Kultureller Bildung in Konfliktsituationen in Westafrika. Das Graduiertenkolleg wird von 2016 bis 2025 vom DAAD aus Mitteln des Bundesministeriums für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) gefördert. Die Wissensplattform KULTURELLE BILDUNG ONLINE dankt den Mitarbeiter*innen des **Instituts für Kulturpolitik der Universität Hildesheim** für die Ermöglichung dieses Wissenstransfers.

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Gerne dürfen Sie aus diesem Artikel zitieren. Folgende Angaben sind zusammenhängend mit dem Zitat zu nennen:

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