

NAB



NEWS FROM THE INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BAYREUTH



International Partnerships

Collaborative Research Across the World

Institute of African Studies

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Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence

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Collection

Welcome!



Sabine Greiner



Malick Faye

In an increasingly interconnected world, the importance of international partnerships in academia cannot be overstated. When minds from different cultural, linguistic, and intellectual traditions come together, they create space for richer dialogue, more innovative research, and a deeper understanding of global challenges. Such collaborations transcend national borders and disciplinary bubbles, weaving together diverse experiences and perspectives that make knowledge not only broader but also more inclusive.

At their best, these partnerships are not just about institutional exchange but about human connection as well – about building lasting relationships rooted in mutual respect and shared purpose. They offer a way to reimagine academic work as a collaborative, global endeavour rather than a solitary or nationally bound pursuit.

It is in this spirit that this NAB edition has taken shape, co-edited by two individuals whose paths may seem worlds apart: one with roots in Senegal, the other from Germany. This partnership stands as a microcosm of what international academic collaboration can offer. Together, we tried to curate an edition that reflects a plurality of voices and celebrates the strength that comes from working together by combining diverse perspectives.

NAB is not just about content – it is about process. It is about how shared editorial vision, informed by different life experiences, can shape something truly unique. It is our hope that this collaboration not only produces insightful work but also serves as an example of how people from varied backgrounds can work together in an equitable and dynamic way.

Happy Reading.

Sabine Greiner (editor-in-chief) and
Malick Faye (Academic Coordinator Institute of African Studies)

Dear reader,

It is a pleasure to welcome our readers to *NAB XXIII* – the 23rd edition of News from the Institute of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth (NAB). As always, an exciting year lies behind us, packed with deep research activities and memorable events convened by our diverse members, which now include colleagues from the Faculty of Life Sciences: Food, Nutrition, and Health – the newest faculty of the University of Bayreuth (UBT) established in 2021. Both the research we do and the events that emerge from it thrive on relationships that we have built over decades and hope to cultivate for many years to come. The success behind African Studies at UBT is to a large part the product of successful *relationship work*, driven by our members in Bayreuth and academic partners from Africa and many other parts of world. The vibrancy of these relationships came to the fore when the Institute for African Studies (IAS) hosted the annual conference of the German Association of African Studies (Die Vereinigung für Afrikawissenschaften in Deutschland, VAD) in Bayreuth from 30 September to 2 October 2024, convening over 500 scholars from all over the world, with a particularly strong presence of researchers from the African continent.

The preoccupation of many of our members in 2024 was the renewal application for our Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence as part of the Excellence Strategy of the German Federal and State Governments. Together with our partners from the University of Lagos (Nigeria), Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo (Burkina Faso), Moi University (Kenya), and Rhodes University (South Africa), and supported by other institutional partners worldwide such as the Federal University of Bahia in Brazil, a highly motivated team worked hard to develop an agenda designed to take the reconfiguration of African Studies to new levels. We defended the proposal, which centred on notions of world-making and the co-constitution of worlds, in mid-November 2024. As a sneak preview, we are thrilled to share that our efforts were successful and that the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence was awarded another round of funding from 2026 to 2032.

Members of the IAS were involved in activities to strengthen our relationship with the city of Bayreuth, which resulted in various events, including a workshop on *Africa and Everyday Life in Bayreuth* and a workshop on anti-discrimination held together with the City of Bayreuth's Office for Inclusion.

Lastly, the end of 2024 marked the beginning of a transformative transition for African Studies at UBT. The IAS closed its doors in the building it shared with Iwalewahauss in the city centre of Bayreuth and moved into the premises of the Research Centre for Africa (Forschungszentrum Afrika, FZA), a newly built state-of-the-art facility that will house all African Studies units on the main campus. Funded mainly through a coveted award via a highly competitive programme run by the German Science and Humanities Council (Wissenschaftsrat, WR) to support the construction of research buildings at German state universities, the FZA comes with its own dedicated research agenda on *Society, Technology and Ecology in Africa: Challenges of the 21st Century*. The next NAB will provide comprehensive coverage of the official opening of the FZA, which took place on 14 May 2025.

All these tremendous achievements would not have been possible without the solid and effective partnerships inside and outside of Bayreuth. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to writing the latest chapter of African Studies at UBT.

Enjoy your read!

Gabriele Sommer and **Stefan Ouma**
(Director and Vice Director, Institute of African Studies)

Rüdiger Seesemann and **Ute Fendler**
(Spokespersons, Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence)



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Text UTE FENDLER, DORIS LÖHR

The Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence exemplifies the success of international collaborative research and vibrant cultural cross-exchange. As a pioneering initiative, the Cluster has significantly shaped research networks across the African continent and beyond, establishing a dynamic framework for joint knowledge production and intellectual partnership.

Building on its longstanding relationship since 2008 with six Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) partner universities and the bilateral collaborations with over 30 universities worldwide at the Institute of African Studies (IAS), the Cluster has established four long-term partnerships.

Since its inception in 2019, a cornerstone of the Cluster's internationalisation strategy has been the creation of four African Cluster Centres (ACCs), strategically located in Lagos, Nigeria; Eldoret, Kenya; Makhanda, South Africa; and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. These centres – established through a competitive selection process – serve as

vital nodes for research collaboration. Far more than satellite offices, they integrate local intellectual traditions with the Cluster's transcontinental academic framework. A fifth close partner, the Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais (CEAO) in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, strengthens the Cluster's engagement with the African Diaspora.

Each ACC operates with independent budgetary authority, allowing them to support regionally relevant projects while remaining fully integrated into the Cluster's overarching governance structures. Equal partnership is not only a principle but a practice: all centres hold voting rights at all decision-making levels. This structure ensures that research is co-developed and implemented on an equal footing, resulting in genuinely entangled and collaborative outcomes. The ACCs have evolved into vibrant research hubs by initiating fellowship programmes for researchers, artists, and early career scholars. These programmes have significantly enhanced regional collaboration and capacity-building in West, East, and Southern Africa.

Beyond the ACCs, the Cluster continues to expand its global reach. In 2018,

the establishment of an Africa-Asia Network added a valuable dimension to the Cluster's internationalisation strategy. The African Studies Network in Asia is realised through joint seminars with institutions such as Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India; Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, South Korea; and Kyoto University, Japan. These events have included hybrid and in-person formats, facilitating broad student participation and deepening interregional academic exchange.

Collaborations with key institutions – including Les Afriques dans le Monde (University of Bordeaux Montaigne, France), CEAO, and Indiana University, USA – have since intensified, with further academic links maintained through CEAO to Costa Rica and Cuba. The Cluster's international profile has also been shaped by a variety of workshops and conferences hosted at partner institutions. For example, joint activities with the Centre of African Studies at Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) in Maputo, Mozambique, have strengthened links with Lusophone academic communities, including collaborations with CEAO in Brazil.

The Internationalisation of Research at Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya – A Summary

Text PETER SIMATEI

Moi University's involvement in the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence has significantly transformed its research culture, opening up rich opportunities for international collaboration, mobility, and intellectual exchange. This partnership has not only enhanced the university's academic visibility globally, but has also deepened its engagement with diverse knowledge systems and scholarly networks. One of the most visible outcomes of this collaboration is the vibrant seminar and conference culture fostered by the Moi University African Cluster Centre (Moi ACC). Regular seminars under the Africa Colloquium series bring together scholars from across the globe, creating a dynamic platform where ideas are exchanged across borders. These sessions, often hybrid in format, draw international audiences and facilitate conversations that cut across geographical and disciplinary lines. The inaugural Moi University Conference on African Studies further reinforced this international spirit by

welcoming contributions from researchers based in various parts of the continent and beyond.

Research at Moi University has increasingly reflected a global orientation, with several projects funded under the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence involving cross-continental collaboration. These projects have enabled Moi University scholars to work alongside colleagues from institutions in Germany, Ghana, South Africa, Nigeria, and Brazil, among others. Such engagements have not only broadened the scope of inquiry but have also enriched the theoretical and methodological approaches employed in the research. Long-term projects, in particular, have provided space for sustained interaction, co-mentorship of doctoral students, and the integration of indigenous knowledge systems into global academic conversations.

Fellowship programs have played a central role in this transformation. Moi University has hosted visiting Fellows

from other ACCs, while its own researchers have taken up fellowships in partner institutions. These exchanges have allowed for shared learning experiences, exposure to different academic cultures, and the forging of enduring scholarly relationships. In addition to fellowships, academic and administrative staff from Moi University have participated in various international meetings, summer schools, and conferences, further embedding the university within global networks of African Studies.

At its core, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence is designed to reconfigure African Studies by fostering collaborative research across institutions and continents. For Moi University, this has meant an ongoing process of internationalisation that values mutual learning and the co-production of knowledge. Through seminars, research collaborations, fellowships, and mobility programs, the university has positioned itself as an active contributor to a more interconnected and inclusive academic world.



The Cluster's spokespersons collaborate closely with the ACC directors (f.l.t.r.: Rüdiger Seesemann, Eveline Sawadogo-Compaoré, Peter Simatei, Enocent Msindo, Ute Fendler, Yacouba Banhoro, and Muiyiwa Falaye).

Reconfiguring African Studies at Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Ouagadougou, since 2019

Text **OUSSÉNI SORÉ**

Based on the geographical, cultural, and disciplinary diversity of research on African Studies, the Africa Multiple Project was created with a view to developing a synergistic vision of the realities specific to Africa. University Joseph Ki-Zerbo ACC, in collaboration with the University of Bayreuth, University of Lagos, Moi University, and Rhodes University (Makhanda, South Africa) have been working for seven years to decolonise research in Africa and reconfigure African Studies. This article summarises the work carried out at ACC Ouagadougou ('Ouaga') in terms of scientific collaboration at national, regional, and international levels.

ACC Ouagadougou: A Multidisciplinary Team with a Shared Vision

The first merit of ACC Ouagadougou at the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo is its success in uniting researchers from different institutions around the reconfiguration of African Studies. With 20 people across six research sections (Knowledge, Morality, Learning, Mobility, Affiliation, Art and Aesthetic), the team brings together profiles spanning sociology, sociology of innovation, contemporary history, health history, African archaeology, socio-an-

thropology, philosophy, translation, linguistics, sociolinguistics and language teaching, information and communication sciences, geography, semiotics, law and regional organisations. This heterogeneous group of researchers collaborate and work with the same single vision: the reconfiguration of African Studies.

Institutional Collaboration for the Decolonisation of African Studies

The University Joseph Ki-Zerbo ACC was established as a scientific research unit by scholars from the faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences, with support of the then-President of the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo, got together to write a project and participate in the call for tenders launched by the University of Bayreuth. With a view to broad scientific collaboration, researchers from institutions, such as the National Centre of Scientific Research and Technology (CNRST) and the University Thomas Sankara, were involved to provide a national foundation for research into African realities. Therefore ACC Ouaga has been working in synergy with faculties, laboratories, postgraduate schools and other centres of excellence, including the Gender and Development Laboratory, the Faculties of Letters, Arts, and Communication (LAC), the Faculty of

Human Sciences (SH) and the Post-graduate School in Letters, Human Sciences and Communication (ED/LESHCO) at the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo.

Collaboration for Synergy between Researchers and Young Scholars

Every year, ACC Ouaga offers doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships for young researchers working under the supervision of senior researchers and lecturers. This mentoring initiative strengthens training the next generation of researchers on African Studies. This form of scientific collaboration contributes to the training and capacity-building of early career scholars to ensure continuity and the next generation of scientists working on the reconfiguration of African Studies. The results have been encouraging, with more than ten doctoral theses defended by the doctoral fellows and three collective works published, presenting the fellow's research.

Scientific Mobility between Researchers for a Plural Scientific Outlook

Scientific mobility within the Cluster network has been central to ACC Ouaga's internationalisation. The Centre has hosted visiting fellows from Lagos, Rhodes, Moi, and Bayreuth and, in turn, its own researchers have trav-

elled for academic visits across Africa and Europe. Notable milestones include the hosting of the ACC Directors' meeting in March 2022 and the Academic Coordinators' workshop in October 2024, both held in Ouagadougou, reinforcing intra-Cluster connectivity.

Important International Colloquia, Seminars, and Symposiums for Multi-faceted Collaboration Held at the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo ACC

Between 2020 and 2024, several international events were held at the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo ACC, e.g. a Colloquium on Reacting to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Burkina Faso, emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration across mathematics, medical, and social sciences to address epidemics, a Colloquium on Terrorism in Burkina Faso, focusing on local approaches to counterterrorism, a Seminar on Franco-Arabic Bilingual Education, discussing the state and challenges of this educational model in Burkina Faso. Another Colloquium on Spatialities and Innovations in West Africa, exploring social, cultural, and technolo-

gical innovations, a Francophone Colloquium on Reconfiguring African Studies and Global Partnerships, in collaboration with the University of Parakou, Benin, a Symposium on Managing Your Health, offering multidisciplinary perspectives on health, and a Symposium in Abidjan on Well-being and Plural Care Practices, co-hosted with University Félix Houphouët-Boigny, focusing on African therapeutic methods.

The added value of all these international scientific conferences in terms of internationalisation is that they have led not only to collaboration between ACC Ouaga and various national, regional, and international academic institutions, but also to synergy between researchers from different backgrounds on issues related to African Studies within the Africa Multiple network. The major innovation lies in the association of other players such as civil society, religious, and traditional communities, and professionals from associations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This innovative

approach makes the results of research into African Studies even more visible.

Collaborations on Joint Project and Publications

ACC Ouaga researchers have worked in synergy with researchers from home and abroad on projects with convincing results. By way of illustration, the projects: Fluid Ontologies of Contestation: Social Media, Anti-governmental Protest, and Transnational Decolonisation Movements in Burkina Faso; Control of Migration, Violence, and COVID-19: (Im)mobility Regimes in the Border Areas of Burkina Faso, Benin, and Niger; Socio-anthropological Study on Endogenous Sources of Dialogue and Peace against Terrorism in Burkina Faso, have involved researchers from the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo, the University of Lagos, and the University of Bayreuth. In addition, joint publications involving researchers from various locations are also being produced, such as COVID-19 in Africa: Governance and Containment, the fruit of collaboration between various ACCs on COVID-19. 🌍



The ACC team at Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo





Reconfiguring through Internationalisation: ACC at Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa

Text ENOCENT MSINDO

Since its establishment in 2019 as one of the founding ACCs of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, the Rhodes African Studies Centre (ACC Rhodes) has become a vibrant hub for critical, interdisciplinary, and decolonial scholarship in Southern Africa, drawing on the university's intellectual legacy and archival depth to support the Cluster's vision of reconfiguring African Studies from the continent.

Multidisciplinary Research and Thematic Engagement

ACC Rhodes convenes scholars from anthropology, musicology, environmental science, literary studies, and art history who contribute to the Cluster's six research sections. Notable projects include *Communities on the Margins of the State*, and work in medical humanities, environmental justice, and sonic and visual cultures. The Centre's strong research infrastructure includes close collaboration with the International Library of African Music (ILAM) and the Cory Library and Gallery, which serve as key platforms for archiving, curating, and theorising African expressive cultures and historical memory.

Regional Networks and Global Exchange

Over the past five years, ACC Rhodes has developed a strong regional scholarly footprint through partnerships with institutions in Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. Internationally, the Centre has actively contributed to South-South dialogues and Africa-Asia exchanges, while sustaining collaborative ties with institutions in Europe, North America, and Latin America. These efforts support the Cluster's aim of producing decentralised and transregional knowledge.

Fellowship and Early Career Development

A cornerstone of ACC Rhodes's work is supporting early career scholars. Its doctoral and postdoctoral fellowship programmes have yielded several completions in disciplines such as water research, musicology, and art history. The majority of recent doctoral graduates have been African women, demonstrating a strong commitment to inclusivity and mentorship.

Academic Culture and Community Engagement

Through regular seminars, colloquia,

exhibitions, and workshops, ACC Rhodes has cultivated a dynamic academic culture that intersects with public life. The Centre works closely with ILAM, the Cory Library, and local NGOs to host events exploring themes such as decolonial aesthetics, feminist knowledge, and environmental change. Its integration of archival, musical, and visual practices enables a unique, community-rooted mode of African Studies scholarship.



The ACC at University of Lagos, Nigeria: "The Journey of Reconfiguration so far"

Text DORIS LÖHR

Since its founding in 2019 as one of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence's ACCs, the University of Lagos's ACC has been a key driver of interdisciplinary and international research in West Africa. Rooted in Nigeria's vibrant academic and Diasporic contexts, it has become a hub for scholarly exchange, capacity building, and global engagement, embodying the Cluster's mission to reconfigure African Studies through equitable, transregional collaboration.

Multidisciplinary Collaboration and Research

ACC Lagos brings together scholars from diverse fields – law, philosophy, sociology, history, literature, and arts – working across six thematic sections: Affiliation, Mobility, Knowledge, Morality, Learning, and Arts and Aesthetics. Key projects include *Rethinking the Artistic Trajectory of African Women*

Artists, or: Women as Sages: Exploring the nature and value of 'Feminine' Wisdom and a socio-anthropological study on peace and security in West Africa, reflecting its focus on contextually grounded, globally relevant knowledge.

Internationalisation and South-South Linkages

ACC Lagos emphasises building connections across Africa and globally. Its partnership with the CEAO in Brazil exemplifies the Cluster's South-South vision through joint conferences, fellowships, and research. The Centre is also active in Africa-Asia collaborations, engaging with institutions like Kyoto University and Jawaharlal Nehru University to promote transregional perspectives and to de-centre dominant knowledge flows.

Fellowship and Capacity Building

The Centre runs vibrant doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships, fostering

early-career mentorship and collaborative research. Fellows have contributed to workshops, conferences, and publications, while ACC Lagos also hosts visiting researchers and supports residencies abroad. Notably, Paul Akinmayowa Akin-Otiko's 2024 fellowship at Rhodes University advanced joint projects on indigenous medicine and marginal communities.

Academic Events and Public Engagement

ACC Lagos has cultivated a rich academic culture through international colloquia and symposia. Events like the 2021 *Colloquium on Urban Spaces and Belonging* and the 2023 *Archives of the Future* symposium on memory and decolonial methods demonstrate its commitment to combining academic rigour with public relevance. Regular Africa Colloquium Series sessions and local initiatives underline the Centre's inclusive approach.



The CEOA at the Federal University of Bahia: Expanding African Studies in the Global South

Text LIVIO SANSONE

The CEOA at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) has long been recognised as a key institution for African and Afro-Oriental Studies in Brazil and Latin America. Over the past decade, and especially in the last five years, CEOA has intensified its international engagement, becoming a vital hub in the Global South for both academic cooperation and cultural exchange. These efforts have been significantly strengthened through long-standing collaboration with the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and its ACCs, particularly along the Africa-Asia line of inquiry.

Internationalisation at CEOA is not a recent trend but has reached a new level of institutionalisation in 2024. A milestone this year was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UFBA and the University of Bayreuth, formalising years of collaboration

with the Cluster and setting the stage for future research and academic exchange. CEOA researchers have also actively contributed to the development of new thematic lines for the next phase of the Cluster, reinforcing their leadership role in shaping research agendas that reflect the perspectives of the Global South.

To diversify its support base beyond the Cluster, CEOA secured new funding through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Probral programme, facilitating two-way mobility between UFBA, the Cluster, and the Federal University of Recôncavo da Bahia (UFRB). In addition, the Brazilian National Council of Scientific and Technological Development Research Council (CNPq) approved two significant projects on memory, slavery, and independence – one focused on the Caribbean (Cuba, Costa Rica, and the Guianas), and the other on Southern and Eastern Africa. These projects enabled multi-sited re-

search, cross-regional dialogue, and academic exchanges beyond traditional North–South flows. Updates on important projects like the Afrodigital museum and the doctoral school Idea Factory (Fábrica de Ideias, 25th edition in 2024) will be elaborated on in the *African Studies Around the Globe* section. 🌍



African and Caribbean Studies Programme at the University of Costa Rica

Text GUILLERMO NAVARRO

Founded in 2013 at the University of Costa Rica, the African and Caribbean Studies Programme is an interdisciplinary research centre and network that develops four lines of research: African Studies, Caribbean Studies, studies on Afro-descendants, and ethnic-racial relations.

The programme is based on important social and university debates and transformations, including the constitutional recognition of Costa Rica as a multi-ethnic and multicultural society, the promotion of inclusive social policies in the university system, and the international declaration of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024 and 2025–2034).

From Central America, the program aims to develop African, Caribbean, and Afro-descendant studies from a Central American, Caribbean, and Global South perspective, generating processes of internationalisation in the areas of cooperation and research, within the framework of critical epistemological and geopolitical processes, taking on the challenge of building academic networks between Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and other regions of the world from Central America.

Research is currently being conducted on the issue of land tenure in the Caribbean, ethnic-racial inclusion and multiculturalism policies, African migrations, enslavement and post-enslavement, and the mission-

ary impact in West Africa, among other topics.

In this vein, the African and Caribbean Studies Programme has developed various international networks with which it has strengthened its different lines of research. Together with the Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars, it developed the international conference *Caribbean Feminisms: Genealogies and Geographies of Resistance*. It also works in cooperation with the Research and Development Institute (IRD) and the University of Côte d'Azur, France, on various research projects within the framework of the Academic Research Network: Otherness, Territoriality, and Environment (Red-Ata).

The African and Caribbean Studies Programme in Costa Rica was founded in 2013.



In addition to this, it actively participates in Central American, Caribbean, and Latin American networks, especially with the CEOA and the multidisciplinary programme of Ethnic and African Studies at the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil, participating in this context in different projects and in the doctoral School Idea Factory.

Costa Rica, Central America, and Africa.

Together with the African Multiple Cluster of Excellence, various activities have been developed, including participation in workshops on African Studies held in Salvador, Bahia, and Seoul, Korea, as well as various confer-

ences organised by the Cluster in South Africa and Bayreuth.

This cooperation, together with the IRD and the University Côte d'Azur, led to the jointly organised III Symposium on Africa and the Caribbean Studies programme *Resistance, Inequalities, and (Afro)multidimensional Mobilities*, held in Costa Rica from 18 to 21 February, bringing together more than 50 participants from these institutions and regions in South America, Central America, the Caribbean, and Africa. 🌍

Official website:



African Studies Association of India (ASA India): A Collaborative Partner of the Cluster

Text AJAY DUBEY

The African Studies Association (ASA) of India is an all-India apex organisation of Indian Africanists consisting of higher academics and other stakeholders in African Studies of India. It is a registered non-profit organisation under Indian law with the aim to promote African Studies and an Indian understanding of African affairs. It is registered in New Delhi. Its secretariat is currently located in the African Studies Centre of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. It undertakes research projects, organises international conferences, and publishes books and international journals on African Studies. Both its journals are in SCOPUS and Web of Science. The *Insight on Africa* journal is published by Sage Publication and the *Africa Review* journal is published by Brill, Netherlands. It has a book series published by Palgrave-Springer on *Global Engagement of Africa* which has a global submission of manuscripts on Africa's global engagement and prevalence of multiple African Studies approaches. ASA India has MOUs and collaborations with several universities across the world to promote better understanding of African Studies. It is one of

the initiators of Asian African Studies network and participates along with Hankuk University of Foreign Studies and Kyoto University. It is an affiliate member of ASA USA, and a collaborative partner of the Africa Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow, Russia), an associate member of African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP, Australia) and was associate member of AEGISE (Europe). It has bilateral MOUs with several African Studies centres of foreign universities. It organises conferences, publications, and conference panels in collaboration with African Studies centres across the world. ASA India has also several collaborative initiatives with the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence programme of the University of Bayreuth.

Current president of ASA India is Ajay Dubey, Professor at the Centre for African Studies JNU. He has participated twice in the conferences organised by the AMC. One of the coordinators of AMC, Ute Fendler, visited New Delhi and interacted with ASA India resource persons and faculty members of Centre

for African Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Fendler also attended two conferences of the Asian Africanist network in Seoul and Kyoto. Fendler has coedited a book on *Asia-Africa Multifaceted Engagement in Contemporary World* (2024) which was published by ASA India under its book series *Africa's Global Engagement* through Springer. In December 2024, Fendler was also a co-panellist and presented in a collaborative panel with ASA India on *Asia-Africa Relations* in Chicago, USA, at the annual conference of ASA USA. ASA India and AMCE are co-organisers in a forthcoming international conference in Burkina Faso along with the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo on *India-Africa: Endogeneity, Modernity and Solutions for Development* from 27 to 29 November 2025. 🌍



A Cartography of Academic Cooperation:
IAS and its Global Partnerships

Text **MALICK FAYE, STEFAN OUMA**

Far more than a list of names and places, the Institute of African Studies' (IAS) global network of partnerships reveals a dynamic, decolonial, and deeply collaborative map of African Studies in motion – connecting institutions across continents to co-create knowledge and reshape academic hierarchies.

At first glance, the data look like a simple enumeration of names, cities, and insti-

tutions. But read more closely, and it reveals itself as a vibrant web of exchanges crossing languages, disciplines, and geographies. The partnerships forged by IAS members extend well beyond cooperation: they transform how African Studies is practised. Some ties, such as those with the University of Cape Town, have grown into long-term engagements involving multiple researchers. Others – like connections to the Catholic University of Bukavu in the Democratic Republic of Congo or the University of Ghana in Accra – focus more narrowly on specific themes.

Four institutions stand at the heart of this network: the ACCs at Moi University in Kenya, Rhodes University in South Africa, University Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Burkina Faso, and the University of Lagos in Nigeria. These relationships, anchored in joint doctoral supervision, long-term fieldwork, and sustained co-authorship, form the foundation of the German Research Council-funded Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. Together with Bayreuth, they have elevated IAS into a global hub for collaborative, digitally connected, and transformative scholarship.

Alongside these South-North partnerships lie intra-European ties with Leiden, Aarhus, and Ingolstadt. While important, these collaborations differ in texture: many arise from thematic projects or disciplinary consortia, whereas African partnerships often require negotiation across linguistic, epistemic, and institutional difference. AEGIS-related institutions provide further frameworks, weaving IAS into the broader fabric of European African Studies.

What strikes the eye is the diversity. IAS members collaborate across West, Central, Southern, and East Africa – in Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone regions. This plurality resists any singular narrative of “Africa,” instead revealing a

continent of diverse institutions and intellectual traditions. The network also reaches beyond Africa, with enduring ties to the Federal University of Bahia in Brazil or the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul. This constitutes gestures toward a multipolar African and Diaspora Studies.

There is a political resonance here. These collaborations unsettle extractive models of knowledge production by emphasizing reciprocity: shared supervision, co-authorship, joint teaching. They embody transformative practice not merely as theory but as lived relation. South-South linkages deepen this approach. The Federal University of Bahia and the University of Dar es Salaam stand as key

partners, reinforcing pluralism in law, culture, and language.

Looking forward, the Research Centre for Society, Technology, and Ecology in Africa (Forschungszentrum Afrika, FZA), opening in May 2025, broadens IAS's profile into applied research. Designed for interdisciplinary projects on urgent societal questions, it offers a platform to co-develop knowledge with African and international partners alike.

This is not a hierarchical structure, but a relational one – driven by shared agendas, sustained exchanges, and long-term commitments. Here, African institutions are not simply sites of study but co-creators of global knowledge. 🌍

IAS GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP NETWORK

Global Partnerships in Numbers

Top Partner Institutions:

- Rhodes University (11)
- University of Ghana (8)
- Moi University (10)
- Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo (7)
- Univ. of Dar es Salaam (10)
- University of Cape Town (7)

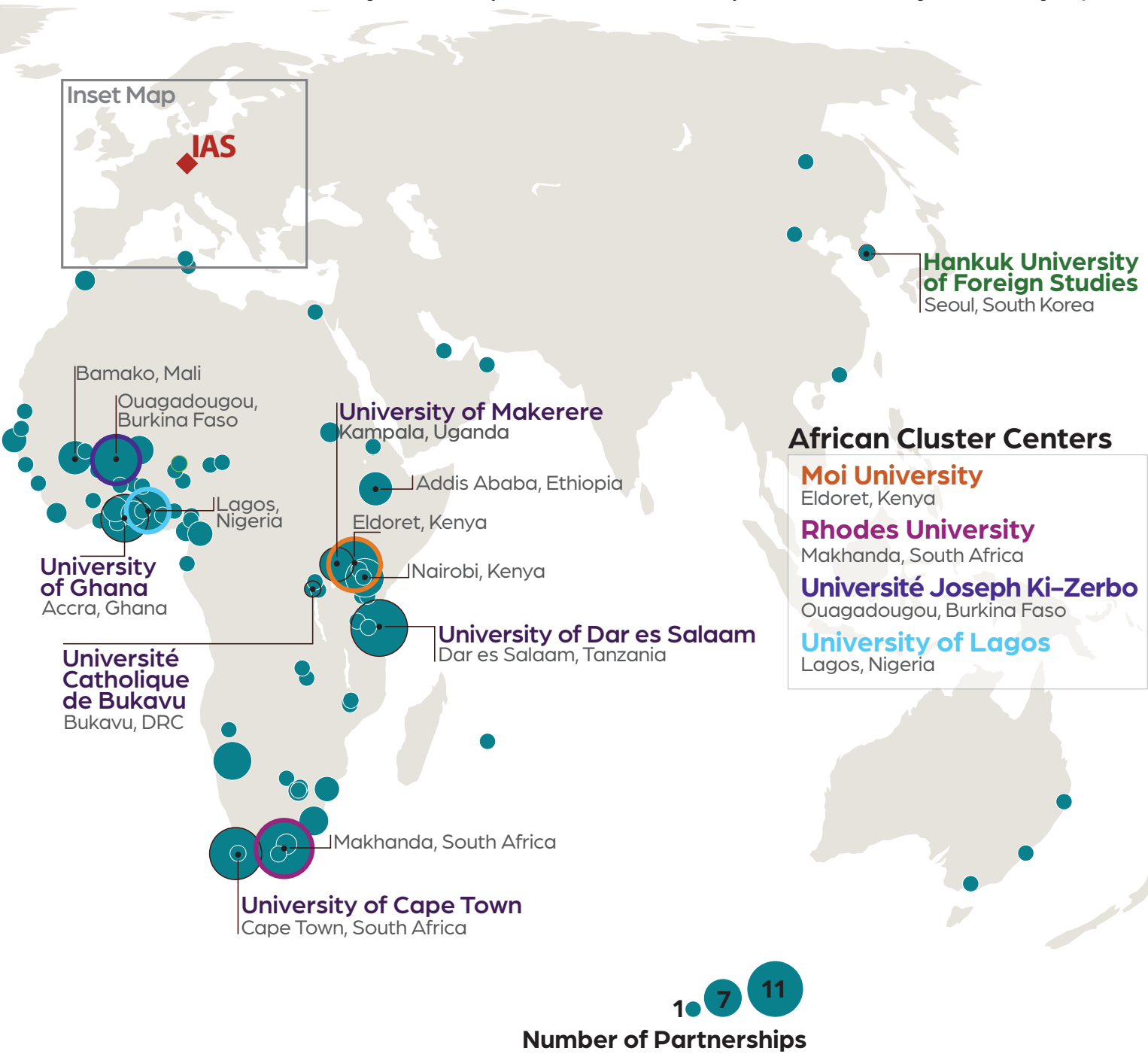
Top Cities:

- Bonn (18)
- Berlin (13)
- Dar es Salaam (11)
- Makhanda (11)
- Cape Town (10)
- Eldoret (10)

European Partnerships



Map by Malick Faye, Stefan Ouma, and Elbie Bentley
Data collection and Processing: Maryam Khalid
Basemap Data Sources: Natural Earth <https://www.naturalearthdata.com/>



Africa Takes Centre Stage at Bayreuth's First Africa Days

Text MALICK FAYE

Bayreuth welcomed high-ranking African diplomats for the first-ever Africa Days, showcasing the University of Bayreuth's leading role in African Studies and international cooperation. From cutting-edge research to contemporary art, the event highlighted deep academic and cultural ties between Europe and Africa.

Bayreuth hosted its inaugural *Africa Days* at the end of September 2024, welcoming senior diplomats from across the African continent. Bayreuth's Mayor Thomas Ebersberger invited ambassadors from Angola, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Liberia, Niger, Zimbabwe, and Uganda to visit Upper Franconia to experience first-hand the University of Bayreuth's strong ties with Africa.

The event spotlighted the University of Bayreuth's global academic reach, especially its leadership in African Studies within the Institute of African Studies (IAS). With the highest concentration of Africa-related professorships and third-party research funding in Europe, the University of Bayreuth has established itself as a hub for African scholarship. In their welcoming remarks, University President Stefan Leible and Vice President for Internationalisation, Equal Opportunities and Diversity, Nina

Nestler, highlighted the institution's extensive partnerships with 68 universities in 26 African countries.

Stefan Ouma, Deputy Speaker of the IAS, introduced the University's expansive Africa research community, comprising roughly 100 members and more than 40 professors. A key focus of the visit, however, was the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. Spokesperson Rüdiger Seesemann explained the initiative goals to reconfigure African Studies within Germany and beyond.

The Faculty of Life Sciences: Food, Nutrition and Health also plays a role in the university's African engagement. Janin Henkel-Oberländer introduced the English-language pro-

gramme Global Food, Nutrition and Health, based at the Kulmbach campus. She also shared insights into current research projects focused on food systems and health challenges relevant to Africa.

A guided tour, led by University Pro-vost Nicole Kaiser, gave the ambassadors a preview of the soon to be finished Research Centre for Africa (FZA) building, set to open officially in 2025. The Centre is expected to further strengthen academic exchange and interdisciplinary research with African partners.

The visit concluded at Iwalewaha, home to Europe's largest public collection of contemporary African art. More than just a gallery, Iwalewaha serves as a bridge between cultures, offering space for artistic, academic, and social exchange. During their visit to the Iwalewaha, the ambassadors also met with representatives of the Bayreuth Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK) as well as business delegates from the wider Upper Franconia region.

Bayreuth's *Africa Days* marked a milestone in the city's international outreach. By bringing African diplomats face-to-face with researchers, students, and cultural curators, the event underscored the University of Bayreuth's role as a European leader in African Studies and its commitment to equitable global partnerships.

Representatives from Angola, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Liberia, Niger, Zimbabwe, and Uganda with representatives from UBT



Photo: Jürgen Rennecke



The delegation surrounding Ilse Aigner (first row, 4th from the left) meeting with UBT president Stefan Leible and other University representatives.

Bavarian State Parliament Delegation Visits the Cluster

Text SABINE GREINER

During a visit to the University of Bayreuth, a delegation from the Bavarian State Parliament explored the extensive work of the Institute of African Studies in general and the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence in particular. Engaging with researchers and students, the politicians gained insight into this innovative hub for African Studies at UBT where global partnerships and artistic exchanges are shaping the future of interdisciplinary research.

On 6 March 2024, Ilse Aigner, President of the Bavarian State Parliament, and a delegation of over 20 members of parliament and regional politicians of all parties, paid an official visit to the University of Bayreuth (UBT), highlighting the global relevance of African Studies and interdisciplinary research. The delegation's visit focused on the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and its work within the Institute of African Studies (IAS) at the University of Bayreuth.

The visit commenced with a welcome and an official signing of the university's Golden Book, followed by a presentation from University President Stefan Leible. He introduced the

university's longstanding commitment to African research, anchored in the IAS, which has shaped the academic landscape for over 30 years.

The Director and the Vice Director of the IAS, Gabriele Sommer and Stefan Ouma, respectively, presented the Institute as a hub for African and Diaspora-related research, education, and international partnerships. As an umbrella institution, the IAS supports projects and programmes such as the Cluster of Excellence, Iwalewaha, afriZert, and the European Interdisciplinary Master African Studies programme (EIMAS).

Iwalewaha, with Europe's largest collection of contemporary African art, was introduced by its curator, Sigrid Horsch-Albert. She explained that the centre not only hosts exhibitions and artist residencies, but also fosters dialogue between cultures, with "Iwalewa" – a Yoruba saying meaning "character is beauty" – at its core.

At the heart of the visit, however, was the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, presented by Rüdiger Seesemann. He explained that since its launch in 2019 as part of Germany's Excellence Strategy, the Cluster has established a dynamic research network across four African universities. Its interdisciplinary ap-

proach has given rise to over 70 research projects, international fellowships, and global academic events. Two research projects showcased during the visit underscored the Cluster's innovative focus. Gilbert Shang Ndi discussed the project *Black Atlantic Revisited*, which investigates memory cultures around the transatlantic slave trade through artistic and literary responses. Billian Otundo presented her study on multilingual educational spaces in Kenyan schools, exploring how local and global languages shape learning. Claudia Gebauer introduced afriZert, a certificate programme that provides students throughout Bavaria with Africa-specific knowledge, while Fatima Elmardiya Ahmed drew attention to EIMAS, a master's programme offered by the University of Porto, Bordeaux Montaigne University, and UBT. The University of Bayreuth leads this joint master's programme as part of Erasmus Mundus, funded by the European Commission.

Aigner and the delegation engaged in an open dialogue with researchers and students, expressing their appreciation for the university's commitment to global perspectives and intercultural exchange. The visit concluded with a group photo and a shared sense of the importance of collaborative knowledge in shaping future relations between Europe and Africa.



EIMAS alumna Fatima Elmardiya Ahmed



Dean of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence Rüdiger Seesemann



Deputy Spokesperson of the IAS Stefan Ouma

Rethinking Transnational Governance through South–South Relations:



Insights from INFRAGLOB

Text JAN SÄNDIG AND JANA HÖNKE

Africa’s Infrastructure Globalities (INFRAGLOB) – a project funded by the European Research Council (ERC) from 2018 to 2025 – uncovers how Chinese and Brazilian infrastructure projects in Africa transform governance, highlighting diverse practices, local contestation, and shifting South–South relations.

Led by Jana Hönke at the Chair for Sociology in Africa, the INFRAGLOB project has examined large-scale infrastructure development to deepen understanding of transforming governance practices through South–South relations. The project focused particularly on how Chinese and Brazilian companies operate mines and ports in Africa, analysing governance structures, corporate behaviour, and contentious politics.

Research explored if and how governance models travel within the Global South and become embedded in local practises, and how new practises emerge from South–South relations. Given that such investment projects often generate opposition, INFRAGLOB investigated how contentious interactions can lead Chinese and Brazilian companies to adapt their practices. INFRAGLOB also examined how emerging actors in the Global South are reshaping transnational governance from the bottom up – as professionals diffuse, adapt, and renegotiate know-how across borders.

The team conducted research across a range of African contexts: Yifan Mia Yang carried out in-depth field research for her doctoral thesis on how Chinese mining companies manage



Yifan Mia Yang during field research in Guinea (2022)

community relations in Guinea. Sheila Oreiro analysed both overt and “invisible” forms of protest surrounding the Chinese-built Lamu Port in Kenya. Raoul Bunskoek (currently Head of the Clingendael Institute’s China Centre) critically examined assumptions about a monolithic “Chinese model” through engaging relational theory and practice in Chinese development thought and practice; together with Hönke, he also conducted a study on Chinese transnational professionals, providing unique insights into their lifeworlds and career trajectories, which highlights the limitations of the existing literature’s focus on the “Anglosphere”. With Jan Sändig, an analysis of protest events in Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was conducted to compare the contestation and responsiveness of Chinese and Western mining companies. Finally, Eric Cezne (now at the African Studies Centre at Leiden University, The Netherlands) studied how the Brazilian mining company Vale governed its societal relations in Mozambique, and how a grassroots alliance of Mozambican and Brazilian activists challenged the practices of this mining giant.

INFRAGLOB also collaborated with Claude Kabemba and his team at the NGO Southern Africa Resource Watch (SARW), based at Johannesburg, South Africa, for grounded local insights.

The research findings contest the notion of uniform “Chinese” or “Brazilian” models, instead revealing a diverse array of corporate practices shaped by the interplay of international standards, African host-country regulations, and local political interests. The research also highlights the multiple meanings given to “the South” and provides a nuanced understanding of the on-the-ground practices, relationships, and negotiations surrounding the governance of transnational projects. It identifies continuities as well as transformations of practices, and points to highly fragmented transnational communities of practice. In contrast to the existing literature on professionals and expertise in world politics, the project moved beyond a Eurocentric focus on the Anglosphere by studying Brazilian and Chinese professionals in Africa. This revealed the stratification of transnational professionals and their com-

munities along multiple lines of race and identity.

The INFRAGLOB research underscores the need to understand fragmenting and multiplying communities of practice, the exclusions they perpetuate or create anew, and the potential for new alignments and relationships that they may facilitate in an increasingly polycentric world order.

Throughout the project, the team disseminated the research. The team has published widely and participated in numerous international conferences. A key output is the open-access edited volume, *Africa’s Global Infrastructures* (Hurst/Oxford University Press, 2024), featuring contributions from leading scholars in the field. INFRAGLOB research has also appeared in major journals such as *African Affairs*, *Global Society*, *Mobilities*, *The Extractive Industries and Society*, and *World Development*. The team presented their work at prominent conferences including the European Conference on African Studies (ECAS), Association for African Studies in Germany (VAD), Italian Association for Africa-China Studies (AISAC), International Studies Association (ISA), European International Studies Association (EISA), German Political Science Association (DVPW), and others. Particular highlights were the book launch events in China, where Hönke and Yang shared INFRAGLOB’s findings in Beijing and Shanghai.

Key publications from INFRAGLOB (open access)

Bunskoek, Raoul & Jana Hönke (2025): “Party Time: Entering the Lifeworlds and Career Trajectories of Chinese Transnational Professionals in Africa”, *Global Studies Quarterly*.

Hönke, Jana, Eric Cezne & Yifan Yang (eds., 2024): „Africa’s Global Infrastructures: South–South Transformations in Practice”, London: Hurst Publishers/ Oxford University Press.

Sändig, Jan, Jana Hönke & Claude Kabemba (2024): “Contention and concessions: Exploring the responsiveness of Chinese mining companies in Africa”, *The Extractive Industries and Society*.

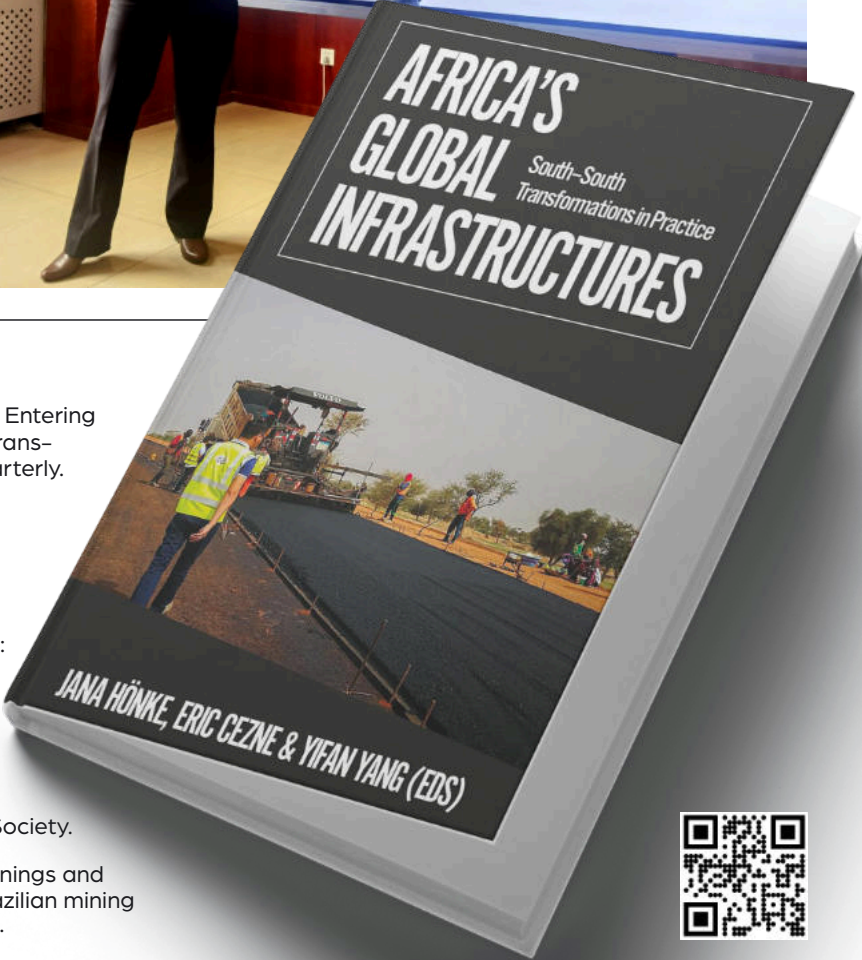
Hönke, Jana, Eric Cezne & Yifan Yang (2022): “Liminally positioned in the South: Reinterpreting Brazilian and Chinese relations with Africa”, *Global Society*.

Cezne, Eric & Jana Hönke (2022): “The multiple meanings and uses of South–South relations in extraction: The Brazilian mining company Vale in Mozambique”, *World Development*.



Jan Sändig at the “AfriKaleidoskop meets ARTE” roundtable (Bayreuth 2024, Photo: fabriclux/AMC)

Jana Hönke presenting at the Centre for African Studies of Peking University (2024)



News from the Chair of African Legal Studies at the University of Bayreuth

Text PHILIPP BOGENSPERGER In 2024, the Chair of African Legal Studies (ALS) at the University of Bayreuth continued to strengthen its position as a hub for research, teaching, and dialogue on African legal systems. The following highlights reflect the Chair's activities during the year.

Visit of Representatives of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights

On 10 June 2024, the Chair was honoured to host Robert Eno (Registrar) and Dennis Dominic Adjei (Judge) of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. During their visit, Eno and Adjei contributed to the Human Rights in Africa seminar with a presentation on *Special Protection of Human and Peoples' Rights in Africa: Case of Children, Women's Rights, and Environment*. This was followed by a moderated roundtable discussion on the role of comparative human rights law and jurisprudence in regional human rights systems and regimes, in which our guests joined other faculty members and experts in examining the importance of cross-regional dialogue in human rights protection.

Joint Symposium: Unmasking the Intractable: Exploring Anti-Racism and the Law

In October 2024, the Chair, in collaboration with Verfassungsblog: On Matters Constitutional, launched the joint symposium *Unmasking the Intractable: Exploring Anti-Racism and the Law*. The symposium critically addressed per-

sistent racial inequality within international and national legal frameworks and reflected on the limitations of existing anti-racism laws. Contributors explored whether these limitations stem from unrealistic expectations or structural design flaws and advocated for the integration of decolonial and third-world legal approaches. Funded by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth, the project produced ten thought-provoking articles over five weeks on the African Legal Studies Blog, fostering dialogue and critical reflection on anti-racism and the law.



Teaching and Academic Work

Alongside the Chair's regular lecture offerings, 2024 featured several distinguished guest lectures and academic events. Highlights included a talk by Walters Nsoh (University of Birmingham, UK) and a seminar presentation by Robert Nanima (University of the Western Cape, South Africa) on Child Labour in Conflict Situations: Deciphering the Approach of the African Human Rights System. The African Legal Studies Blog continued to grow, publishing a variety of articles on hu-

man rights, environmental law, and related fields. The Additional Study Programme in International Legal Studies, which launched in summer 2022, saw further development and increasing student participation, reflecting the Chair's ongoing commitment to broadening students' understanding of international law.

Fifth Anniversary of the Chair of African Legal Studies

On 1 December 2024, the Chair proudly celebrated its fifth anniversary. As the first permanent chair in Germany dedicated to African legal systems, the Chair has established itself as a centre for innovative teaching and research on law in Africa. Its work focuses on international human rights and environmental law, the interaction between these fields and African legal systems, and interdisciplinary approaches supported by partnerships with African and global institutions, including the long-standing cooperation with the Tanzanian-German Centre for Eastern African Legal Studies. The Chair extends its gratitude to all who have contributed to its success over the past five years and looks forward to continuing this important work.



< On 10 June 2024, Robert Eno (first row, first left) and Dennis Dominic Adjei (first row far right) visited the University of Bayreuth to discuss Human and Peoples' Rights.

Staging Change: Theatre for Development in Legal Research

Text GIFT MAULUKA

Millions of children navigate their childhood by working in harsh conditions. This is despite international and domestic conventions that frown at child labour. But what if the stage, rather than a courtroom and boardroom, could help change the reality?

At the Chair of African Legal Studies (ALS), this idea is being explored to tackle intractable human rights problems through the Advanced Methods Lab (AMLs), a platform for testing bold, unconventional, and interdisciplinary approaches, such as Theatre for Development. Among other things, the AMLs bring the law to life in communities affected by child labour, a complex human rights issue.

Child labour is being investigated under the project, *When the Law is Not Enough: Intractable Problems of Human Rights*. Through this Cluster-supported research project, AMLs are being utilised to explore research methods that can support the resolution of composite problems, including human trafficking, climate change, LGBTQI rights, energy transition, migration, and other global challenges. These AMLs, which have been conducted since 2022, challenge dominant research methods and explore unconventional and interdisciplinary approaches. This provides evidence of how different platforms can be utilised to contribute to the reconfiguration of the Cluster's structural and theoretical agenda.

In light of this, and whilst researching on child labour, a global problem that affects mil-

lions of children across the globe, there is a call for unorthodox approaches that challenge the status quo and enable people to explore their realities and, additionally, to provide a platform for critiquing and questioning the laws and structures outlined in legal documents. One such project is the Theatre for Development. The deployment of this approach is not typical and may be considered disruptive in understanding child labour law, given the formalistic, structured, and dogmatic nature of legal scholarship.

Nevertheless, the advancement of such an approach attests to what the AMLs in this project were meant to achieve.

Theatre for Development prompts people to examine their situation, highlighting how a particular phenomenon is impacting their lives. It provides a platform for communities to engage in dialogues that might otherwise be considered taboo. The approach empowers vulnerable members of society to question the established powers and authority, and to challenge narratives that may seem distant from their ways of life.

Thus, instead of adhering to doctrinal research methods, where laws are analysed, cases are examined, and literature surrounding legal theories is reviewed to identify connections, the performative approaches in Theatre for Development enable empirical interaction with communities at various levels. The deployment of this approach in Malawi between October and December 2024 demonstrates how an AML can produce outputs that can be potentially materialised and empirically utilised on the ground. It is a testament to how a reimagination of indigenous knowledge, skills, approaches, and research methods can be integrated into academic discourse to bring about nuanced ideas that are both theoretical and practical. This is a way of stepping off the page and onto the stage. A reminder that real change often begins when the laws listen to the voices it claims to protect. A clear indication that when the law is not enough, creativity and community might just be the way to go.



The Theatre for Development provides a different perspective on the problems of child labour.

Photo: Derrick Pare



DRE in Action: Activities and Achievements in 2024

Text **MIRCO SCHÖNFELD, JAE SOOK CHEONG, NEERAJ THANDAYAN-VISWAJITH, JIAYU YANG**

Explore how the Digital Research Environment (DRE) advanced research data management in 2024! From expanding WissKI@UBT's data network to supporting ACCs and partner institutions in data ownership, DRE is paving the way for a more connected research collaboration in African Studies.

The Digital Research Environment (DRE) is curating information about and providing access to research data from all research projects conducted at the University of Bayreuth, the African Cluster Centres (ACCs), and other partners. The team had an exciting year in 2024 with many achievements, as well as new ideas for 2025. Make sure to check out the Cluster's database WissKI@UBT - the primary repository for research data: www.wisski.uni-bayreuth.de

The Data Network

As of 18 December 2024, WissKI@UBT connects data from 24 research projects from the University of Bayreuth; the University of Lagos, Nigeria; Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya; Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa; and the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. At that time, a further 19 projects were still under consultation in order to be included into the database as quickly as possible. Through collaborative and thorough curation, individual outputs

are connected in a data network, or knowledge graph.

In addition, through the DRE's partnership with Rhodes University, they have begun connecting WissKI@UBT to their journal *African Music: Journal for the International Library of African Music* (ILAM).

The DRE has also collaborated closely with its privileged partner, the Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, Brazil, to host and publish newly curated collections from the AfroDigital Museum using WissKI@UBT.

These substantial additions significantly expand both the breadth and depth of the Cluster's interconnected data network, providing invaluable resources to inspiring new research endeavours, and establishing a comprehensive and unique coverage of a variety of data around African cultural heritage and scholarship.

The network itself spans across all Cluster locations: partner institutions set up their own research data management systems hosting data and retaining data ownership. WissKI@UBT only provides links to these repositories, ensuring data security and respecting the preferences of contributing researchers. WissKI@UBT is accessible at: www.wisski.uni-bayreuth.de

Data-related Activities at the African Cluster Centres

The ACCs have made remarkable strides in achieving their research data

management (RDM) goals. This progress includes consistent and timely RDM consultations with researchers and project members, as well as the successful establishment of institutional data repository infrastructures. Institutions such as the University of Lagos, Moi University, and more recently, the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo have implemented DSpace systems and initiated data intake and publication workflows.

Over the past year, the DRE has also partnered with ACCs to standardise data intake and publication processes. This includes the incorporation of reliable automation strategies and the development of reference materials that align with both the FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) and CARE (collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility, ethics) principles. The team are in close contact with colleagues from all ACCs, enjoying global exchange and mutual learning: the DRE in Bayreuth has learned a lot from collaborations with ACCs and partner institutions.

WissKI@UBT

WissKI@UBT is designed to make research more connected and more visible, supporting the goal of "Reconfiguring African Studies." It comprises the output of research conducted at the University of Bayreuth and the African Cluster Centres (ACCs), including the University of Lagos, Moi University, University Joseph Ki-Zerbo, and Rhodes University, as well as partner institutions like the Federal University of Bahia.

The DRE has made great progress since WissKI@UBT was launched in 2020. The DRE developed a data model and a dedicated ontology for the Cluster's research data, which forms the basis of all RDM activities. Robust workflows for data intake, collecting, and securely storing all the valuable contributions from the Cluster's research projects were established. And, as an important aspect of WissKI@UBT, the team has developed and refined a website through which researchers can interact with the database.

In WissKI@UBT, each data item is described with detailed metadata provided by the researchers, as shown in Figure 1. Users can explore the research data by keyword search (Figure 2), or filter by resource type, person, institution, subject, or language. Users can also browse by project or collection, easing access to the ILAM or the AfroDigital Museum, for example. It will facilitate searching for potential collaborators and discovery of inspiring research directions in African Studies through WissKI@UBT.

Capacity Building and Outreach

In 2024, the DRE team conducted a variety of online training sessions and workshops with partner universities,

fostering mutual learning and knowledge exchange around research data collection, organisation, and open source sharing practices. Through these collaborative discussions, valuable insights into varying legal and regulatory frameworks across different countries and regions highlighted the importance of continued communication and shared development of data privacy and protection awareness.

In November, the DRE team presented the WissKI@UBT implementation progress at the WissKI Community meeting held at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nürnberg. This invaluable gathering facilitated direct engagement with WissKI developers and promoted connections with fellow users from international universities and museums, enabling knowledge sharing and collaborative discussions about best practices and future developments.

Outlook

As the data network and knowledge graph developments accelerated in 2024, the team gained deeper insights and richer data connections. In 2025, through continued collaboration with other researchers, substantial data

growth will be seen in WissKI. Furthermore, the team is working on unlocking new functionality for researchers visiting WissKI@UBT for discovery and research. That includes improving the website design and enhancing user experience. A key milestone will be integrating interactive knowledge graph visualisation tools, enabling users to independently explore metadata connections and discover deeper research pathways. Looking ahead, the DRE is committed to expanding researcher and data networks, delivering comprehensive technical support and data management training programs, and ultimately making the world of data attractive to as many researchers as possible. 🌍

For inquiries or assistance, please contact the DRE team at: africamultiple-digital@uni-bayreuth.de

Let WissKI@UBT help amplify your research impact!

Learn more:
www.wisski.uni-bayreuth.de



A data item description page on WissKI@UBT

An example of searching on the Navigate page on WissKI@UBT



afriZert in Motion:

Highlights from 2024

Text **CLAUDIA GEBAUER**

Discover the latest from afriZert! New student cohort, first alumni, and a growing network of experts shaping the future of afriZert. Read on to learn more about our exciting developments!

We are excited to share some highlights from the afriZert year 2024. As we settle into our new home at the Research Centre for Africa (FZA) on the campus at the University of Bayreuth, we thought it was the perfect time to look back.

In the summer term 2024, our students completed their second-semester courses and participated in a workshop to prepare them for their time abroad. The workshop, supported by the Bavarian Youth Exchange Foundation, covered essential topics like travel medicine and intercultural communication. You can relive the experience on our YouTube channel:



In the winter term 2024/25 we were delighted to welcome 32 new students to the afriZert family. The University of Bayreuth is particularly well represented this time around, with 15 students calling the Upper Franconian institution their alma mater. We are very excited to see the diversity of our student body grow.

First afriZert Alumni

Twelve of our pioneering afriZert students have completed their supplementary studies and are now part of our alumni network. To stay in touch, a LinkedIn group has been set up, and we are looking forward to seeing the contributions and impact of our alumni community.

A recent headcount shows that the afriZert programme now brings together 66 contributors working in numerous universities as well as in the private and public sector in Germany and abroad. This diverse network is all about providing afriZert students with a rich and multifaceted education on the African continent and its living and working environments.

At the end of 2024, afriZert bid a fond farewell to Sinah El Kord, who has been an integral part of shaping our scholarship program since 2022. At the same time, we welcomed a new team member, Felicia Frempong, who has taken on managing the scholarship program and extending our network further.

Finally, we are incredibly grateful to the Bavarian State Ministry for Science and the Arts for extending our funding for the foreseeable future. This allows us to welcome a new cohort of eager students interested in broadening

At our kick-off workshop in November, made possible by the support of the SJB, our new students were able to get to know each other personally.

their horizon by learning more about the African continent in the winter term 2025/26. 

Stay connected:

If you are on Instagram, be sure to follow us! We launched our account in 2023, and we would love for you to join the conversation.

As afriZert has moved to a new location, please make sure to find us at the FZA in the future:

Postal Address:
Universität Bayreuth / IAS – afriZert
Universitätsstraße 30
95440 Bayreuth

Visitors:
Universität Bayreuth
Forschungszentrum Afrika (FZA) / R. I.10
Universitätsstraße 30
95440 Bayreuth

Interested parties can of course still reach us by email at afriZert@uni-bayreuth.de. For more information on the supplementary study program afriZert, please visit: www.afriZert.uni-bayreuth.de.

1938 – 2025

Tribute to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

With this piece and a dedicated online page, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence pays tribute to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, honoring his impact on literature, language, and decolonial thought

Today my heart is heavy beyond words. Our beloved **Mwalimu Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o** has transitioned. The world has lost a giant: a fierce warrior of words, truth, and African dignity.

Every Sunday like clockwork, the phone would ring – and there you were, with your voice full of life and laughter. You would sing old Gikuyu songs, fill the air with stories soaked in wisdom, and always ask how my children and my mother were doing. That simple consistent care – that was your way. You carried generations with you, reminding us to remember who we are, where we come from, and where we must go. You were more than a teacher, You were a compass. A lighthouse. A revolutionary griot. Through your words, you gave us back our pride, and our power.

Together, we founded KAAAL – the Kemet Awards for Achievement in Afri-

can Languages. It was a vision rooted in your life's work – a space to honour African languages and celebrate those committed to their revitalisation. At KAAAL, we didn't just celebrate you, Mwalimu – we celebrated your profound influence on millions across the world. You never missed a KAAAL conversation. You were always there, present with humility, joy, and generosity, eager to share your deep well of knowledge and love. You showed us that language is liberation, and through KAAAL, we built a living legacy with you.

You were a father to many of us – children of the continent, of the Diaspora, of the struggle, of the dream. You made space for us. You believed in us. You taught us that writing in our mother tongue is an act of defiance and love.

There is no Decolonising the Mind without Mwalimu Ngũgĩ. You gave us

the vocabulary and the vision. You made it clear that to reclaim ourselves, we must reclaim our tongues, our stories, our truths. We will carry your light forward. We will sing the songs. We will write the stories. We will speak the languages. We will teach the children.

You once told me "Language is not just communication – it is memory." Thank you, Mwalimu, for restoring our memory. Thank you for the love. The calls. The laughter. The courage.

Rest now, Mwalimu. Your legacy is rooted deep, and we will continue the work – in your name, in your spirit, in your song.

Lala salama. Mwathani akuhe thayu.

Rahab Njeri,
University of Cologne
Germany



For more tributes to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o from Akosua Adomako Ampofo and Catherine Kiprop please scan the QR-code.



New Year Lecture 2024: "Crazy Tings" Navigating an African Agenda in the Academy

Text **SABINE GREINER**
Photos **ROBERT GÖTZE**

In the 2024 New Year Lecture of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, Akosua Adomako Ampofo explored the tensions of pursuing an African agenda within global academia. The event featured an introduction by Fulera Issaka-Toure and a thoughtful response by Grace Musila, enriching the discussion with critical perspectives from across the continent.

On 18 January 2024, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence inaugurated its event calendar with the Fifth Annual New Year Lecture, delivered by Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Professor of Gender and African Studies at the University of Ghana and chairperson of the Advisory Board of the Cluster. Entitled *Crazy Tings: Can We Be True to an African Agenda and Survive in Today's Academy?*, the lecture offered valuable insights for participants on-site and online.

In her presentation, Adomako Ampofo drew on the popular Nigerian song *Crazy Tings* by Tems as a metaphor for the many "crazy things" encountered

within academic institutions. Music, she argued, is intimately tied to identity, memory and emotional resonance – qualities that reflect the lived experience of Global Africa. By choosing this metaphor, she invited the audience to consider how the academy often times shapes and constrains African scholars.

Central to her theme was the question: Can one remain faithful to an African intellectual agenda without being subsumed by the demands of Western academic structures? Adomako Ampofo urged African scholars to embrace their commitment to local priorities, languages, methods, and forms of knowledge, even when these diverge from prevailing global norms. Survival in the academy, she acknowledged, often means navigating institutional pressures that valorise publication metrics, external funding, and Western epistemologies.

Adomako Ampofo emphasised that being "true to an African agenda" involves more than decolonisation as a critique; it is about embedding African-centred modes of thought within research questions, curricula, and collaboration models. She encouraged scholars to define

their own terms of engagement, rather than adapting to standards imposed by external institutions.

The lecture illuminated the tension between resistance and compliance. Adomako Ampofo did not advocate radical rejection of Western structures, but rather strategic negotiation – where African scholars retain agency over their intellectual contributions. She highlighted the importance of intergenerational solidarity and institutional support systems that sustain scholarly autonomy.

Following the lecture, the audience engaged in a lively Q&A, reflecting on issues such as the practical challenges of funding, the role of languages other than English in scholarship, and the emotional labour of decolonial critique. Adomako Ampofo responded with both rigour and warmth, acknowledging the structural barriers while affirming the urgency of agency and collective persistence.

As the lecture concluded, the message was clear: for African and Africanist scholars, survival in the academy does not require compromise of one's intellectual commitments. Rather, it demands creativity, collective resolve, and a steadfast orientation towards knowledge rooted in African realities.

The New Year Lecture 2024 set a thoughtful, probing tone for the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence's year ahead, inviting further inquiry into how decolonial agendas can flourish and remain sustainable within global academic structures – a challenge that is as urgent as the pertinent questions Adomako Ampofo raised.

Text **SABINE GREINER**
Photos **ROBERT GÖTZE**

In the 2024 edition of the Okwui Enwezor Lecture Series, Katharina Warda unearthed the hidden histories of Black East Germans, challenging the audience to rethink identity, memory, and whose stories history chooses to tell.

On 17 July 2024, the distinguished *Okwui Enwezor Lecture Series* was held for the fourth time at Iwalewaha, University of Bayreuth. This time, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence's flagship event welcomed the author, artist, and academic Katharina Warda, who presented her illuminating lecture, *Invisible(Hi)Story. Exploring Black East German History*. Drawing upon rich research and compelling narratives, Warda's presentation delved into overlooked histories, interrogating the past to reshape our current understanding of identity, memory, and belonging.

Established to honour the legacy of the late curator and global African arts pioneer Okwui Enwezor, the lecture series creates space for trailblazing voices that question and expand prevailing narratives of art, culture, and history, especially in African and Diasporic contexts. This year's focus on the hidden histories of Black people in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) offered a critical, much-needed lens on how Black lives and experiences were constructed, concealed, and contested under East German regimes.

Warda's exploration revealed an 'invisible archive' comprised of fragmented stories, including oral histories, photo-



Okwui Enwezor Lecture 2024

graphs, correspondence, and nascent community records. Through this archival excavation, she painted a nuanced portrait of Black individuals and families who inhabited the GDR's spaces – students, diplomats, musicians, athletes, and children born of bi-cultural relationships. Each narrative she presented spoke to lives lived both within and beyond state surveillance, ideological conformity, and Cold War binaries.

A central theme of the lecture was the paradox of *visibility and erasure*: how Black East Germans were seen – as

symbols, tokens, or curiosities – yet seldom heard as full subjects with agency and complexity. Warda highlighted how state socialism wielded both inclusionary rhetoric and exclusionary practices, oscillating between celebrating supposed solidarity with decolonised nations and ignoring the lived realities of racially marked individuals in its midst. In doing so, she called for a re-examination of GDR historiography that centres the perspectives of those at the margins. By unveiling invisible (hi)stories, Warda reminded us that history is never complete without the voices of the marginalised. Her work challenges us to rethink conventional archives, to embrace discomfort, and to commit to a more inclusive historiography – one that acknowledges how official histories are often sustained through the silencing of other voices.

The captivating lecture drew a large audience in presence and online, including University of Bayreuth scholars and students, members of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, and participants from all corners of the world. In the spirit of Okwui Enwezor's legacy – his insistence on polyvocality, intersectionality, and global criticality – this lecture invited ongoing enquiry into Black experiences across unexpected geographies. Situated at the crossroads of German, African, and Diasporic narratives, Warda's research propels us to question: Whose histories do we recognise? Whose remain invisible? It is these queries, and the unearthing of those obscured by archives and ideology, that made this lecture so compelling and powerful.



Rüdiger Seesemann and Katharina Warda in conversation



Katharina Fink, Katharina Warda, Rüdiger Seesemann, Katharina Greven

For those who wish to dive deeper, the full lecture is available on the Cluster's YouTube channel



Rüdiger Seesemann, Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Fulera Issaka-Toure and Grace Musila

Text **DORIS LÖHR**
Photos **ROBERT GÖTZE**

The 30th Association for African Studies in Germany (VAD) Conference, titled Reconfigurations in Africa – and in African Studies, took place at the University of Bayreuth from 30 September to 2 October, 2024. The biennial VAD conference was organised by the Institute of African Studies (IAS) and the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth, and supported by NomadIT.

The 2024 Association for African Studies in Germany (VAD) conference explored transformative processes in Africa and their implications for African Studies globally. The format was hybrid, for only the second time since the VAD's inauguration in 1969, and brought together almost 700 participants, with more than 400 attending in person. The University of Bayreuth campus was chosen as the conference venue for the

third time: the University of Bayreuth previously hosted in 1998 – the topic was *Africa and Globalisation* – and 2014, when *Future Africa* was the theme, based on the general research focus of the then newly-founded Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies, a seven-year project with third-party funding through the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMBF).

The 2024 conference focused on the intersections of African perspectives with pressing global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and democratic erosion. A core goal was to deconstruct Eurocentric paradigms in knowledge production by emphasising reflexivity, relationality, and multiplicity in African studies. Discussions ranged from historical and contemporary changes in African institutions to their handling of crises like climate impacts and armed conflicts. The conference encouraged a re-evaluation of how African and non-African institutions

collaborate in knowledge creation. Scholars, activists, politicians, and artists participated, fostering a collaborative and multidisciplinary exchange.

The program featured seven thematic streams collaboratively developed with representatives from the African Cluster Centres in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso, Bayreuth scholars, and the VAD main committee. The streams centred around:

■ **Location-based African Studies:** Debates on perspectives shaped by specific regional contexts.

■ **Perspectives on current crises:** Migration, pandemics, climate change, and their societal impacts.

■ **Imagining 'Africanness':** Reflections on African identities in Africa and the Diaspora.

■ **The political economy of extractivism:** Recurring debt, resource extraction, and energy transitions shape Africa's entanglement with global capitalism.

■ **Social media, archiving and 'the digital':** How the digital sphere opens new ways to communicate in and about Africa, with scholars, artists, and activists using it.

■ **New forms of collaboration in African Arts:** Exploration of innovative forms of cultural production and collaboration.

■ **Ecology and planetary consciousness:** Examining the interconnectedness of environmental, spiritual, and societal systems.

This approach aimed to enrich African Studies and expand its global resonance. The conference hosted thematic panels, workshops, and keynote speeches addressing both theoretical and practical aspects of reconfiguring African Studies. Topics included the effects of colonial legacies, the role of African universities, and pathways to equitable academic collaboration. The conference reinforced the importance of decentring European perspectives by advocating for African-driven narratives and methodologies in research and education. It also highlighted the need to address the situatedness of knowledge, emphasising inclusivity and accountability in global academic discourse.

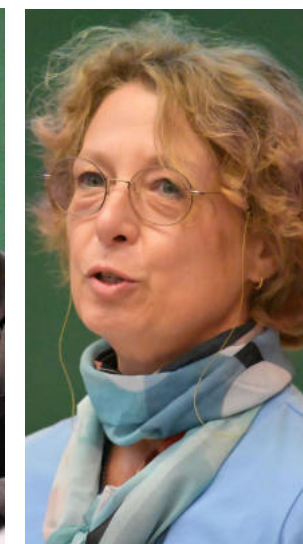
The event marked a pivotal moment for African Studies by fostering intellectual exchange and proposing strategies for reimagining the field in response to global and African-specific challenges. The opening keynote by Grace Musila (University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg) discussed *Black Sensemaking / Discretion*, focusing on discretion as an ethical and cultural practice in Black societies. The closing keynote by Mactar Ndoeye (former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Delegate) reviewed the UN International Decade for People of

African Descent (2015–2024), its achievements, challenges, and expectations for a proposed second decade.

Highlights were also the Young Scholars Forum, held on 29 September 2024. This session was exceptionally well-attended and widely praised, providing an invaluable platform for emerging voices in African Studies. A vibrant social gathering on 30 September at Zentrum, Bayreuth, added a cultural and celebratory dimension to the conference. Attendees appreciated the event's excellent catering and the DJ talents of the colleagues Hauke Dorsch and Tom Simmert, fostering informal networking and engagement. During the conference, the pre-opening of the exhibition (*With These Hands* by South African artist Sabelo Mcinziba) was held at Iwalewahaus.

In sum, the VAD Conference 2024 was a resounding success, advancing the decentring of European perspectives in African Studies while fostering meaningful collaboration among global stakeholders. It underscored the evolving role of African institutions and the necessity of interdisciplinary and reflexive approaches in addressing contemporary challenges. Additionally, the conference gave a platform for networking, and feedback from participants highlighted the quality of scholarly engagement and the importance of integrating cultural and social elements into academic events. 🌍

VAD Conference 2024



Impressions from the 2024 VAD Conference in Bayreuth

Centring African Perspectives: Insights from the Young Scholars Forum 2024

Text ASMA BEN HADJ HASSEN, DARJA WOLFMEIER, SAÏKOU OUMAR SAGNANE, LUISA SCHNEIDER

The Young Scholars Forum 2024 at the University of Bayreuth brought together early-career researchers from across Africa and beyond to explore urgent questions at the intersection of knowledge, activism, and art.

On Sunday, 29 September 2024, the University of Bayreuth welcomed early-career researchers for the Young Scholars Forum (YSF) 2024. Held under the theme *Research in African Studies and Societies*, the event opened in a warm and energetic atmosphere, creating space for academic exchange and reflection on African epistemologies, research ethics, and scholarly responsibility.

The forum was co-created by Junior Fellows from the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) and PhD students from Moi University (Kenya), the University of Lagos (Nigeria), and Rhodes University (South Africa), partners in the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. Together, they shaped a shared vision for an inclusive and critical space rooted in diverse knowledge traditions and everyday scholarly realities.

Rüdiger Seesemann (Dean and Spokesperson, Africa Multiple Cluster of

Excellence) and Andrea Behrends (conference convenor and Chair of the Association for African Studies in Germany (VAD)) opened the YSF, highlighting the importance of transcontinental collaboration and young voices in African Studies.

The keynote address by Nomusa Makhubu, Professor of Art History at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, offered a compelling start. Titled *Knowledge and the Picket Line*, her talk explored the relationship between creativity and resistance in post-apartheid South Africa. Through powerful examples such as Inga Somdya's symbolic works and Qondiswa James' performance *The Fire This Time*, Makhubu illustrated how artistic practises can serve as acts of memory, critique, and protest, highlighting the body as a site of political and historical struggle.

After lunch, the forum continued with interactive formats. A highlight was the World Café, where participants discussed the intersections of research, activism, and community engagement. These rotating conversations sparked connection and reflection on the tensions between academic rigour and real-world impact. A resonant roundtable brought together women scholars to openly discuss often-silenced issues in academia, including mental health, parenting during PhD studies, and career uncertainty. The space fostered care, honesty, and soli-

darity, reminding everyone that behind each scholarly path is a personal struggle.

As evening fell, art closed the day. Liberian poet Patricia Jabbeh Wesley delivered a moving reading on identity, history, and survival. DJ Izzy followed with a celebratory set, bringing the day to a joyful close.

The YSF 2024 demonstrated how scholarship, art, and community can converge to inspire reflection and connection. For many participants, the YSF was a shared space of purpose, care, and imagination.

We extend our gratitude to the VAD for their institutional backing and to the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence for their support. Special thanks go to Christine Scherer, Academic Coordinator for Early Career and Equal Opportunity, for her dedicated efforts in bringing our collective vision to life, and to Cassandra Mark-Thiesen for her invaluable contributions. The Young Scholars Forum 2024 in African Studies was organised by the following PhD students and postdoctoral researchers: Elizabeth Murrey and Tabitha Osoro (Moi University), Isaiah Olayode (University of Lagos), Binjun Hu (Rhodes University), Asma Ben Hadj Hassen, Darja Wolfmeier, Deborah Dike, Edidiong Ibanga, Perseverance Madhuku, Saïkou Oumar Sagnane, and Luisa Schneider (all from the University of Bayreuth).



Happy participants after the workshop, looking forward to the poetry reading in the evening.

Knowledge Lab 2024: Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò's Critical Turn at Bayreuth

Text and photo ANTHONY OKEREGBE

During the 2024/25 winter semester, a bold reimagining of African agency unfolded at Bayreuth, where Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò's provocative sessions reconsidered decolonial orthodoxy and inspired new dialogues on temporalities, sovereignty, and intellectual futures.

In the 2024/25 winter semester, two standout sessions in the Annual Theme Year on Temporalities enriched the Knowledge Lab at Bayreuth. The first, held on 21 November 2024, was a reading and discussion of Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò's seminal works *Africa Must Be Modern* and *Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously*. The second, a public lecture delivered by Táíwò himself, took place on 12 December 2024. Táíwò was chosen not only because of the current interest in rethinking decolonisation, but also for the thematic resonance of his work with the concept of Temporalities.

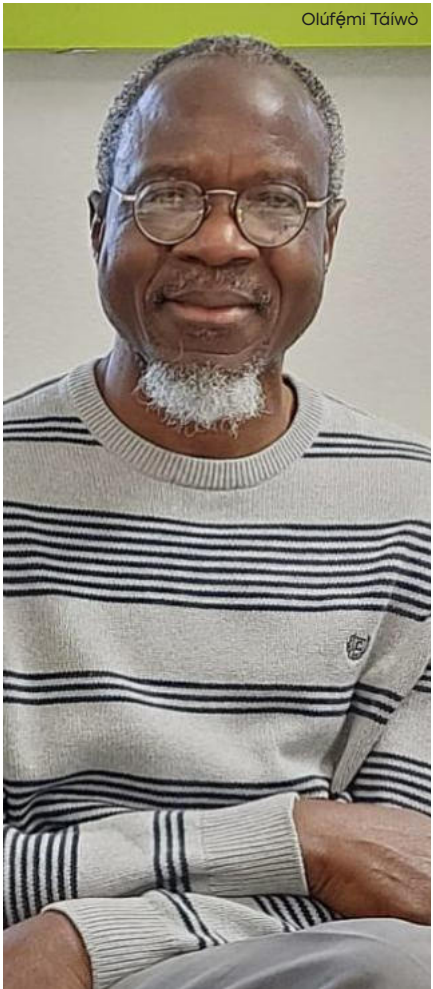
During the earlier Knowledge Lab event, which fostered critical inquiry into how African societies engage with colonial history and the present, Táíwò's works were examined as a potential watershed moment in the evolving epistemology of African Studies. Participants, who had earlier been invited to read and reflect on selected chapters, explored Táíwò's arguments through the lens of Temporalities, and debated how African agency navigates past colonial legacies and future aspirations. Moderated by Annual Theme Fellow Anthony Okeregbe, the discussion was led by Patrick Oloko from the African Cluster Centre (ACC) in Lagos, Nigeria, and Paul Opondo, ACC Moi, Kenya, whose diverse perspectives enriched the dialogue.

This dynamic gathering paved the way for deeper conversations with Táíwò at the 12 December 2024 public lecture.

In the thought-provoking speech titled *Against Decolonisation: Africa's Place in the Global Circuit of Ideas*, Táíwò reiterated his bold critique of prevailing decolonial discourses, and challenged African scholars and institutions to rethink the conceptual framing of history, culture, and agency. He also argued for a re-centring of African intellectual sovereignty and an honest interrogation of how temporal narratives, from colonial legacies to present-day practices, shape scholarly engagements.

Also moderated by Okeregbe, the lecture featured rich commentary from the discussants Thando Njovane (Rhodes University, South Africa) and Olabode Ibironke (Rutgers University, USA), with both offering nuanced reflections on the global and continental impact of Táíwò's books and lecture. Attendees actively engaged Táíwò's provocative stance on epistemic agency and the role of African thinkers in global scholarship. The discussion continued informally when BIGSAS Junior Fellows hosted Táíwò for an intimate dialogue on mentorship and philosophical inquiry.

Beyond academic exchanges, Táíwò's visit was punctuated by a tour of the Documentation Centre Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg, which offers in-depth insights into the Nuremberg trials, including profiles of the defendants, the nature of their crimes, and the ensuing legal proceedings. As a philosophy of law lecturer, Táíwò described the experience as deeply enriching both as a valuable teaching resource for his students and as a long-awaited personal milestone.



Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò

His itinerary also included nostalgic visits to the Margravial Opera House Museum and Iwalewahaush, marking a heartfelt return to Bayreuth, where in 1999 he had once served as a Visiting Professor at the Institute of African Studies.

In all, these sessions not only elevated ongoing debates in African Studies, but also marked a pivotal moment in Bayreuth's commitment to intellectual openness and critical dialogue.



Telling Africa's Stories Right:

The BIGSAS Journalist Award 2024

Text SABINE GREINER
Photos ROBERT GÖTZE

From green energy in Kenya to tech-powered education in Ghana – the 2024 BIGSAS Journalist Award celebrates thoughtful, future-oriented reporting that challenges outdated stereotypes about Africa. Held in Bayreuth, the award honours journalists who bring nuance, insight, and respect to their storytelling.

On 7 November 2024, the University of Bayreuth's Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence hosted the sixth Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) Journalist Award, honouring outstanding German-language journalism that presents Africa through a nuanced, contemporary lens. This year's ceremony, held on campus, was more than a celebration of journalistic achievement – it was a call to re-think the way Africa is portrayed in the media.

Originally launched in 2011 by BIGSAS and integrated into the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence in 2019, the award recognises reporting that avoids clichés, instead offering balanced, well-researched perspectives on African societies, cultures, and innovations. The 2024 edition drew 45 submissions from across the German-speaking world, and a 15-member jury chaired by Yacouba Banhoro, director of the African Cluster Centre in Ouagadougou, selected twelve articles for the shortlist. From these, three journalists were ultimately honoured for their work.

Rüdiger Seesemann, Spokesperson of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, opened the evening by highlighting the vital role of journalism in shaping public understanding. He noted that the award exists to encourage reporting that goes beyond crisis and stereotype, emphasising the importance of stories that reflect Africa's diversity, agency, and complexity.

Spotlight on the Winners

First prize was awarded to journalist Birte Mensing for her article *Mit grüner Energie in die Zukunft (With Green Energy into the Future)*, published in *frings* –

on Africa.

The jury praised the piece for its clarity, depth, and emphasis on local agency in addressing global challenges.

The second prize was shared by Ruona Meyer and Bettina Rühl, whose works reflect similarly innovative and socially engaged themes. Meyer's article, published on the RiffReporter platform, takes the reader to Senegal, where a start-up has begun producing baby food from locally sourced organic ingredients. The enterprise uses social media to market its porridge products while promoting nutritional awareness and supporting small-scale farmers. Meyer captures the energy and ingenuity of young African entrepreneurs, framing the story not as a novelty but as part of a broader economic and social transformation. Her reporting highlights how digital tools are empowering local initiatives that directly respond to community needs.



The winners, jury and laudators of the 2024 BIGSAS Journalist Award

Rühl's contribution focuses on educational technology in Ghana. Her article examines a project that delivers digital learning through mobile computer labs and an offline education app. In regions where internet access is limited or unreliable, this approach helps close the digital divide by making modern teaching materials available to schools in remote areas. Rühl's narrative gives voice to students, teachers, and developers, weaving their experiences into a compelling account of how technology can be harnessed for equity and inclusion.

Each of the prize winners received a hand-crafted statue designed by Zimbabwean artist Walter Maponga. The first prize included 1,500 Euro in prize money, while the second-place awards carried 750 Euro each. The funding was

provided by the Universitätsverein Bayreuth, reflecting strong institutional support for journalism that fosters global understanding.

More Than a Prize Ceremony

The award evening extended beyond the formalities of announcement and applause. German-Ghanaian actor Eugene Boateng delivered a powerful keynote address, in which he shared personal insights on diversity in the German film and media industry. He emphasised the need for broader representation – not only on screen but also behind the scenes – and spoke about how storytelling, when handled responsibly, can dismantle prejudices and create space for new narratives.

The evening's cultural highlight came in the form of a musical performance by Guinean griot singer Sona Diabaté. Known for her role in preserving and transmitting West African

oral traditions, Diabaté brought a sense of continuity and heritage to the occasion, reminding the audience that storytelling is not only a journalistic or academic pursuit, but also a deeply rooted cultural practice.

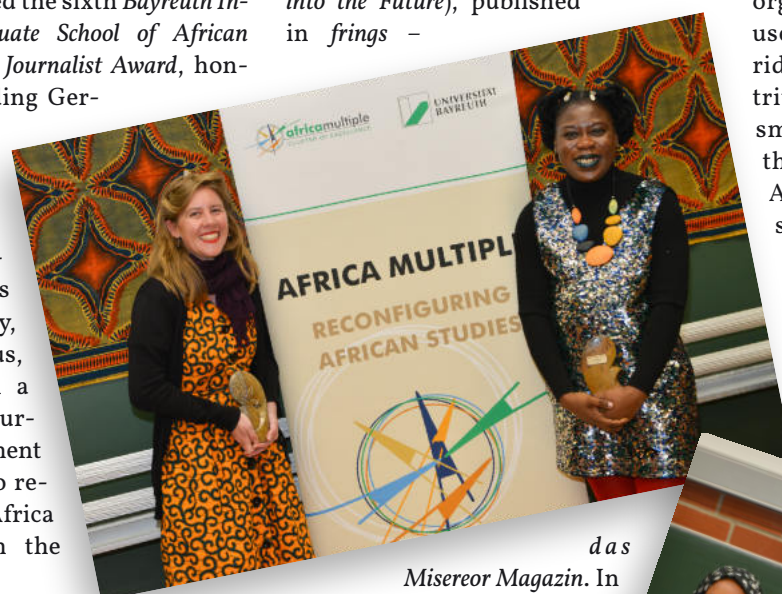
Rewriting the Narrative

In a world where media consumption is fast-paced and often sensationalist, the BIGSAS Journalist Award stands as a counterweight. It acknowledges that the stories we tell – and how we tell them – shape public consciousness in profound ways. The 2024 laureates demonstrated that African contexts deserve reporting that is not only accurate, but also empathetic, forward-looking, and grounded in lived realities.

By highlighting solutions rather than just problems, these journalists have expanded the horizon of what is considered 'newsworthy'. Their work offers fresh insights into African societies as complex, dynamic, and full of possibility. It also challenges European media professionals and audiences to rethink their assumptions and engage more thoughtfully with global issues.

Looking Ahead

As the Africa Multiple Cluster continues its work at the intersection of research, education, and public engagement, the BIGSAS Journalist Award will remain an essential part of its mission. The next award cycle is planned for 2026. 🌍



das
Misereor Magazin. In

this feature, Mensing offers a vivid and uplifting portrait of Kenya's renewable energy transition. She details how the country now produces almost all of its electricity through sustainable sources such as hydropower, geothermal, and wind energy. Far from focusing on problems, Mensing's article illustrates progress, resilience, and forward-thinking governance – qualities often overlooked in international reporting



Photos f.l.t.r.: Winners Birte Mensing (l.) and Ruona Meyer – third winner Bettina Rühl joined online. Moderators Fatima Elmardiya Ahmed (left) and Thierry Boudjekeu (right). Singer Sona Diabaté and Eugene Boateng.



A Forum for Reflection and Dialogue

Text SABINE GREINER
Photo ROBERT GÖTZE

The day after the BIGSAS Journalist Award ceremony, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence hosted a public roundtable, **Connecting Continents: How Can African Studies and Journalism Benefit from Each Other?** Moderated by Cluster members **Billian Otundo and Joschka Philipps**, the discussion brought together two winners of the BIGSAS Journalist Award, **Birte Mensing and Ruona Meyer**, jury members, and scholars from African Studies.

From the outset, one theme dominated: the enduring prevalence of stereotypes in Western media portrayals of Africa. Participants agreed that nuanced, context-rich storytelling requires collaboration between journalists and academics. As first-place winner Birte Mensing noted, the key is “not about positive reporting, but about nuanced reporting” – recognising both achievements and challenges.

The conversation highlighted that journalists covering African topics often struggle to access reliable data and knowledgeable contacts. Academic institutions, it was argued, could play a more active role, connecting journalists with local researchers and community leaders, and sharing existing fieldwork. Runner-up Ruona Meyer illustrated this potential with her award-winning story on Senegalese baby food entrepreneurs: “This story would not be possible without the academics I found already working on this.”

Ethics and reflexivity were central concerns. Both journalists and scholars stressed the need to acknowledge positionality and avoid extractive practices. “Bias is like food,” Meyer re-



The roundtable pane (f.l.t.r.): Joschka Philipps, Ruona Meyer, Birte Mensing and Billian Otundo.

flected. “Anybody can start eating it without realising.” Building trust, spending extended time in the field, and maintaining contact with sources beyond publication were described as essential, if resource-intensive, steps.

Power dynamics also surfaced in discussions about editorial control. Headlines can distort nuanced work – sometimes endangering contributors. Panellists urged academics to be explicit about boundaries when engaging with the media, and for journalists to push back when editorial framing risks harm.

The roundtable also addressed the shifting media landscape. While mainstream German outlets devote limited coverage to the Global South, there is increasing reporting through digital platforms and cross-border collaborations. Funding constraints remain, but so too does the opportunity for shared projects that publish in multiple languages and formats, making work accessible both to international and local audiences.

Audience members raised questions about how journalists adapt to unexpected findings in the field. Mensing described arriving at a school to report on solar installations, only to discover

the panels had not worked for months – a challenge she reframed as a chance to discuss sustainability and maintenance. Meyer recalled her surprise at hearing Senegalese farmers discuss the war in Ukraine, and at witnessing sophisticated digital practices by non-literate traders.

Both agreed that mutual learning was at the heart of such encounters. For scholars, working with journalists can offer fresh channels for disseminating research to wider publics; for journalists, academic expertise can ground stories in deeper context and comparative insight.

While no single formula emerged, the discussion reaffirmed that African Studies and journalism share a stake in fostering a more informed and equitable global conversation. Collaboration, the panellists suggested, works best when it is reciprocal, transparent, and conscious of the histories and hierarchies that shape how Africa is seen – and heard – in the world. 🌍



The roundtable can be watched on YouTube:



Overview of Umar Timol's activities, photos and poems

Text SABINE GREINER

In May 2024, Mauritian poet and photographer Umar Timol joined the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence as a chronicler. Through poetry, portraiture, conversation, and public installations, he offered unique artistic reflections on the Cluster's intellectual life.

For the third edition of its *Cluster Chronicles*, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence invited Umar Timol, an acclaimed writer, poet, and photographer from Mauritius, to accompany its activities as chronicler during May 2024. With his multi-faceted artistic background, Timol brought a quiet, reflective presence to Bayreuth, translating everyday moments into poetic and visual expressions.

His stay began with the event *How to Capture the Soul*, held on 13 May 2024 at Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb. In an intimate conversation, Timol introduced his portrait work – including his 2022 volume *Graces* – and reflected on the philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of photography. The event opened a space for dialogue on how art can reveal inner presence, and how portraiture becomes a form of story-

telling. The evening highlighted Timol's belief that the soul can be glimpsed in quiet gestures, captured through both lens and language.

Ten days later, on 23 May 2024, Timol moderated and participated in the roundtable discussion *Writing, Mise-en-scène, Public*, also hosted at Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb. This event explored theatre as a form of multilingual, intercultural expression. Together with scholars, artists, and the Bayreuth public, Timol engaged with the interplay of writing, staging, and audience reception, adding his perspective as both a poet and attentive observer of human interaction.

A particular highlight of his residency was his contribution to the *inside/out* series at Iwalewaha. Under this initiative entitled *La Nostalgie des Ombres/The Nostalgia of Shadows*, Timol's photographs were projected onto the building's ground-floor windows during the evening, offering passers-by the chance to encounter art in the public space. These visual poems – illuminated in Bayreuth's cityscape – invited reflection on memory, identity, and the overlooked moments of daily life. The installation transformed Iwalewaha into a quiet exhibition

site that blended the personal and the public, the written and the seen.

Throughout his time in Bayreuth, Timol also produced a collection of photographs and texts documenting his encounters with the Cluster's people and spaces. Portraits of scholars and staff captured in informal moments formed a visual record of academic life beyond the lecture hall. With a soft eye for light and mood, his images portrayed the human texture of intellectual exchange.

Cluster Chronicles are curated by Ute Fendler, the Cluster's Vice Dean of Internationalisation and Public Engagement. Reflecting on Timol's residency, she remarked, “Umar Timol opened a poetic space in the everyday. His work encouraged us to slow down and notice – with care and curiosity – the people and processes that shape our work.” Timol's residency continues the *Cluster Chronicles* series, following in the footsteps of Elnathan John (2021) and JeanLuc Raharimanana (2023), and reaffirms the Cluster's commitment to creative collaboration at the intersection of art and research. His images and reflections remain part of the Cluster's evolving archive, inviting ongoing dialogue between disciplines and imaginations. 🌍



Photo and portraits (left: Maryam Shoojei, right: Laude Ngadi) taken by Umar Timol during his stay as Cluster chronicler in Bayreuth. More on the Cluster website (see QR code above)

Cinema Africa 2024

A Panorama of African Voices and Visions in Bayreuth

ricomulti



Filmmaker Seydou Boundouane was present in Bayreuth for the screening of „Le Sermon des Prophètes“ which concluded the 2024 Cinema Africa festival.

Text SABINE GREINER

From Lesotho’s windswept high-lands to the turbulent landscapes of the Sahel, Cinema Africa 2024, plus its bonus AfriKaleidoskop screenings, brought a cornucopia of African stories to Bayreuth. Over six days, filmmakers, scholars, and audiences alike engaged in a rich dialogue where art and analysis met on equal ground.

From 21 to 24 January 2024, the official *Cinema Africa* programme invited audiences on a resonant cinematic journey through African narratives, presented at Cineplex Bayreuth. The festival then expanded into a supplementary *Afri Kaleidoskop* strand on 25 to 26 January, hosted at Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb, where three further thought-provoking films were screened, each followed by in-depth discussions with filmmakers, moderators, and the audience. Together, these two parts created a week-long celebration of African cinema, bringing into focus the diverse voices, visions, and debates shaping

the continent’s contemporary film landscape. Organised by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and curated by its Spokesperson Ute Fendler, the programme offered audiences an intense journey through contemporary African filmmaking.

As Fendler emphasised during the opening evening, “*Cinema Africa* is not just a showcase of films – it is a forum for dialogue that connects African filmmakers with audiences in Europe, inviting us to engage with pressing cultural, political, and social questions from multiple perspectives.” This vision framed the festival’s selection and guided the dynamic interplay between screenings and post-film conversations.

The opening night set a high bar with *This Is Not a Burial, It’s a Resurrection*, the first film from Lesotho ever submitted for the Academy Award for Best International Feature. Directed by Lemo-hang Jeremiah Mosese, the film recounts the story of the elderly Mantoa, whose life is upended when a dam

threatens to submerge her village. Mary Twala Mhlongo’s portrayal of Mantoa captures the weight of grief, resilience, and defiance, her gaze etched with the marks of time and struggle. Mosese’s camera does not shy away from hardship, yet frames the Lesotho highlands with painterly beauty, reminding the audience of cinema’s capacity to transfigure loss into lasting images. The emotional resonance was palpable in the post-screening conversation, where the endurance of Mantoa’s spirit became a metaphor for broader struggles against displacement.

The second evening brought *Omen* by Belgian-Congolese director and musician Baloji, winner of the New Voice Prize in the *Un Certain Regard* section at Cannes 2023. A multi-threaded narrative interweaving characters across gender and generational lines, and the film examines belief in witchcraft, its entanglement with prejudice, and its role in sustaining discrimination within families. Baloji’s “modern fairy tale” also touches on feminism and intercultural

discovery, themes that moderators unpacked through both cinematic and Religious Studies perspectives. The audience responded enthusiastically, discussing the fine balance the film strikes between cultural specificity and universal human concerns.

On 23 January, *Mami Wata* by Nigerian director C.J. ‘Fiery’ Obasi drew viewers into the monochrome world of the fictional village of Iyi, where the people revere the water spirit through their intermediary Mama Efe, her daughter Zinwe, and protégée Prisca. When mysterious child deaths stir unrest, and a rebel leader named Jasper arrives, the fragile equilibrium collapses. The film’s stylised black-and-white cinematography – winner of Best Cinematography and Best Set Design at the Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO), alongside the African Critics’ Prize – heightens its exploration of the tension between tradition and modernity. The ensuing discussion revisited the enduring legacies of colonialism and the contested spaces of identity in African societies, as well as African legends like *Mami Wata* and their impact on contemporary experiences.

The *AfriKaleidoskop* side programme enriched the festival with further screenings. *Sadrack*, by Cameroonian director Narcisse Wandji, addressed the largely unspoken reality of Alzheimer’s disease in African contexts. Inspired by the filmmaker’s personal experience with his grandmother, the narrative follows Bayo, whose daily life reveals the disease’s emotional and social impacts. The director, unable to attend in person, shared his motivations in a recorded message, sparking audience reflections on the film’s sensitivity and its potential to raise awareness.

The festival’s political register deepened with *Sira*, by Burkinabé director Apolline Traoré. Set against the backdrop of terrorism in the Sahel, the film follows its eponymous protagonist through the dangers of conflict, while also engaging with broader questions about the causes, consequences, and governmental re-

sponses to extremist violence. The screening was attended by Justin Ouoro, Ambassador of Burkina Faso to Germany, who, together with PhD student Marie Tsogo, guided a post-film discussion marked by candid exchanges between the diplomatic and academic perspectives in the room.

Other highlights included *Harka*, a Franco-Tunisian-Belgian production by Lotfy Nathan inspired by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, whose death triggered the Tunisian Revolution and the wider Arab Spring. Centring on Ali, a young man eking out a living selling petrol in a corrupt system, the film’s claustrophobic framing and intimate close-ups drew viewers deep into the character’s emotional landscape. The screening was followed, without pause, by *Omen* in the neighbouring cinema hall, underscoring the festival’s dynamic pacing.

Eystein Young Dingha’s *The Planter’s Plantation* opened the *AfriKaleidoskop* strand with the story of Enanga, a determined young woman resisting familial and societal pressures to retain the plantation her father acquired from a departing colonialist. The work, interpreted as a decolonial allegory, provoked discussion on the persistence of neo-colonial structures in contemporary African economies.

The festival concluded on 26 January with *The Sermon of the Prophets* (*Le Sermon des Prophètes*, 2022), the debut feature of Burkinabé filmmaker Seydou Boundouane. The story follows Abdou Djamal, a manipulative militia leader masquerading as a devout Muslim. Boundouane’s presence in Bayreuth facilitated a substantive dialogue with Ibrahim Bachir, a doctoral researcher at Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS)



Marie Tsogo presented the last movie of the 2024 screenings.



The ambassador of Burkina Faso to Germany, Justin Ouoro, attended the presentation of „Sira“.



The 2024 Cinema Africa team with their guests: (f.l.t.r.) Thierry Boudjekeu, Orianne Azangban, Justin Ouoro, curator Ute Fendler, Seydou Boundouane, Marie Tsogo.

specialising in terrorism in the Sahel. Audience members seized the opportunity for probing questions, bringing the 45-minute exchange to an animated close before the final thanks and farewells.

Across its five core screenings and the extended *AfriKaleidoskop* programme, *Cinema Africa 2024* reaffirmed its place as an essential platform for African filmmakers to present their work in a context that values critical engagement as much as artistic merit. By fostering encounters between directors, scholars, diplomats, and diverse audiences, the festival continues to expand the space for African cinematic voices in the German cultural landscape – and to underline that these stories, rooted in specific geographies and histories, speak with urgency to global audiences.



afriKaleidoskop meets arte

A Cinematic Lens on African Realities in 2024

Text DORIS LÖHR
Photos ROBERT GÖTZE

As part of the cooperation between the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and ARTE, three public film events with subsequent discussions took place in 2024. The screenings, usually at Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb, explored perspectives on African societies, history, and global interdependencies through the medium of film and fostered public discussion.

As part of a unique collaboration between the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and the European cultural broadcaster ARTE, three public film screenings followed by expert discussions were held in 2024 under the banner *AfriKaleidoskop meets ARTE*. This curated series explored African societies, histories, and global interdependencies through documentary cinema, engaging German-speaking audiences in fresh and critical perspectives.

Migration and Return in Focus Senegal: From Paris to Dakar

The series launched on 20 March at Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb in Bayreuth with the screening of the documentary *Senegal: Von Paris nach Dakar (Senegal: From Paris to Dakar)*. Directed by Jean Yves Cauchard, Gaspard Baudry,



Ute Fendler, Sangan Vital Cédric Yao

Sylvain Kasper, and Valentin Barrault, the film examines transnational migration, return, and entrepreneurial initiatives between France and Senegal. The ensuing panel brought together Lamine Doumbia, a University of Bayreuth alumnus and Research Associate at Humboldt University in Berlin, and Ibrahima Sene, a specialist in African history at the Bayreuth Chair on History in Africa. Moderated by Thierry Boudjekeu, a doctoral candidate at BIGSAS and researcher in the *Black Atlantic Revisited* project, the discussion provided rich insights into the complexities of post-migration life, return economies, and Diasporic identities.

Art, Identity, and Transcultural Dialogue: Stadt Land Kunst: Spezial Elfenbeinküste

The second event, held on 22 May, featured the ARTE documentary *Stadt Land Kunst: Spezial Elfenbeinküste*, a cultural journey through Côte d'Ivoire's vibrant art, music, and heritage. The screening was followed by a conversation with Ute Fendler, Chair of Romance Literature and Comparative Studies with a focus on Africa, and Director of several Africa Multiple research projects. She was joined by Sangan Vital Cédric Yao, a Master's student, originally from Yamoussoukro, capital of Côte d'Ivoire, whose thesis explores the digital economy and ecological change in Côte d'Ivoire. The discussion delved into the trans-



f.l.t.r.: Joschka Philipps, Juliet Gudhlanga, Philipp Sandner, Jan Sändig

cultural connections highlighted in the film, particularly through the lens of African-American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, who traveled to Côte d'Ivoire in search of artistic and ancestral roots. Directed by Fabrice Michelin, the documentary traces Basquiat's encounters with the Ivorian art scene and broader themes of identity, cultural memory, and global artistic exchange.

Global Inequality and the Resource Race: Operation Africa

The year concluded with the screening of *Operation Afrika – Die Jagd nach den Rohstoffen der Zukunft (Operation Africa – The Hunt for Future Resources)* on 18 December. This hard-hitting investigative documentary scrutinises the global race for Africa's raw materials and the continuing economic dependencies imposed on the continent.

Director Philipp Sandner attended the event and participated in a critical discussion led by Jan Sändig, Postdoctoral Researcher in Peace and Conflict Studies. He was joined by Joschka Philipps, Junior Research Group Leader at the Africa Multiple Cluster and interim Professor of Sociology of Africa, and Juliet Gudhlanga, a Ph.D. candidate at BIGSAS. Together, the panel unpacked pressing issues of global inequality, neo-extractive economies, and the role of African agency in shaping future development. 🌍

All panel discussions were recorded and are accessible via ARTE's event media library and the Cluster's YouTube channel



A Reflective Evening at Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb: Der vermessene Mensch

Text and photos SABINE GREINER

On 11 July 2024, Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb in Bayreuth hosted an evening of cinematic and historical reflection with the screening of *Measures of Men (Der vermessene Mensch)*, followed by a live discussion. Organised as part of the AfriKaleidoskop series, the event brought audiences face to face with a harrowing yet crucial chapter of German colonial history.

The evening centred on the 2023 feature film *Measures of Men*, directed by Lars Kraume and inspired by Uwe Timm's novel *Morenga*. Set in the early 20th century, the historical drama follows a young ethnologist from Berlin who travels to German South West Africa – present-day Namibia – at the height of German colonial rule. What begins as a scientific expedition soon turns into a moral reckoning as the protagonist witnesses the unfolding genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples. Leonard Scheicher delivers a compelling performance as the conflicted ethnologist whose academic and ethical ideals are confronted and ultimately corrupted by the brutal realities of empire and violence.

Premiering at the Berlinale in February 2023, *Measures of Men* has been recognised for its unflinching portrayal of Germany's colonial past – a subject that remains underrepresented in both historical education and public discourse

in Germany. The film addresses not only the violence of colonial conquest, but also the ideological and scientific justifications that underpinned it. Through the protagonist's gradual transformation, the story interrogates the complicity of early anthropology and academic institutions in the structures of oppression and racial classification.



Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb provided an intimate yet open space for this important event. The venue, known for its commitment to cultural dialogue and community engagement, proved fitting for an evening that aimed to bridge historical awareness with contemporary reflection.

Following the screening, a discussion in German was led by Carmen Letz, Senior Lecturer at the University of Limoges, France, and Thierry Boudjekeu, Junior Fellow at the University of Bayreuth. Their conversation provided

valuable context to the film, exploring the themes of memory, representation, and the lingering effects of colonial violence. They also engaged the audience in a broader dialogue about the role of film and art in confronting uncomfortable histories, especially in academic and cultural spaces.

The event was part of *AfriKaleidoskop*, a broader initiative by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence to spotlight African perspectives and foster critical engagement with Germany's colonial entanglements. By foregrounding a film that grapples directly with the genocide of the Herero and Nama – one of the earliest genocides of the 20th century – curator Ute Fendler, Co-Spokesperson of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, underscored the importance of historical accountability and transnational dialogue.

The presentation drew broad participation from students, academics, and the general public alike. The event not only amplified underrepresented historical narratives but also invited a necessary interrogation of how they are remembered, taught, and depicted. In an era where historical amnesia and cultural reckoning coexist uneasily, the screening of *Measures of Men* offered more than a viewing experience – it was an invitation to witness, to question, and to confront. The evening served as a reminder that the stories we choose to tell, and how we tell them, continue to shape our understanding of the present. 🌍



Event organizers Marie Tsogo and Ute Fendler with discussants Carmen Letz and Thierry Boudjekeu (left); Letz and Boudjekeu on stage (right)



Decolonising the Mind

The 36th Swahili Colloquium in Bayreuth

Text and photo CLARISSA VIERKE

The 36th Swahili Colloquium explored language and decolonisation, marking forty years of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's book *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* with vibrant debates, keynotes, and an intergenerational dialogue of activist and poets. Thiong'o himself joined the conversation.

The 36th Swahili Colloquium, organised by Clarissa Vierke and Serena Talento, Professor and Assistant Professor in Literatures in African Languages at the University of Bayreuth, was held from 17 to 19 May 2024 at the University of Bayreuth. It brought together 76 participants from across the globe, including Germany, Kenya, Tanzania, the USA, the UK, France, Japan, Mexico, and beyond. Scholars at all stages, from BA students to senior academics, gathered under this year's theme: *Decolonising the Mind*.

The theme marked the 40th anniversary of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's seminal book, part of which was written during his stay in Bayreuth in 1984. Thiong'o's core argument – that language is not just a means of communication but a foundation of worldview and identity – shaped the Colloquium's central inquiry: how does language function in both colonial domination and decolonial liberation? This year's gathering highlighted the ongoing marginalisation of African languages within post-colonial studies and aimed to reverse that trend. Scholars were invited to explore Swahili's role in shaping alternative histories, narratives, and epistemologies. Swahili Studies itself also



Conversation with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in Swahili. Video by M. Ghassani

came under critical reflection, continuing debates initiated in earlier colloquia.

The event opened with a keynote by Jacky Kosgei (University of Tübingen, Germany) on embodied and experiential knowledge within Swahili- and Digo-speaking communities in Kenya. Panels interrogated translation practices that honour diverse experiences and cultural systems. Other panels addressed political visions in literature, pop culture, and music.

A highlight was the keynote by renowned scholar Alamin Mazrui (Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA), who revisited Thiong'o's arguments in light of current decolonial debates and in relation to his own experience of opposition and resistance in Kenya. Panels on sociolinguistics and comparative literature deepened the discussions, with contributions from scholars. The final day centred on language as a tool of liberation in education and media.

A moving climax came with Thiong'o

himself joining via Zoom. Despite health challenges, he delivered a powerful lecture in Swahili and on Swahili as a language global reach and its potential as a tool of decolonisation. The conversation – moderated by Kosgei and veteran poet Abdilatif Abdalla – linked generations of resistance and scholarship in Kenya. Abdalla's own newly translated prison anthology *Sauti ya Dhiki (Voice of Agony)* was launched during the colloquium, celebrated through interdisciplinary discussion involving Annmarie Drury, Laura Fair, Kai Kresse, and Meg Arenberg. Further enriching the program were a second book launch, *Sounds of Other Shores* by Andrew J. Eisenberg, a film screening by Mariyam Hamdani from Zanzibar, poetry readings from Safal Cornell Kiswahili for African Literature Prize winners, and a festive music evening.

With coverage by Mohammed Ghassani of the Deutsche Welle and vibrant book stands, the 36th Swahili Colloquium reaffirmed Bayreuth as a global hub for critical and creative engagement with African languages, literature, and decolonial thought. 🌍



Jacky Kosgei and Abdilatif Abdalla in conversation with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

Africa in Everyday Life in Bayreuth: History and Culture of Remembrance

Text IBRAHIMA SENE

The workshop *Africa in Everyday Bayreuth* examined the historical and contemporary presence of Africa and people of African descent in Upper Franconia, highlighting their significance in shaping local cultures of remembrance and regional identity.

From 26 to 27 June 2024, Ibrahim Sene (Research Associate, Chair of African History) and Marcus Mühl-nikel (Institute for Franconian Regional History, IFLG) jointly convened a workshop titled *Africa in Everyday Bayreuth: History and Culture of Remembrance* at Iwalewaha. The interdisciplinary event examined the historical and contemporary presence of Africa and people of African descent in Upper Franconia, aiming to situate local experiences within wider national and transnational contexts.

Bayreuth is primarily known for its cultural heritage, especially the Richard Wagner Festival, and its historical significance within the German cultural landscape. However, beyond these widely recognised aspects, there exists a lesser-explored and often marginalised dimension of the city's history: its historical connections with Africa and the presence of people of African descent in the region dating back to the Baroque period. These ties

are not merely colonial relics but continue to influence the region's social fabric, memory culture, and intercultural relations today. The workshop brought together scholars from history, literature, and political science alongside civil society actors, administrative representatives, artists, church members, and local activists. Through this diverse range of perspectives, the event highlighted Africa's multifaceted presence in Upper Franconia – past and present.

The presence of African individuals in Bayreuth can be traced back to the reign of Margrave Christian Ernst (1644–1712). The baptism of two Africans, Sophia Magdalena and Christian Ferdinand, illustrates early instances of African integration into court life. These symbolic acts, however, were often framed through exoticised or hierarchical lenses. Today, African presence in Upper Franconia is evident

through migrant communities, cultural initiatives, economic ties, and academic partnerships. These dynamics shape the region's contemporary identity and provide opportunities to rethink integration, representation, and memory practices.

The workshop aimed to contribute to both academic debate and public discourse while also encouraging broader societal engagement. The legacy of colonialism continues to influence public memory. Postcolonial counter-narratives – emerging from literature, film, visual arts, and archives – seek to contest dominant depictions of Africa and Africans. These narratives challenge historical omissions and stimulate broader reflection on integration, racism, and belonging. The workshop contributed to several key academic debates. It links regional history with global entanglements and postmigrant discourses and situates Bayreuth within broader reflections on trans-cultural and diasporic communities in Germany. Using historical, cultural, and social approaches, participants explored how past and present African presences reshape understandings of identity, solidarity, and coexistence. By revisiting overlooked connections and amplifying marginalised voices, it also laid the groundwork for a more inclusive, historically informed, and forward-looking culture of remembrance in Bayreuth and beyond. 🌍

In his work, Ibrahim Sene scrutinizes the presence of Africa in contemporary Bayreuth.



Exhibitions

at Iwalewahaus

Twins Seven Seven and His Yorùbá Universe

— A Journey Between Fiction and Reality
Marked by Magic and Spirituality.

This year, Iwalewahaus honoured the Nigerian artist Twins Seven Seven (1944-2011) on the occasion of what would have been his 80th birthday. His life and work were celebrated in the exhibition, *Twins Seven Seven and His Yorùbá Universe – A Journey Between Fiction and Reality* Marked by Magic and Spirituality.

Twins Seven Seven was born as Taiwo Olaniyi Oyewale-Toyeje Oyelale Osuntoki and as the lone survivor of a line of seven twins and the son of a prince from a royal family from Ibadan, South-West Nigeria. He was a musician, painter, sculptor, dancer, and actor, and he selected his alias Twins Seven Seven in homage to his birth.

In the early 1960s, his interest in music and dance was reflected in his work as a commercial dancer. In this role, he fascinated Ulli Beier, the founding Director of Iwalewahaus.

Twins Seven Seven was one of the most well-known artists to come out of the Mbari Mbayo workshops, which were organised by Beier and had a significant influence on modern Nigerian art. Founded in the 1960s in Osogbo, Nigeria, the workshops represent an important chapter in Nigerian contemporary art. They continue to inspire artists to this day and have contributed to raising the profile of Nigerian art on the global scene. Twins Seven Seven made a major contribution the local and global popularity of Nigerian contemporary art.

“Yes, I look at what others are doing, but then I quickly forget everything because it actually interferes with my art”, Twins Seven Seven said.

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With his work, Twins Seven Seven has influenced the discourse of Afrofuturism in contemporary African art. In fact, Twins Seven Seven's work was ahead of its time. Twins Seven Seven's creative vision and cultural contributions draw heavily on the ideas, aesthetics, and values of the Afrofuturist movement.

Based on Yorùbá myths and folklore, Twins Seven Seven's oeuvre is extremely nuanced and draws from a broad and diverse source of inspiration within Yorùbá cosmology, including magical realism, Yorùbá semiotics, and animal and textile symbolism. The highly personalised approach of his works is the tangible expression of an ever-changing universe full of powerful energies. His extraordinary creative ability is evident in the images themselves, which are incredibly complex, as shapes and colours merge to create a mythopoetic world.

Widespread praise was given to his unique style, with vivid colours, complex patterns, and surrealistic images. The strong ties to his cultural past are evident in the references to Yorùbá mythology, folklore, and spirituality in his artwork.

As a key figure in the Osogbo art movement, Twins Seven Seven was a participant in many exhibitions; his works are part of prestigious collections worldwide. In 2005, he received recognition as a UNESCO Artist for Peace.

Text // Sigrid Horsch-Albert
Curator // Mallam Mudi Yahaya /
Sigrid Horsch-Albert

Curatorial Assistance // Paula Battermann
/ Hamdi Catalpınar / Regis Hitimana / Jonas
Würdinger / Benjamin Zorn

Project Coordination and Logistics // Sigrid
Horsch-Albert

Cooperation // Centre for Black Culture
and International Understanding, Osogbo /
Freundeskreis Iwalewahaus e.V. / Institut für
Afrikastudien / Oberfranken Stiftung Bayreuth
/ Universität Bayreuth / Universitätsverein
Bayreuth e.V. / Zentrum für Hochschullehre



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I See You

— Iwalewahaus Offers Moving Insights into Lives with Disability

On 3 December 2024, Iwalewahaus opened the exhibition *I See You – A Photo Album of People with Intellectual Disability* to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Until 13 December, visitors could view powerful portraits of former patients from the historic Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum. Curated by Rory du Plessis, Lecturer and Researcher at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, the exhibition built a bridge between past and present. It not only shed light on eugenic practices in history but also invited reflection on current issues of inclusion and human rights. Through this exhibition, Iwalewahaus made a compelling statement for visibility and dignity for people with disabilities. The project was supported by the Institute of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth.



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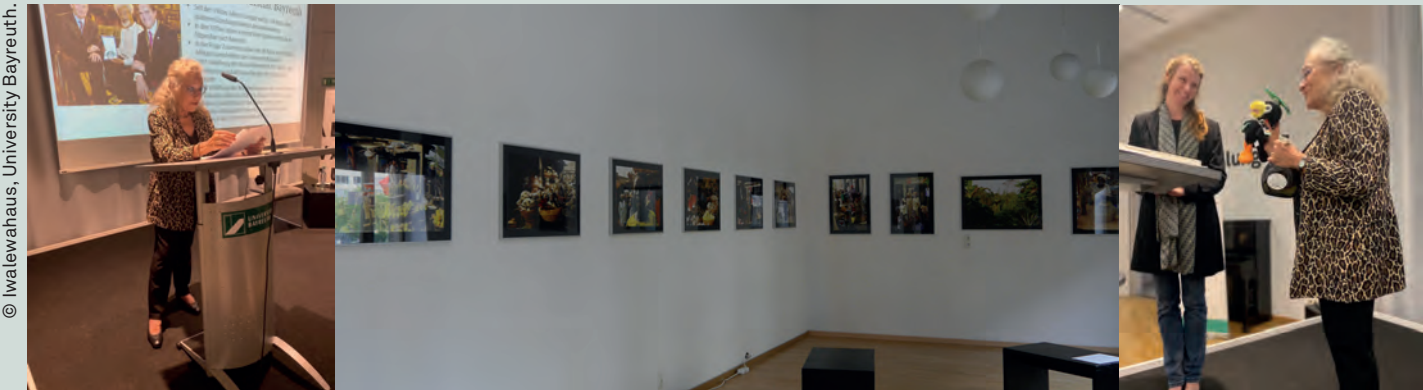
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Text // Inken Böbert
Curator // Rory du Plessis
Project Coordination and Logistics / Sigrid Horsch-Albert / Philipp Schramm

The World is a Market

The 90th birthday of Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka provided the occasion for an exhibition, a film screening, and, last but not least, a Bayreuther Stadtgespräch at Iwalewahaus. The poet, novelist, actor, and stage director was the first African to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986. Since the 1960s, Soyinka had been friends with Ulli Beier, the founding director of Iwalewahaus, and they had been connected through numerous joint projects. Vera Botterbusch, herself an author, filmmaker and photographer, visited Wole Soyinka in 1999 to film the documentary “A Childhood in Nigeria.” During this trip, she also took numerous photographs, which she made available to Iwalewahaus for the exhibition “The World Is a Market.” In the Bayreuther Stadtgespräch series, Vera Botterbusch gave the lecture “On the Magic and Misery of the World – Wole Soyinka on his 90th Birthday” and reflected on the life and work of Wole Soyinka.

Text // Sigrid Horsch-Albert
Curator // Vera Botterbusch
Project Coordination and Logistics // Sigrid Horsch-Albert



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Beyond the Gaze

Beyond the Gaze marked the European debut of the artist Baomei and served as the final project of Ruiying Yang, a student in the AVVA (African Verbal and Visual Arts) programme’s Creative Track. Through a sensitive photographic lens, Baomei bridged her Chinese roots with African cultural encounters – without claiming to speak for the other. Inspired by Trinh T. Minh-ha’s idea of “speaking nearby,” the exhibition left space for complexity and self-representation. It challenged the objectifying gaze and invited viewers to reflect on what unfolds between the seen and the unseen. Beyond the Gaze offered not just images, but an invitation to listen differently – with presence, curiosity, and care.

Text // Nicole Marina Klug
Curator // Ruiying Yang
Artist // Baomei
Project Advisory //Nicole Marina Klug / Sigrid Horsch-Albert
Project Coordination and Logistics // Ruiying Yang
Cooperation // Kulturstadt Bayreuth / Studierendenwerk Oberfranken



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In Memory of Valente Ngwenya Malangatana (1936–2011)

A special connection led to an extraordinary exhibition: Iwalewahaus presented works by the renowned Mozambican artist Malangatana Valente Ngwenya in an exclusive pop-up exhibition. This was created in collaboration with his son, Mutxhini Malangatana Ngwenya, and the researcher Richard Gray. Known for his powerful and politically charged works, Malangatana is considered one of Africa’s most important artists and has gained international recognition for his contribution to modern African art. The exhibition featured several significant works from the Iwalewahaus collection, including a reprint of the painting *To the Clandestine Maternity Home* that was then on display at the Venice Biennale Arte 2024, “*Foreigners Everywhere*.” This unique work, known for its dynamic fusion of traditional Mozambican motifs with modernist techniques, reflects Malangatana’s distinctive style, which often explored social and political themes. A special highlight was the opportunity to talk with Mutxhini Malangatana Ngwenya and Gray. Together, they shared personal memories and professional insights into the life and work of this influential artist, thus enabling a deeper understanding of his artistic influence.

Text // Sigrid Horsch-Albert
Curator // Sigrid Horsch-Albert
Curatorial Assistance // T. Chowdhury / Regis Hitimana / Benjamin Zorn
Project Coordination and Logistics // Sigrid Horsch-Albert
Cooperation // Mutxhini Malangatana Ngwenya / Richard Gray

Objekt des Monats



© Regis Hitimana

Art Passport

— Artworks from the Iwalewahaus Collection on Loan in Inter*national Exhibitions

Iwalewahaus Artists Shine at the 2024 Venice Biennale

Sat, May 10, 2025–Sun, Nov 23, 2025, Venice.

Under the motto *Art Connects*, Iwalewahaus used its social media channels to spotlight the artists whose work it collects, researches, and exhibits, and who featured at the 60th Venice Biennale Arte in 2024. The Biennale itself embraced the theme *Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere*. Highlights included the loan of Malangatana Valente Ngwenya’s 1961 painting *To the Clandestine Maternity Home*. Artists such as Twins Seven Seven, Susanne Wenger, Uche Okeke and Ndidi Dike were exhibited in Venice for the first time, offering powerful insights into their experiences. Their presence underscores the significance of Iwalewahaus as a global hub for contemporary art, bridging cultures and narratives across continents.

Text // Inken Bößert



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From Cape Town to Basel — When We See Us

Following its debut at Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) in Cape Town, South Africa, *When We See Us* arrives at the Kunstmuseum Basel in 2024, showcasing over 150 works of African figurative painting from the past hundred years. Curated by the Zeitz MOCAA team under Koyo Kouoh, Director and Chief Curator, the exhibition celebrates Black self-representation, everyday life, spirituality, and triumph. Key loans from Iwalewahaus – including works by Aboubacar Diané, Augustin Okoye, Matundu Tanda, and Nestor Vuza Ntoko – highlight the diversity and self-perception of artists from the African continent and its Diaspora. Through these significant contributions, the Iwalewahaus collection helps open new perspectives on global art history, amplifying the voices of African artists on the international stage.

Text // Inken Bößert

PROJECT A BLACK PLANET THE ART AND CULTURE OF PANAFRICA



Iwalewahaus Contributes to Pan-African Vision in Project a *Black Planet* Exhibition

In 2024, Iwalewahaus loaned works by Ibrahim El-Salahi and Colette Oluwabamise Omogbai to the landmark exhibition *Project a Black Planet: The Art and Culture of Panafrica*, which was staged at the Art Institute of Chicago. This major show was the first to explore modern and contemporary cultural production through a distinctly pan-African perspective. Spanning more than 2,000 square metres, the exhibition showcased hundreds of artworks and cultural objects, tracing a narrative from the first pan-African congresses of the 1920s to the present. Bringing together painting, design, literature, music, film, and architecture, the exhibition illuminated creative dialogues stretching from Brazil and the Caribbean to metropolitan centres in Africa, Europe, and North America. Curated by Antawan I. Byrd, Elvira Dyangani Ose, and Matthew S. Witkovsky, *Project a Black Planet* celebrated transnational connections and visions of unity, while simultaneously confronting the persistent consequences of inequality. After its Chicago debut, the exhibition, featuring significant contributions from the Iwalewahaus collection, is scheduled to appear in Barcelona, London, and Brussels.

Text // Inken Bößert
Photographer // Joe Tallarico
Courtesy of Art Institute of Chicago



Artist in Residence

Sabelo Mcinziba — Fellow at Iwalewahaus and the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence

As an Artist Fellow at Iwalewahaus and the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, Sabelo Mcinziba developed With These Hands, a photo-essay project narrating South African history through the hands of people from all walks of life. A pre-launch event on 2 October 2024 offered a first look at the exhibition. On 4 November, an interdisciplinary roundtable with students from the seminar Games With Purpose explored the hand as a symbol of labour, identity, and interaction in digital and social contexts.

Text // Katharina Greven
Curator // Sabelo Mcinziba / Katharina Greven
Curator Programme // Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence
Project Coordination and Logistics // Serawit Debele / Katharina Greven
PR // Sabine Greiner
Cooperation // Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence



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Kleine Gunk — Named Honorary Senator

On 28 November 2024, the University of Bayreuth celebrated its 49th Academic Anniversary; in this context, Bernd Kleine-Gunk was appointed Honorary Senator of the University. He was honoured in recognition of his donations and permanent loans of contemporary African art to Iwalewahaus. Kleine-Gunk discovered his love of contemporary art in the late 1980s, while working in development in Zimbabwe. Since then, he has travelled repeatedly to the African continent and systematically assembled contemporary art from various regions of Africa into important collections. Since 2014, Kleine-Gunk has contributed objects from his unique collection to Iwalewahaus through annual gifts. The generous donations of art objects – paintings, sculptures, prints, and textiles – include works by now-renowned African artists such as El Anatsui, Susanne Wenger, Twins Seven Seven, Cheri Samba, Mulala Landry, Jak Katarikawe, and Richard Onyango, to name just a few. A total of 271 objects have been added to Iwalewahaus collection through Kleine-Gunk’s endowment.

Text // Sigrid Horsch-Albert
Curation, Project Coordination and Logistics // Sigrid Horsch-Albert
Cooperation // Oberfrankenstiftung / Universitätsstiftung / Universitätsverein e.V.



© Sabine Linn



Thandeka Mfinyongo

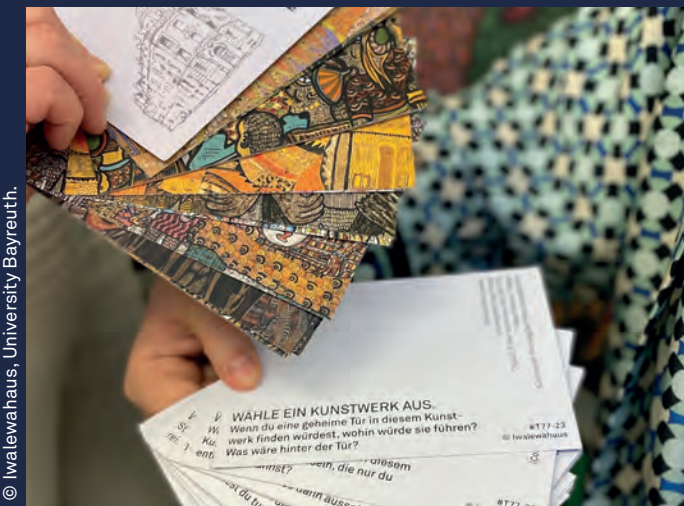
As Artist in Residence at Iwalewahaus and the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, musician and instrument-maker Thandeka Mfinyongo introduced her work with traditional Xhosa instruments such as the uhadi and umrhubhe. On 9 December 2024, Mfinyongo hosted a Meet the Artist evening, sharing her journey as a performer and cultural practitioner. This event served as a prelude to a hands-on workshop series in early 2025, culminating in public concerts and a pop-up exhibition, celebrating traditional music-making and collective creativity.

Text // Katharina Greven
Curator // Katharina Greven
Curatorial Assistance // Silvan Spohr
Curator Programme // Katharina Greven / Thandeka Mfinyongo / Silvan Spohr
Project Advisory // Katharina Greven
Project Coordination and Logistics // Katharina Greven / Silvan Spohr
PR // Sabine Greiner / Inken Böbert
Cooperation // Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence

My Iwalewahaus for Take Away

In just a few months, Sarah Steingrüber and Iwalewahaus collaborated to develop action cards that encourage collecting, discussion, and a personalised approach to the art in Iwalewahaus collection. Steingrüber is studying art education at Bauhaus University Weimar, Germany and chose the Iwalewahaus collection for a subject didactics project. The front of the cards shows various image sections of works from the collection, while the back supplies an approach, or rather, an action, formulated as a question. While the first card provides the “instructions” for the action card concept, the information about each work is written on the back of the cards.

Text // Sigrid Horsch-Albert
Project Coordination and Logistics // Sigrid Horsch-Albert
Cooperation // Sarah Steingrüber // Bauhaus Universität Weimar



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New Additions

to the Iwalewaha Collection



© Iwalewaha, University Bayreuth.

Twins Seven Seven

On 5 March 2024, Iwalewaha received an email from the USA asking whether it would be interested in purchasing a painting by Twins Seven Seven. Since Iwalewaha team was in the middle of planning the exhibition *Twins Seven Seven and his Yorùbá Universe – A Journey Between Fiction and Reality Marked by Magic and Spirituality*, they were extremely excited.

The work was created in April 1968 and depicts a couple in a boat on a lake. It tells the story of a diplomatic wedding and of the couple "... in the boat of everlasting peace and love ... on the love sea." Iwalewaha is delighted to have been able to add this unique work of art to its collection.

A special thank you goes to the family who made the offer and to Mimi Wolford, who grew up with Nigerian artists of the Osogbo school and has maintained a close connection with them, their descendants, and Iwalewaha for years. Her mediation made this important acquisition possible, perfectly complementing the Iwalewaha collection. The painting was immediately included in the current exhibition.

Iwalewaha is grateful for the support of the Bayreuth University Association and the Freunde des Iwalewaha e.V., which made this purchase possible.

Project Coordination and Logistics // Sigrid Horsch-Albert

Cooperation // Universitätsverein Bayreuth e.V. / Freunde des Iwalewaha e.V.

Albert Spiegel

"It is a great honour for us that Albert Spiegel has entrusted us with these pieces. They are a magnificent addition to our unique collection at Iwalewaha," said University of Bayreuth President Stefan Leible in August 2024.

Albert Spiegel was born in Tehran, Iran in 1940. He studied law in Munich, Mainz, and Freiburg and, after completing his doctorate, Spiegel entered the diplomatic service – with postings to Nigeria, among other places. Until 2002, he headed the Foreign Cultural Policy Department at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin.

Since Iwalewaha houses the largest public collection of contemporary African art in Europe, the idea of donating Spiegel's collection of paintings to Iwalewaha arose in a conversation with Gisela Janetzke, who was a member of the University Council of the University of Bayreuth from 2012–2021; it was through her that the contact with Iwalewaha was established.

The artists of the new works come from Nigeria, primarily from Osogbo and Ife, and follow in the tradition of Iwalewaha founding Director Ulli Beier, who organised artist workshops in Nigeria in the 1960s.

In addition to seven paintings and two batiks, Spiegel donated photographs, slides, and reports from the period of creation of the works to Iwalewaha. The latter also refer to exhibitions that Spiegel organised in 1975 in collaboration with the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations at various locations in Germany.

Text // Sigrid Horsch-Albert



© UBT_Jürgen Rennecke

Film

Taiwo Shango — The Second Day after Death

On 31 January, Iwalewaha screened the long-lost 1965 television film *Taiwo Shango: The Second Day After Death*. The film was the first German-Nigerian co-production by Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR), Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), and Nigerian Television Service (NTS), and was directed by BR Africa correspondent Klaus Stephan (1927-2002).

The film revisits a historical incident – the interruption of a ritual suicide in Oyo, Nigeria in 1946 – which inspired Duro Ladipo (1926-1978) in his „Yoruba opera“ Oba Waja in 1964; the film was shot almost exclusively with Nigerian actors on location. In 1975, Wole Soyinka also explored this incident in the play *Death and the King's Horseman*.

The film and screenplay can be found in the estate of Klaus Stephan and Nina Fischer-Stephan, Iwalewaha collection, and were part of Christine Matzke's research project at the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence.

Text // Sigrid Horsch-Albert



© Nina Fischer-Stephan.

The 2024 Activities of the ACCs in Burkina Faso, Kenya and Nigeria

In 2024, the African Cluster Centres (ACCs) in Ouagadougou, Eldoret, and Lagos further deepened their academic collaborations and expanded their research initiatives. Through fellowships, conferences, workshops, and publications, they actively supported early career scholars, fostered artistic engagement, and contributed to the Cluster’s ongoing agenda of *Reconfiguring African Studies*.

A writing workshop brought together scholars from UNILAG ACC, Moi ACC and Bayreuth.
Photo: Anke Schürer-Ries



2024: UNILAG-ACC on the move!

Text **BOLATITO KOLAWOLE**
Photo **UNILAG-ACC**

The University of Lagos African Cluster Centre (UNILAG-ACC) had a fruitful 2024, characterised by an array of international conferences, monthly lectures, and vibrant interactions among scholars, both local and international. Throughout the year, the Centre reaffirmed its commitment to supporting early career researchers across the Cluster network and beyond.

One notable collaboration was between Research Professor Ayo Yusuff and Gerard Millogo, whose PhD thesis Yusuff co-supervised at the Université

Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Burkina Faso. On 26 April 2024, Yusuff attended Millogo’s final examination, further strengthening the academic ties between the two institutions.

UNILAG-ACC also welcomed postdoctoral fellow Hellen Kilelo from the Department of Sociology, Psychology, and Anthropology at Moi University, Kenya. In addition, the Centre hosted several visiting PhD students, including Sophia Ertlmaier from the University of Bayreuth and Annie Siribie from the Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Burkina Faso.

The Centre’s Early Career Coordinator and Principal Investigator (PI), Feyi

Ademola-Adeoye, participated in the inaugural Early Career Representatives meeting at the University of Bayreuth from 1 to 7 April 2024, marking an important milestone in advancing the network for early career researchers.

In the realm of digital research, Bilqis Alayaki, Head of IT, took part in a Digital Research Environment (DRE 2.0) writing workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 10 to 12 April 2024. The workshop, organised by Anke Schürer-Ries, Mirco Schönfeld, and Cyrus Samimi from the University of Bayreuth, focused on advancing research data management, digital literacy, and future research support beyond 2025.

Research mobility played a prominent role in UNILAG-ACC’s activities throughout the year. Several PIs were awarded fellowships at the University of Bayreuth and other African Cluster Centres (ACCs). Feyi Ademola-Adeoye participated in the workshop *Making Meaning, Shaping Knowledge: Practices and Perspectives in African and African Diasporic Multilingual Spaces* at Moi University’s Mombasa campus from 2 to 6 December 2024, organised by Billian Otundo and Susanne Mühleisen of the University of Bayreuth.

Other fellowship recipients included Paul Akinmayowa Akin-Otiko, who served as a Fellow at Rhodes University in South Africa from April to May 2024, before completing another fellowship at Moi University-ACC from

May to July 2024. Anthony Okeregbe was a Fellow at the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies from November to December 2024, while Abisoye Eleshin received a fellowship at the Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 27 February to 9 April 2024 for his project *Circumventing the Yoruba Language among Yoruba Migrants in Burkina Faso*.

In an exciting development, Lagos-based documentary filmmaker Deji Akinpelu became the Centre’s first Artist in Residence. Akinpelu embarked on a two-month fellowship from 1 April 2024, working on his documentary *Harmonising Heritage: African Traditional Dances and Their Resurgence in Afrobeat and Hip-Hop*.

To broaden the reach of its research, the Centre premiered the documentary *Land and Power: Interrogating Material and Ideological Contestations for Ownership of Lagos*. This film, led by PIs Taibat Lawanson and Eleshin, delved into the complex relationship between urban development, indigeneity, and governance in Lagos. The documentary, now with over 18,000 views on YouTube, has been a significant success, engaging a wide audience on these pressing issues.

Looking ahead, UNILAG-ACC remains committed to fostering meaningful academic contributions, promoting scholarly exchange, and encouraging innovative collaborations that continue to shape the academic landscape.



ACC Ouaga 2024 Journey: Activities, Events, Research Projects, and Findings

Text **OUSSÉNI SORÉ**
Photos **MOHAMADOU KONATE**

ACC Ouaga’s main activities conducted by Principal Investigators in 2024 include Early Career and Mobility Programmes, the Academic Coordinators’ annual meeting, the Cluster conferences, workshops, and book publications of various research conducted by the members.

As part of the reconfiguration of African Studies, African Cluster Centre (ACC) Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso has been continuously involved in research activities, the scientific supervision of Early Career scholars and the publication of books and scientific articles.

Early Career and Mobility Programme
ACC Ouaga welcomed five post-doctoral fellows and five doctoral fellows in 2024. The aim is to support these Early Career scholars and enable them to strengthen their scientific capabilities. At the end of their work, a seminar

was organised for the Fellows to present their research results in order to gather observations and suggestions with a view to publishing a collective volume under the title *Restating the State: Security, Knowledges, Cultures*.

As for the Mobility Programme, in line with scientific collaborations, ACC Ouaga welcomed Abisoye Eleshin from

the University of Lagos, Nigeria. His research work was focused on African language engagements for indigenous knowledge production in Africa, based on the example of Ouagadougou.

Academic Coordinators Meeting
The annual Academic Coordinators meeting of the African Cluster Centres was held from 13 to 20 October, 2024 at



ACC Ouaga’s Research Data Management (RDM)

the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo. The theme of this year's conference was *Strengthening Inter-ACC Collaborations for a Stronger Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence*. It was attended by the various Cluster Coordinators: University Joseph Ki-Zerbo (UJKZ), Burkina Faso; Rhodes University ACC, South Africa; Moi University ACC, Kenya; and University of Lagos ACC, Nigeria, as well as ACC Ouaga Members and Fellows. Exchanges and discussions focused on Cluster 2.o, the strengthening of scientific cooperation through joint inter-ACC projects and the creation of a network of young researchers within the framework of Early Career. Moreover, exchanges with University Presidents of UJKZ and the University Thomas Sankara (UTS), and the Director of the Institute of Society Sciences (INSS), opened up promising prospects for scientific collaboration.

Cluster Conferences

Under the responsibility of Fernand Bationo, an international symposium was held on the theme of *Well-being, Knowledge and Plural Care Practices*. In collaboration with the University Félix Houphouët-Boigny, this 2nd edition was held from 8 to 10 May 2024 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Bringing together experts and practitioners from a variety of backgrounds, the symposium invited them to reflect on the meaning of the plurality of therapeutic methods by deepening social and human sciences understanding of the issues linked to health and well-being in contemporary societies, as well as on individual and collective modes of subjectivation in dealing with, living with, or undergoing illness and health, both in the bodies of subjects and in their specific contexts.

From 20 to 22 November 2024, the University of Parakou, Benin, hosted the 2nd edition of the International Francophone Colloquium initiated by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and its francophone partners. The theme of this scientific event was *Reconfiguring African Studies in North-South and South-South Partnerships: What Prospects?* This scientific event was attended by Academic Coordinator Ousséni Sore, Representative of the



International Symposium

ACC Ouagadougou. Activities included panels on scientific communications, roundtables on scientific partnerships, and the valorisation of research results.

Cluster Workshops

Under the aegis of Désiré Boniface Some, a workshop was organised on 12 April 2024 on the theme: *Conceptual and Methodological Approach for a Study on Social Hierarchies and Social Crisis Management in the Sahel*. The main objective of this workshop was to reference the field study in the Sahel, an area plagued by security crises.

From 12 to 15 November 2024, a workshop was held on *Female Identity in the Academic Profession*, led by Eveline Sawadago-Compaore, Gender and Diversity Representative from ACC Ouaga. The research team was able to identify the themes emerging from the preliminary analysis, and to work on them in a draft scientific article, a framework for which was produced at the end of the workshop.

The results of the project entitled *From 2000 to 2020, Two Decades of Burkinabe Fiction Films: Actors/Actresses, Thematic Orientations, and Aesthetic Profiles* were presented on 30 November 2024 at UJKZ. This project is led by Toro Justin Ouro, Ute Fendler, and Valentine Palm-Sanou in collaboration with other researchers. The presentation was attended by members of the academic and cinematographic worlds, who were able to appreciate the characteristics of Burkinabe cinema, the players involved, and the challenges facing the field. As part of the project, a confer-

ence debate was held on 21 March 2024 on the theme of *Women and Acting in Burkinabe Cinema: Challenges and Sharing Experiences*, which made a significant contribution to the project's results.

As part of the Research Data Management Unit (RDM) programme, two workshops were held, led by Mohamadou Konate, ACC Ouaga IT Engineer. The first workshop dealt with the revision of metadata on Cluster-funded projects, and the second one with the installation and configuration of dSpace. These workshops contribute to the implementation of the Cluster's Digital Research Environment (DRE) and to inter-university collaboration by making research data available to all researchers on a common digital research platform.

Book Publications

■ *Genre, Société et Développement en Afrique* by Sawadago-Compaore, Moubassié Sigue, Yisso Fidèle Bacye, and Valérie Rouamba-Ouedraogo. This book is a testament to the lasting impact of Fatoumata Badini-Kinda on social science research, and in particular on gender issues in Africa. The articles that make up the book explore themes such as gender equality, gender relations, intersectionality, development policies, and many other topics relevant to the African continent.

■ *Santé globale et globalisation de la santé au Burkina Faso. Une approche historique (1978–2020)* by Yacouba Banhero. Starting from the divergences within the international community over the World Health Organisation (WHO) primary health care programmes and

the disagreements surrounding the management of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the author shows how global health governance has taken precedence over international health, based on the case of Burkina Faso.

■ *Penser les punitions, penser la réinsertion sociale au Burkina Faso. Expériences endogènes et contemporaines* by Bationo and

Boubié Bazié. This book explores the issues surrounding the incarceration of individuals in socio-cultural contexts. The authors attempt to answer a multitude of questions about the incarceration of minors, their identities, their origins, the main reasons for their arrival in these centers, and their social reintegration. With a multi-disciplinary approach, the book analyses

all these issues linked to the detention of minors in Burkina Faso.

It's worth noting that ACC Ouaga has maintained its former momentum, making a significant contribution to the Cluster agenda through the reconfiguration of African Studies and contributing significantly to the renewal of Cluster 2.o.



Moi University ACC's Productive 2024: Advancing African Research and Cultural Heritage

Text PETER SIMATEI

2024 marked another successful year for the Moi University African Cluster Centre (ACC) in Eldoret, Kenya. With a focus on impactful research projects, international fellowships, and a series of enriching seminars, the Centre fostered collaboration and scholarship across a range of disciplines. Highlights included three major research projects, the support of early career scholars, and a key workshop on African musical traditions.

Research Projects

Of the five Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence research projects, each in-

volving a large group of researchers, undertaken at the Moi University African Cluster Centre (Moi ACC), Eldoret, Kenya in 2024, three were 24-month projects: *Indigenous Intelligence and Livelihoods*, directed by Mosol Kandagor; *Pots, Fire and Gourds: A (Re)presentation of Cultural Knowledge Systems*, directed by Justine Sikuku; and *Ethics and Legitimacies in Modification of Moving Material Cultures in North Rift, Kenya*, directed by Joram Kareithi. The remaining two were long-term, 48-month projects: *Islamic Popular Culture and Public Performance Practices*, directed by Hassan Ndzovu; and *Beyond the Digital Return: "New Heritage(s)", Sustainability, and the Decolonisation of Music Archives in South Africa, Kenya, and*

Ghana that had Tom Michael Mboya co-directing with Lee Watkins of Rhodes University, South Africa, and Markus Coester of the University of Bayreuth.

Fellowships

In 2024, the Moi ACC hosted three Fellows. Two were researchers: Fabio Baqueiro Figueiredo from the Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais (CEAO) at the Federal University of Bahia in Brazil, and Paul Akinmayowa Akin-Otiko from the Institute of African and Diaspora Studies (IADS) at the University of Lagos in Nigeria. The third Fellow was Migan Cherotich Kibet, a Kenyan filmmaker who served as Artist in Residence.



Moi University is a place for interdisciplinary and international exchange and knowledge production.

During his fellowships, Figueiredo examined race, Africa, nation, and culture by studying Kenyan press coverage of FESTAC '77. Akin-Otiko focused on comparing Yoruba and Maasai traditional therapies of preventive medicine, exploring multiple indigenous healthcare epistemes. Kibet produced a documentary titled *Comedy on Canvas*, which tells the story of Maketh, a South Sudanese comedian who grew up in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya.

Early Career Scholars

Three PhD students received Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence scholarships in 2024. Mohamed Ndaro and Sumaiya Yunus Mwamzandi were both embedded in the research project *Islamic Popular Culture and Public Performance Practices*. The third student, Tabitha Osoro, was supported by the research project *Beyond the Digital Return: “New Heritage(s)”, Sustainability, and the Decolonisation of Music Archives in South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana*.

Additionally, the Moi ACC provided fieldwork funding for two Moi University PhD candidates. Joan Koech explored patterns of family relationships and support systems in Nandi County, Kenya. Janet Naisoi Mashara investigated the drivers and deterrents of maternal health care uptake in Laikipia West Subcounty, Laikipia County, Kenya.

Hellen Kilelo, a researcher based at Moi University, was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Lagos in 2024. Her project focused on women’s representation in the Lagos State Assembly and their policy impact.

Seminars and Workshop

In 2024, the Africa Colloquium hosted 17 engaging seminars, showcasing diverse perspectives on African scholarship and cultural heritage. The year began on 16 February with Abdilatif Abdalla’s thought-provoking presentation, *Mustakabali wa Kiswahili kama Lugha ya Kimataifa*, exploring the future of Kiswahili as an international language. On 12 March, Mary Lonyangapuo, Samuel Obuchi, Simon Nganga, and Stella Onyiego of Moi University delved into the role of lyre music and dance in

preserving knowledge and mitigating political tensions among the Bukusu of Kenya. Later that month, on 26 March, John Mwangi Githigaro from Mashariki Research and Policy Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, examined the prospects and challenges of political integration in the East African Community, two decades on.

April saw two compelling sessions: on 23 April, Kimingichi Wabende of the University of Nairobi unpacked gender power dynamics in ritual dance performances centred on sexuality, followed by Bramwel Matui of Moi University on 30 April, who discussed speech act theory and the benign politics of world order within East African Community integration. On 14 May, Christopher Odhiambo Joseph of Moi University illuminated how post-mortem tropes can serve as critical lenses for reading war literature in Eastern Africa. June welcomed Figueiredo of Federal University of Bahia, Brazil, who on 11 June presented his exit seminar on Kenya’s cultural representation at FESTAC ‘77. Carolyn Sambai of Moi University, on 18 June, highlighted the digital baraza, #AskKokweet, as a platform to revitalise Kalenjin indigenous knowledge.

On 9 July, sessions opened with Benard Mwori Sorre of Moi University discussing sexuality and wellbeing among Kenyan students in higher education. The following week, on 16 July, two presentations enriched the colloquium: Akin-Otiko of the University of Lagos compared Yoruba and Maasai traditional therapies, while Kara M. Taylor of Indiana University explored how a sense of belonging can enhance academic success. On 25 July, Kibet, a Kenyan filmmaker and artist in residence, reflected on the transformative power of documentary films in *Documentary Films and Social Change: A Reflection on Comedy and Canvas*. The month concluded on 30 July with Angelina Kioko of United States International University – Africa in Nairobi examining gendered identity discourses in Akamba non-normative family structures.

On 13 August, Daniel Kipkorir of Moi

University discussed the commodification of traditional medicinal practices among the Marakwet community. A week later, on 20 August, Loreen Maseno of Maseno University, Kenya, explored how Christ Is the Answer Ministries (CITAM) Ngong Church in Nairobi has embraced digital spaces for religious expression. The final leg of the year’s seminars featured Chepchirchir Tirop of Stanford University, USA, on 10 September, tracing the early development of athletics in post-war Kenya as part of a broader decolonisation project. Concluding the 2024 Africa Colloquium on 17 September, Jamin Masinde of Moi University explored the evolving perceptions, opportunities, and challenges in the leisure activities of older adults in Kenyan cities.

Each seminar offered a vibrant lens into Africa’s cultural, political, and intellectual landscapes, sparking dynamic discussions and deep reflections. From 8 to 9 August, the Moi ACC hosted its major workshop for the year. The workshop, whose theme was *Traditional Music/ Musical Traditions: Past(ness) in African Music Today – Substance and Significance* brought together practitioners and scholars from diverse backgrounds who explored why, how, and to what ends music and musical ideas from the past are kept alive in the African present. The entire team of the research project *Beyond the Digital Return: “New Heritage(s)”, Sustainability, and the Decolonisation of Music Archives in South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana*, drawn from University of Bayreuth, University of Ghana, Rhodes University, and Moi University participated in the workshop.

Towards the end of the year, several Moi University-based Cluster Members participated in the team meetings that wrote sections of the proposal for the renewal of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. Indeed, the Moi ACC was privileged to host, albeit remotely, several of the meetings.



Please check the Cluster’s publication pages for books and articles published within all ACCs



Global South at the Centre: CEOA’s Expanding Horizons in 2024

Text LIVIO SANSONE

From new research alliances to digital transformation – 2024 was a decisive year in CEOA’s journey to reshape African and Afro-Oriental Studies from a Global South perspective.

The Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais (CEAO) at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) consolidated its position in 2024 as a key hub for academic innovation, cultural exchange, and digital knowledge infrastructures in African and Afro-Oriental Studies. Building on decades of scholarship and partnerships, the institution strengthened its international reach, deepened collaborations, and launched initiatives that highlight its leadership within the Global South.

A central milestone was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between UFBA and the University of Bayreuth, formalising long-standing collaboration with the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. This agreement signalled a new phase of institutionalised exchange and research cooperation. Alongside this, CEOA researchers actively shaped new thematic directions for the Cluster, reinforcing their role in setting research agendas rooted in Southern perspectives.

Funding diversification also featured prominently in 2024. Support from the DAAD/Probral programme facilitated two-way academic mobility with the Cluster and the Federal University

of Recôncavo da Bahia. In addition, the Brazilian Research Council (CNPq) approved two major projects addressing memory, slavery, and independence – one centred on the Caribbean and the other on Southern and Eastern Africa. Both projects fostered multi-sited research and cross-regional dialogue, extending collaboration beyond the traditional North-South axis.

Among CEOA’s signature initiatives, the Factory of Ideas doctoral school celebrated its 25th edition in Salvador in November 2024. The programme, themed around the turbulent 1990s, multiculturalism, intangible heritage, and the reconfiguration of African Studies, drew 50 graduate students and 40 senior and mid-career scholars from across the Americas, Africa, Europe, and Asia. Notably, leading figures from African Cluster Centres and Bayreuth underlined the continuing strength of institutional ties.

Digital innovation reached new levels with the renewal of the Afrodigital Museum, first created in 1998 and relaunched in Bahia in 2024 with affiliated stations across Brazil and in Portugal. Its new website, integrated into the Cluster’s Digital Research Environment, now provides access to curated exhibitions, collections, audiovisual resources, and scholarly publications. This digital infrastructure improves access to rare materials, particularly in the Global South, and anchors CEOA’s role in shaping innovative platforms for research and teaching.

CEAO’s global connections were further expanded through its participation in the Africa-Asia: A New Axis of Knowledge network. At the 13th International Convention of Asia Scholars in Indonesia, CEOA researcher Fabio Baqueiro Figueiredo engaged in roundtables on Africa-Asia-Latin America convergence and co-produced two podcasts with the conference co-organizers, the International Institute of Asian Studies in Leiden, Netherlands. His three-month fellowship at Moi University in Kenya allowed him to study FESTAC’77, linking debates on national identity, ethnicity, and arts with broader discussions at the Cluster’s Nairobi workshop.

Publishing remained central to CEOA’s mission. AfroAsia, the oldest journal in its field in Brazil, continued to disseminate cutting-edge scholarship while reflecting the institution’s increasingly international and interdisciplinary scope.

Altogether, 2024 was a year in which CEOA deepened its role as a leader in the reconfiguration of African and Afro-Oriental Studies. By advancing digital platforms, securing new research projects, fostering academic mobility, and strengthening South-South and transcontinental collaborations, CEOA reaffirmed its mission to expand the possibilities of knowledge production and cultural dialogue from the Global South.



Please check the website of Museu Afro-Digital

F.l.t.r.: The ACCs Early Career Coordinators Lassane Yameogo, Feyisayo Ademola-Adeoye, Mary Lonyangapuo, and Thando Njovane with Susanne Mühleisen, the Cluster's Vice-Dean of Early Career.

Building a Shared Vision for the Cluster International Career Centre

Text and photos CHRISTINE SCHERER

With a big bundle of ideas for the collaborative future in training and teaching, the four early career representatives of the African Cluster Centres (ACCs) met for a retreat in the first week of April 2024 at the University of Bayreuth.

The event brought together Mary Lonyangapuo from Moi University, Kenya; Thando Njovane from Rhodes University, South Africa; Lassane Yameogo from the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Burkina Faso; and Feyisayo Ademola-Adeoye, from the University of Lagos, Nigeria: all representatives for early career support in the five locations within the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. In order to collectively shape the vision for the Cluster International Career Centre (CIICC) with Susanne Mühleisen, Vice Dean for Early Career & Equal Opportunity (EC & EO) in the Cluster, and the EC & EO Academic Coordinator Christine Scherer, four days of intensive work were set up. As a significant step in advancing the creation of a unified and unifying early career

institution based on the synergies of each Cluster location's strengths in training, mentoring, and teaching PhDs and postdocs, this key initiative had already been discussed during the director's meeting in October 2023.

Throughout the retreat, the coordinators engaged in dynamic discussions with the management of BIGSAS, Alexander Stroh-Steckelberg and Coordinator Michelle Heese, as well as early career scholars. They formed working groups, and involved important stakeholders from within the Cluster and beyond. The goal was to develop a shared vision and strategy for the CIICC, ensuring a comprehensive approach to supporting early-career academics across the Cluster. By the end of the week, the coordinators presented the key outcomes in a hybrid session to the ACC directors in a special meeting which also included Rüdiger Seesemann, Dean of the Cluster, and Franz Kogelmann, Managing Director of the Cluster:

■ **Shared Vision and Mission:** The participants reached a consensus on a clear, shared vision for CIICC that aligns with

the broader goals of the Cluster. This vision focuses on fostering professional development, inclusivity, visibility, and international mobility and collaboration for early-career professionals.

■ **Defined Goals and Objectives:** Specific goals and objectives were outlined for the future of CIICC, focusing on enhancing joint training measures between the five locations and establishing stronger curricula to enhance future skills.

■ **Action Plan:** An actionable roadmap was developed which includes timelines, roles, and responsibilities for each partner institution. This plan will guide the establishment of CIICC and ensure the successful implementation of its activities.

The retreat helped solidify the relationships between representatives from the different ACC locations, creating a truly shared vision and approach to fostering the careers of early career scholars at the doctoral and postdoctoral level. The discussions also highlighted opportunities for further joint initiatives such as early career awards for the commitment to reconfigure African Studies together across borders or highlighting excellent theses. Finally, yet importantly, and after the hard work certainly a true pleasure, all the retreat participants enjoyed a visit to the baroque Margravial Opera House Museum and a trip to the Eremitage. 🌍

The coordinators presented the outcome of the retreat to the ACC directors in a hybrid meeting.



From Bayreuth to Johannesburg: A Journey of Becoming

Text EMNET TADESSE
WOLDEGIORGIS

When I arrived in Germany to begin my PhD at the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), I carried with me not only academic ambitions but also uncertainty about where I might fit in the vast and shifting landscape of African Studies.

Trained in political science, I stood at a threshold, unsure of how to locate myself, how to make meaning of my questions, and how to navigate the confluence of disciplines, histories, and narratives that intersected in that scholarly space. What unfolded over the next several years was more than a doctoral journey; it was a transformative encounter with knowledge, people, and place that redefined who I am and what I do.

BIGSAS was not simply a graduate school; it was an intellectual sanctuary, a space of possibility. It offered me more than access to global academic discourses; it gave me the space to re-imagine my own scholarly voice. Coming from Ethiopia, where critical inquiry often contends with scarcity and surveillance, the freedom felt almost utopian. Freedom to think, to question, to imagine otherwise. In Bayreuth, I was permitted, no, encouraged, to wander intellectually, to ask unanswerable questions, to dwell in uncertainty, and to write from the margins without apology.

The interdisciplinary texture of BIGSAS was not just structural, it was embodied. In midday conversations at the Mensa, on the steps of the library, or in spirited debates over a glass of beer at student gatherings, I experienced the full range of what it means to dwell in plurality. I learned the true value of interdisciplinarity, not as a theory, but as a lived experience. I came to realise

that plurality and interdisciplinarity are not a method, but an ethos, a way of being in the world that refuses boundaries and embraces entanglement.

It was through the intellectual generosity of peers and the enduring mentorship of my supervisors that I came to believe in my capacity to contribute. I was no longer a passive receiver of knowledge but an active participant in its co-creation. Bayreuth, small, unassuming, and deeply textured, became a cosmopolitan node of ideas and encounters. And it was not only a site of academic rigour but of joy, intimacy, and solidarity: cooking shared meals, hosting house parties, travelling across Europe on meagre budgets, and dreaming out loud with friends in kitchens, bars, and seminar rooms. These experiences formed a mosaic of becoming: intellectual, emotional, and social.

After completing my PhD and postdoctoral research in Bayreuth, I moved to South Africa to join the University of Johannesburg as an associate professor in Higher Education Studies. Here, my intellectual path deepened. Within two years, I was appointed Director of the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies (AMCHES), succeeding the late Prof. Michael Cross. At that time, AMCHES was modest, with three academic staff and a handful of doctoral students. Today, it is one of the most vibrant centres of higher education research on the continent, with over 22 PhD students, ten postdoctoral fellows, and more than 20 research associates from around the world. We host over 15 international research projects with partners across Germany, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and the African continent.

In 2024, I reached a personal and professional milestone that I could hardly have imagined when I first set foot in Bayreuth: I was promoted to full professorship. Today, I hold a National Research Foundation (NRF) rating and have authored over 40 peer-reviewed publications. I supervise eleven PhD candidates and three postdoctoral researchers, serve as Chair of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) Peace Education Task Force, and sit on advisory boards for higher education programmes in Finland and Denmark. I also co-edit book series and journals dedicated to transforming higher education in Africa and beyond.

And yet, amid these titles and achievements, I often return in thought to Bayreuth, to the quiet walks between the city centre and campus, the feeling of becoming, the warmth of friendships formed in shared kitchens, and the intellectual spark ignited in humble seminar rooms. BIGSAS did not merely shape my academic career, it shaped my life. It trusted me before I fully trusted myself. And for that, I remain profoundly grateful. 🌍

Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis





Taking African Studies to all Corners of Bayreuth

Text ERIC ANCHIMBE and MALICK FAYE

In a series of sports and intercultural events, the BIGSAS Football Club remains faithful to its motto: A little bit of play after work!

Fifteen years after it was created, the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) Football Club (FC) continued to carry the flag of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth to all corners of Bayreuth and its environs in 2024. Under the slogan, “A little bit of play after work”, BIGSAS FC participated in many sports and intercultural events in Upper Franconia, creating more awareness of the African focus of the University of Bayreuth and its organisations like the Institute of African Studies (IAS), BIGSAS, Iwalewaha, and the African Multiple Cluster of Excellence. These events offered BIGSAS Junior Fellows, guests, staff, and friends of African Studies in Bayreuth the opportunity to meet the non-university community and to share ideas and vision.

As in the past 14 years, BIGSAS FC played in League 4a of the Wilde Liga Bayreuth in the 2024 season. It won the league, scoring a record 80 goals in

14 matches – an average of 5.7 goals per match. BIGSAS FC was also champion of the same league in 2021, 2022, and 2023 – hence earning the highest league wins in the last seven years. As a household name in the six-a-side Wilde Liga hobby league, BIGSAS FC has made inroads into the non-university community of Bayreuth, created synergies between students in African Studies and students in other disciplines at the University of Bayreuth, and provided networking opportunities for players with actors and professionals in the region as well as with students from other parts of the world.



Champions of the ASV Oberpreuschwitz 2024 Tournament

The team also participated in the ASV Oberpreuschwitz Hobby Tournament in June 2024 where it came second. It was their fourth participation in the tournament: in the three previous tournaments BIGSAS FC came out as champions. In July 2024, BIGSAS FC played in the Eintracht Bayreuth 2024 Football Summer Tournament, ending with the title runners-up. Additionally, BIGSAS FC was invited for the third year to play in the ASV Lindenhart Summer Tournament 2024, 20 kilometres outside of Bayreuth. In 2024, BIGSAS ended up fourth place, but enjoyed a hilarious welcome in the heart of Creußen.

In winter 2024, not even snow could stop the team. It participated in the Sport Service Franken (SSF) 15th Business Cup: Indoor Football Tournament in Weidenberg, some 12 kms outside Bayreuth. Unbeaten in the ten-team competition, BIGSAS FC dramatically lost the finals in penalty shoot-outs, but won the hearts of the hundreds of spectators who showed up to watch the Sunday morning event.

The team colours, orange and green, represent a positive view of life and the team's love for a safe and green planet and environment for all. BIGSAS FC welcomes anyone who wants to join for a little bit of play after work, as they continue to reach out to the Bayreuth and Upper Franconian public with the University's African focus. 

Photo credit: Eric A. Anchimbe

End-of-Project Workshops in Benin: Multiple Realities of (Il)literacy

Text ISSIFOU ABOU MOUMOUNI

Two workshops in Benin marked the close of an international Cluster project on illiteracy, fostering dialogue between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to shape inclusive literacy strategies.

To mark the end of the project *Learning Beyond the Classroom: Coping with Illiteracy in Urban Contexts in Benin, Bolivia, and Germany*, two workshops were organised in Benin, aiming at influencing future strategic orientations of public policies with regard to illiteracy in the country. As the project was organised in collaboration between the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth (Germany) and the Laboratory for Studies and Research on Social Dynamics and Local Development (LASDEL-Parakou), one of these workshops was organised at LASDEL-Parakou, the other in Benin's economic capital Cotonou, in which the majority of policy makers are concentrated. This followed a conference in La Paz/El Alto, Bolivia in August 2023 (see also NAB XXII/2023 p.36), the second research site. The project members Issifou Abou Moumouni, Erdmute Alber, and Carlos Kölbl as well as the cooperation partner in Benin, Clarisse Tama, took part in the workshops.

The workshops in Benin were organised on 16 and 18 March 2024 and focussed on the subject *Orality, Writing, and Reading: Multiple Realities of Literacy*

and *Illiteracy*. They followed two strategic aims: First, to create a framework for exchange between actors involved in the implementation of literacy programmes and researchers on the issue of (il)literacy; and second, to report on research findings with the perspective of making them fruitful for policy development in the field of learning. In Cotonou, the project was discussed mainly with policy makers, in Parakou, with actors in the field.



Workshop held on 18 March 2024 in Parakou (LASDEL)

The two workshops brought together a diverse group of participants, including government representatives from the Ministry of Secondary Education and Vocational Training, Directorate of Literacy and Promotion of National Languages, Departmental Directorate of Secondary Education and Vocational Training, and practitioners, namely NGOs and technical and financial partners working in the field of literacy and illiteracy (representatives of the Cotonou NGO Collective, and the NGOs DERANA, SIA N'SON, and AJEPEC), beneficiaries of functional literacy programmes, research part-

ners, and academy (University of Parakou and University of Abomey-Calavi). At the workshop, participants reflected on literacy and illiteracy from a theoretical and empirical perspective in a diverse context. This enabled the necessary, but rarely realised exchange beyond the academic context, so that policy makers became better aware of academic results. To this end, these workshops gave rise to 13 presentations (six in Cotonou and seven in Parakou) on various topics highlighting the multiplicity of illiteracy. Some explored literacy in relation to climate change and development issues; others discussed experiences of implementing literacy programmes and the issue of measuring literacy; finally, others discussed innovations and strategies to enable “illiterate” people to adapt to a literate environment and access digital public services.

The depth of the debates, the experiences shared about the difficulties in implementing literacy programmes, and the adaptive innovations developed by illiteratised people in their learning process are all relevant elements highlighted by these workshops, which, according to the technical advisor to the Minister for Secondary Education and Vocational Training, should guide public policy. One of the immediate effects of these workshops was observed in Luxembourg's cooperation programme, which allocated a budget line to increase funding for literacy programmes. 



Gedisa Jacob and former Director Dr. Niles at the National Museum and Art Gallery (NMAG)

Expanding Networks

Research and Curatorial Dialogue between Bayreuth, Melbourne and Port Moresby

Text SARAH BÖLLINGER and KATHARINA GREVEN

In August and September 2024, we travelled to Australia and Papua New Guinea to present our research project *The Pacific and the Indian Ocean – Threads of Modernist Movements in the Collection of Iwalewaha* at the Indian Ocean Craft Triennial (IOTA) in Perth, Australia, and to initiate collaborative dialogues with scholars, curators, and institutions in Melbourne, Australia and Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

This journey – situated at the intersection of African Studies, Indigenous Studies, museum practice, and decolonial knowledge production – enabled us to engage in transoceanic exchange on the role of collections and artistic legacies within the present academic and political climate.

Our first destination was the University of Melbourne, where we – greatly supported by Irina Herrschner of the Gateway Office – met with key figures from the Indigenous Knowledge Institute, the Pro Vice-Chancellor International, the Indigenous Studies Program, and the university chancellery. These conversations centred around shared concerns: How can institutions

meaningfully and structurally engage with Indigenous and decolonial perspectives in teaching, research, and exhibition practice? What forms of international cooperation can emerge between a Cluster-based African Studies programme and a university landscape in which “Africa-related” research remains highly decentralised?

We introduced the African Studies programmes at Bayreuth – especially the structure and objectives of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence – and presented Iwalewaha as a site for research-based curatorial practice. There was substantial interest in long-term collaboration, including the development of a dual-PhD model, short-term research exchanges, and joint exhibitions. The Arts West Gallery and the Old Quad in Melbourne emerged as potential venues for showcasing the Iwalewaha collection, particularly in relation to themes such as transcultural modernisms, global South dialogues, and “inclusive aesthetics.” These spaces, deeply embedded in Melbourne’s arts and academic networks, offer promising grounds for critically engaging African and Oceanic collections in dialogue.

Our second destination was Port Moresby, where we engaged with re-

searchers from the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies (IPNGS), the University of Papua New Guinea, and members of the Arts Society of PNG. This segment of the journey revealed a vibrant and diverse cultural landscape, often underrepresented in international academic discourse. Exchanges with Don Niles, former Director, and senior researchers at IPNGS brought forth vital questions about collection access, knowledge restitution, and language preservation – all highly relevant for African Studies, particularly regarding decolonial archival methodologies. The IPNGS’ long-standing engagement with music and intangible heritage mirrored current debates in African contexts about the safeguarding of non-material knowledge systems. One of the first outcomes of this trip was the collaboration between Iwalewaha and the Arts Society of Papua New Guinea, resulting in a special digital display of the 2024 Akis Art Prize, which was showcased from October to December 2024.

The personal dimension of this journey cannot be overstated. As researchers with long-standing ties to Iwalewaha – yet operating under precarious institutional conditions – we entered these spaces with both ambition and caution. In many ways, our experience

echoes what Sara Ahmed outlines in her book *Complaint!*: Institutional resistance to critique, lack of structural support, and the emotional labour required for academic survival. Yet this awareness also sharpened our perspective. We were not merely visitors; we were interlocutors seeking shared vocabularies across contexts shaped by colonial histories and contemporary struggles for recognition.

Several key insights emerged from this experience. First, the necessity of translation: academic terms like “truth telling,” “Indigenous knowledge,” or “decolonial aesthetics” cannot be assumed as universal. Their meanings are profoundly shaped by local histories, institutional landscapes, and epistemic traditions. Second, the contrast between Melbourne’s fragmented Africa engagement and Bayreuth’s integrated Cluster model underscores the potential of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence to offer orientation for institutions aiming to move beyond isolated efforts. Third, the shared interest in collection-based teaching, artistic collaboration, and ethical curatorship opens concrete avenues for future cooperation.

As we reflect on the journey, we remain committed to fostering collaborative frameworks that prioritise mutual respect, shared authorship, and ethical forms of knowledge exchange. Plans for a joint research project and exhibition are currently underway, with funding avenues actively explored. We were also drafting concept notes for dual-PhD supervision and shared seminars – particularly around curating across the global South, epistemologies of the archive, and comparative decolonialities.

At the IPNGS: Tava N. Airika, Don Niles, Bruno Tenakanai, Katharina Greven, Sarah Böllinger, Christopher Neren Pulo



Photos: Katharina Greven and Sarah Böllinger

With Don Niles at Waigani-Campus of the University of Papua New Guinea

We are deeply grateful to the many individuals and institutions who supported this journey – including the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, the early career programme (WiN-UBT), the Bavarian funding programme for the initiation of international research collaborations (Bay-IntAn), and the Equal Opportunities Office of the University of Bayreuth. Our sincere thanks also go to the artists, librarians, scholars, and administrative staff in Melbourne and Port Moresby who shared their time, knowledge, and commitment to cross-cultural dialogue. What began as a presentation opportunity has evolved into a vision for sustained South-South-North collaboration – one that we can hopefully actively pursue with renewed energy and a shared sense of purpose. 🌍

Georgina Beier’s mural at the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies (IPNGS)

In front of artworks by Kauage and Kivu at the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies (IPNGS).



At the New Guinea Collection, Michael Somare Library, University of Papua New Guinea – documenting publications featuring Kauage, complementary to those in the Beier estate.

Installation view of the digital display at Iwalewaha for the Akis Art Prize 2024, presented in cooperation with the Arts Society of Papua New Guinea.



Research Project

Multilingual African Learning Spaces:

Translanguaging Practices in Kenyan Schools

Text BILLIAN OTUNDO

How do multilingual practices shape knowledge (de)construction, identity, and communication across schools, cultural contexts, and digital spaces? This project transcends translanguaging as a creative and critical practice across education, digital culture, and identity, highlighted through fieldwork, conferences, and international collaborations in 2024.

A comprehensive field study was conducted across four counties in Kenya – Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Bungoma, and Nandi. Over 34 days in August to September 2024, Susanne Mühleisen (Principal Investigator), Billian Otundo (Lead Researcher), and Barbara Wabuye (Field Assistant) visited diverse school environments to observe and document how students and teachers engage in translanguaging practices to facilitate learning and meaning-making. From peri-urban centres to remote rural schools, the team navigated various sites which were strategically planned for intensive, hands-on data collection involving observations, video and audio recordings, and interviews.

Workshop and Writing Retreat: Making Meaning, Shaping Knowledge: Practices and Perspectives in African and African Diasporic Multilingual Spaces

From 2 to 6 December 2024, the sunlit coastal city of Mombasa, Kenya, hosted the international conference *Making Meaning, Shaping Knowledge: Practices and Perspectives in African and African Diasporic Multilingual Spaces*, convened by Billian Otundo and Susanne Mühleisen. The workshop brought together scholars working across diverse countries, including Kenya, Nigeria, Greece, Germany, and Jamaica, to create a dynamic forum for

exploring how meaning is constituted, negotiated, and transformed in multilingual settings.

The chapters that emerged from the workshop and were further developed during the writing retreat present a diverse and compelling range of perspectives on translanguaging and multilingualism. Mary Lonyangapuo (Moi University, Kenya) explores the contextual dynamics of meaning-making in Kenyan multilingual settings, showing how translanguaging – shaped by sociocultural conditions – enables speakers to construct and communicate knowledge that resonates with local realities. Similarly, Feyi Ademola-Adedoye (University of Lagos, Nigeria) turns to Nigerian popular music as a rich site of linguistic innovation. Otundo (University of Bayreuth, Germany) focuses on translanguaging practices in rural Kenyan primary schools, illustrating how strategies such as code-switching, singing, and visual representation enhance learner

engagement and comprehension in linguistically diverse classrooms. In the digital sphere, Henry Ndalila (Moi University, Kenya) investigates how codeswitching on Facebook contributes to the (re)construction of Bukusu identity. His study highlights the role of social media as a space where language use reinforces ethnic belonging and cultural continuity. Extending the focus to higher education, Aretousa Giannakou and Ellie Zampiaki (University of Nicosia, Cyprus) examine how English shapes the linguistic experiences of Kenyan university students. Their chapter reflects on the ambivalence surrounding English: while it opens opportunities, it may also obscure the value and visibility of local languages. Meanwhile, Andrew Chelimo (Moi University, Kenya) investigates translangua-

ging among the Marakwet, Keiyo, and Tugen communities, showing how linguistic blending becomes a means of navigating socio-economic challenges, serving both as a communicative tool and a coping mechanism. Finally, Elizabeth Murey (Moi University, Kenya) and Otundo address multilingual commu-



Fieldwork on Translanguaging in Rural Schools

Luther University Halle-Wittenburg, Germany, from 1 – 2 October. This contribution explored the dynamic interplay of linguistic features in Kenya’s multilingual educational settings, with particular attention to intonational patterns and code-switching practices. Earlier in the year, Otundo co-presented another paper with Brenda Chiteri (University of Bayreuth), titled *Linguistic Realities in Kenya’s Digital Innovations: A Contribution to Global Knowledge Evolution*, at the International Workshop on Conflict and Collaboration in African Digital Spaces. This event, part of the postdoctoral working group “Digital Trans*formations in Africa: A Critical Space for Intellectual and Material Capital,” was also co-convened by Otundo and took place at the University of Bayreuth on 12–13 April 2024. The presentation offered valuable insights into the sociolinguistic dimensions of Kenya’s digital transformation and its contribution to evolving global knowledge systems. In addition, Otundo delivered a public lecture titled *Multilingual African Learning Spaces: Translanguaging Practices in Kenyan Schools* as part of the habilitation procedure. The lecture, presented to members of the Faculty of Literature and Languages at the University of Bayreuth, took place during the Linguistic Laboratory on 12 November 2024.

Publications

In 2024, the research team demonstrated the project’s empirical depth and its interdisciplinary reach across sociolinguistics, education, and cultural studies. Otundo co-authored with Tsevi Dodounou (Montmorency College, Laval, Canada), published in *African Identities* (Springer), which examines how naming and labelling practices shape the cultural construction of identity among individuals with albinism in multilingual East, Central, and West Africa. The study critically engages with the politics of language, identity, and marginalisation, providing nuanced insights into the ways linguistic practices intersect with social hierarchies and cultural perceptions.

Other academic exchanges:

Other notable events connected to the research project include a co-presented paper by Otundo and Simon Wehrle (University of Cologne), titled *Intonation Style, Multilingualism, and Code-Switching in Classroom Discourse: Evidence from Kenyan English and Swahili*,



left: Workshop on Meaning-Making

right: Fieldwork Observation in a Peri-Urban School

Photos: Billian Otundo, Barbara Wabuye

Adding a rich cultural dimension, Otundo also partnered with Walter Sande (Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Kenya) in a study that analysed the influence of Dholuo figures of speech on Olusuba folksongs. Published at the University of Bayreuth, this research highlighted how linguistic borrowing contributes to the preservation and transformation of Abasuba cultural identity, positioning language as a key vehicle of intergenerational heritage and artistic expression. In the realm of phonetics and classroom discourse,



Fieldwork on Persons Living with Albinism

Otundo collaborated with Wehrle on a paper to appear in *Phonetics and Phonology (P&P) 2024*, published at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. Their work examined intonation style, multilingualism, and code-switching in Kenyan classrooms, shedding light on the intricate ways English, Swahili, and code-switching are used in tandem by both teachers and students to navigate instructional communication. Further extending the project’s pedagogical reach, Otundo contributed a chapter to the edited volume *Learning Languages, Being Social: Informal Language Learning and Socialization in Additional Languages*, published by De Gruyter Mouton. Her chapter investigates the attitudes of student teachers in Kenya toward translanguaging practices, comparing their perceptions in formal academic settings to those in informal peer interactions. The findings point to a shifting awareness and growing acceptance of multilingual practices showcasing translanguaging as both a social and instructional resource.



Participants of the International Conference

Colonial Letters and the Contact of Knowledges

Text ERIC ANCHIMBE

Digging into colonial correspondence from the British Southern Cameroons (1916–1960), this project investigated instantiations of contact of knowledges and the resulting phenomena of conflict, coalescence, (mis)representation, and hybridism. Often depressing to read, the letters revealed (covert) colonial agendas and the people's helplessness.

Located in the Cluster's Research Section 'Knowledges', the project *Colonial Letters and the Contact of Knowledges* (CLCK) ran for 48 months, from 2019 to 2023. The project had 11 members, including Eric A. Anchimbe (Project Coordinator), Glory Essien Otung (PhD Researcher within BIGSAS), as well as nine members from outside Bayreuth: Gratien Atindogbe (University of Buea, Cameroon), Julius A. Eyoh (University of Yaounde I, Cameroon), Uchenna Oyali (University of Abuja, Nigeria), Stephen A. Mforteh (University of Yaounde I, Cameroon), Pepetual Mforbe Chiangong (University of

Rostock, Germany), Emmanuel Kengo (University of Buea, Cameroon), Boniface M. Mbah (University of Nigeria Nsukka, Nigeria) and Sarah Marjie (University of Ghana Legon, Ghana).

Aims and Research Questions

The overall aim of the project was to describe and analyse colonial correspondences written by both colonial authorities and the local population during British colonial administration of Southern Cameroons in the period from 1916 to 1960. Focus was on the contact and clash of knowledges, the production of multiple knowledges, the hybridisation of social interaction patterns, the construction of multiple identities, and the stratification of languages at a time when colonialism was active. To achieve the above aims, several research questions were posed, among them:

■ How are multiple identities constructed and consolidated in these letters? Are these identities (e.g., ethnic identity, colonialist identity, social identity, linguistic identity, religious identity) challenged or subverted?

■ In which ways is power (e.g., social, political, colonial, hereditary) enacted discursively in the letters? In other words, how is authority performed in the chain of power, i.e., from the colonial office in London down to Enugu, Nigeria and then further down to Buea, Cameroon?

■ What patterns of knowledge production are adopted in colonial letters? How are these different in letters written by colonial administrators and those written by colonised subjects? What repertoires of knowledges drive their production, rejection, and perhaps co-construction?

■ Are there indications in these letters of the ways colonial authorities controlled access to information by, and knowledge flow to, the colonised local people? E.g., knowledge of their rights as a protectorate, rights of the "native administrator" to retirement benefits, etc.

■ In correspondences that report on court cases, conflict resolution, village

claims to land and property, what do they say of norms of social interaction between, for instance, resident British administrators and local collaborators, or local colonial workers and the common people?

These research questions were at the centre of our individual research projects as team members, the inaugural workshop on *Data and Theoretical Perspectives on Colonial Letters* (4 to 8 March 2020), the international conference on *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Colonial Correspondences* (11 to 14 April 2023), and the online lecture series. The upcoming edited volume of the project will also cover these topics and many more beyond Southern Cameroons.

Archival Data: Corpus of Colonial Epistolary Correspondences

The project put together a robust corpus of colonial correspondences from the Southern British Cameroons covering the period 1916–1964. This is a goldmine of data that is beneficial to researchers in basically all disciplines interested in African Studies. The data includes intelligence reports, annual UN-mandated reports, assessment reports, ethnographic reports on the ways of life of communities or ethnic groups, minutes of cases in both customary and colonial judicial courts, reports of inter-group conflict resolutions, personal exchanges, and so forth.

The data was collected from 2020 to 2021 from three archives in three countries: the National Archives in Buea, Cameroon; National Archives of Nigeria, Enugu, Nigeria; and the National Archives London, UK. Partially retyped and fully digitised in both jpeg and pdf formats, it is titled the *Corpus of Colonial Epistolary Correspondences*. It comprises over 6,000 individual pieces of correspondence exchanged in the period from 1916 to 1964 between British Southern Cameroons and London or the colonial head office in Nigeria. In its hard-bound form, the corpus consists of 21 printed volumes, all bound and shelved. The retyped corpus will be made machine-readable for key word searches and concordance building at a later date.

Photos: Clifford Nchotie

Our multidisciplinary team of researchers easily found material for their individual research in the huge corpus. This corpus is available on request both in solid and soft form. The meta data is also being incorporated into WissKi by the Digital Research Environment of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence.

Research Trajectories

Using the corpus of over 6,000 pieces of correspondence, the team investigated instantiations of power during colonialism, the construction of identities by the coloniser and colonised, the (mis)representation of colonised people and their cultures by the coloniser, the clash-contact-coalescence of knowledges during colonialism, and impact of written communication in communities that were inherently oral in nature. We used the correspondence as windows into the minds of the authors and as a reflection of the social structure and power dynamics that existed at the time. The contributions, though multidisciplinary, also adopt certain disciplinary perspectives including anthropology, literature, history, linguistics, sociology, genre analysis, and discourse analysis.

Events and Highlights

In realising the project, the following key events were organised:

1. *Data and Theoretical Perspectives on Colonial Letters*. Inaugural Workshop of the project (4 to 8 March 2020), University of Bayreuth. Attended by all project members and open to other Cluster and university members.

2. *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Colonial Correspondences*. International Conference of the project (11 to 14 April 2023) University of Bayreuth. Attended by 36 active participants from 14 countries, investigating colonial correspondences written in ten colonies. The participants were from Algeria, Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Israel, Kenya, Mauritania, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Singapore, Switzerland, USA, Zimbabwe, and of course Germany.

3. *CLCK Lecture Series*, online on Zoom from 15 July to 16 September 2020. Members of the project presented their individual research within the project. Through this series we kept our research going despite the restrictions imposed as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, the CLCK project offered a glimpse into how colonial administration worked and how postal correspondence was central to the functioning of colonial communication. To be frank, there were a lot of depressing and demoralising moments caused by the deliberate misrepresentation by some colonial officers of indigenous peoples, their ways of life, cultures, and civilisation. Being from former Southern Cameroons, I found several claims to be false and simply made up to fit colonial narratives. 🇳🇬

For more see:
www.colonial-letters.com



Radical Imagination – in the Making of the World: A Glimpse into the Works of

Hannah Arendt
& Saidiya V. Hartman

Text MARIAM POPAL

How can we rethink critical thought and archival research? This text, which represents part of Mariam Popal's ongoing work and 2024 research stay in New York, USA, discusses historical and discursive marginalization, representation – and literary imagination as counter-narrative in the work of Hannah Arendt and Saidiya V. Hartman.

World-making is a major research field in literary theory. The conjunction of literary works – or, more generally of the arts – and world-making seems apparent. But how do we experience and make the world on all our possible roads and dwellings on the earth? True, in the 'real' world we experience the timing and the plot of our continuing life stories, our losses, in their undelayed immediacy on our very own skin, in the regulations and irregularities of our bodies in physical and mental ways, in the injuries and defeated hopes of our expectations and possibilities. Yet we are also experiencing the world, in its glocal dimensions, mostly as narrated. The German-Jewish literary critic Erich Auerbach, who later became a refugee, titled one of his major works *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (*Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, 1946). The university, as an institution that manages 'knowledge' via structures of learning and teaching, and thus the transfer of different narratives, is also a major manufactory of world-making. This not only equips us with the power to contribute to the building of 'worlds'

through knowledge-systems that inevitably will influence the world in the making and the making of worlds. It also implicitly endows us with the task, with a responsibility, and the question of what kind of worlds we are about to shape, to whom we are speaking while creating them, and who may remain unheard or silenced in the process, often without us being aware. Although our works themselves may appear to be mere raindrops, according to a Darian proverb in Afghanistan, it is raindrops that drop by drop create a sea (*qatra, qatra daryā gardad*). So, it may not be irrelevant how we proceed in our works and with which questions in mind we develop them.

Hannah Arendt and Saidiya V. Hartman are two scholars who create worlds in their works by considering literature and literary writing while reading our canons and archives. They do so by employing what I would call a *radical imagination* as an reading lens against the backdrop of often hidden and overlooked atrocities and sufferings. Their works not only begin at the ruins of painful historical events – the long history of antisemitism, beginning in antiquity and much later, the Shoah, as well as the old history and institution of enslavement and later The Middle Passage – but in their search for new beginnings, for opportunities to shift our perceptions and widen the scope of our world's underpinnings, both scholars reconfigure 'knowledge' and its meanings with the dimensions of aesthetics. One of Arendt's impressive phrases was also taken as the title for a posthumously compiled volume of her seminal essays

Thinking without a Banister: Essays in Understanding, 1953-1975 (*Denken ohne Geländer* 2005; 2015) and describes the necessity and risk of this radical approach: It is a movement within uncertainties that have arisen from the ruins of a former knowledge, a knowledge that turned out to be part of destructive political dynamics, or at least, could not prevent them. In *Thinking without a Banister*, Arendt speaks of the 'thinking self' as a 'homeless' entity and refers to this homelessness as a space of 'nowhere' (*Nirgendes*). According to this view, we do not have a place in the process of thinking – we become homeless. She describes this homelessness as a void (*Leere*). However, for Arendt, this void is not something 'bad'. Rather the void – the experience of homelessness – is an essential, natural (*natürlich*) part for thought to emerge; it is the place of all philosophy. Homelessness, Arendt muses, is like a country, a prerequisite world for thinking. Arendt's considerations are based on the history of Judaism as an experience of persecution *par excellence* due to one's thoughts and beliefs, especially in the European context.

Regardless of enlightenment and secularism, racist thinking against Jews culminated in the Shoah genocide within European modernity. Against the backdrop of this history, Arendt developed a complex critical approach towards mainstream traditionalism, knowledge, and philosophy. In her rather neglected work that because of its actuality, brilliance, and depth is now receiving renewed attention across the world, Arendt rereads ancient philosophical texts but also a

number of progressive literary works to find new entry points for thought. One of the concepts she speaks of, and which is also the title of one of her essay volumes, is *The Hidden Tradition* (*Die verborgene Tradition*) (1976). This insightful expression refers to the marginalisation and disregard of the work of Jewish European writers and authors – work and approaches that Arendt unearthed and makes room for.

A similar movement is also inherent in the works of African American literary scholar Saidiya V. Hartman. In her more recent works, Hartman develops a methodological and epistemological reading lens of archival material that is also a form of aesthetically inspired literary writing. This is an approach that she employs in her book *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (2019). In an earlier work, Hartman calls her technique 'critical fabulation'. Using archival and historical records, as well as critical theories, Hartman fills in the gaps in the lives and lived experiences of African Americans, particularly women, that she finds in the archives, while remaining attentive to the injustices they experienced. Hartman also bases her approach on her difficult, and mentally and emotionally exhausting work on *The Middle Passage* and the history of transatlantic enslavement that, because of the unspeakable crimes against humanity that were committed daily and which inform the archives, does not leave space for the experience of beauty. So, in her more recent approach, Hartman attempts to create an aesthetic dimension in her research and give epistemological depth to missing and inadequate archival material through writing. This is an approach that she introduces, for example, in her research on 'Venus' as a recurrent figure of a traumatised girl or woman that haunts the Atlantic slavery archive. The 'nowhere' and the 'void' that Hartman tries to capture and to fill thus represent the lives and voices that the unbearable injustices and atrocities of the *The Middle Passage* have created and left behind – with the urgent, almost impossible attempt to avoid reproducing them. She

understands her approach as a 'counter-history of the human', as a 'practice of freedom', and a form of 'reparation' (*Venus in Two Acts*, 2008). A major component of her thought and work is the question of ethical responsibility regarding the work of representation involved in storytelling. What Hartman seeks to complicate and challenge in her work are the 'pledges of history' "to be faithful to the limits of fact, evidence, and archive, even as those dead certainties are produced by terror." Hartmann's approach, in contrast to the usual research of a disin-

terested style and against the silences that accompany this economy, is "not to give voice to the slave, but rather to imagine what cannot be verified." Like Arendt, Hartman also relates her approach to the present and to the crimes committed in the name of 'security', 'civilisation', 'God', and 'the good' worldwide. Our work may then also mean the attempt to capture the impossible in the face of the other and to carve out space for them while we are engaged in the making of our worlds and the production and distribution of knowledge.



Drawing "repair" by D.M.P., 2025

The Postdoc Working Group

Digital Trans*formations in Africa: A Critical Space for Intellectual and Material Capital

Text BILLIAN OTUNDO, LAMINE DOUMBIA, NOEMI ALFIERI, CASSANDRA MARK-THIESEN

How are digital technologies reshaping identity, knowledge, and power across Africa and its Diasporas? The Digital Trans*formations in Africa group brings radical, interdisciplinary insight into how tech – from AI to archives – reshapes belonging, knowledge, and linguistic justice in a rapidly digitising world.



Workshop participants at Iwalewahaus

Photo: Billian Otundo

Over the past academic year, the postdoctoral working group Digital Trans*formations in Africa: A Critical Space for Intellectual and Material Capital has emerged as a rigorous and innovative forum for rethinking digital transformation processes across Africa and its diasporas. The group brings together a wide array of disciplines, methodologies, and intellectual traditions to interrogate the intersections of digital technologies with cultural production, spatial reconfiguration, and epistemic justice. At its core, the group is concerned with how digital spaces

and practices are reshaping the production and circulation of intellectual and material capital in Africa. Its members explore how communities imagine, perform, and contest belonging through digital means, and how technologies become implicated in governance, learning, memory, and spatial organisation.

Participants and Interdisciplinary Dialogues
Alongside its core postdoctoral researchers, Noemi Alfieri (New Univer-

based Cloud Solutions Architect and digital practitioner, currently a doctoral candidate in software engineering (University of Bayreuth), has brought deep insights into infrastructural development and cloud-based digital ecosystems on the continent, adding a practitioner's perspective to the group's discussions. Her work, co-authored with Otundo, highlights the challenges and potentialities of digital service provision and technological localisation in Kenya, especially in terms of linguistic accessibility, infra-

structure gaps, and the gendered dimensions of tech labour. Aïdas Sanogo (Centre Universitaire de Manga, Burkina Faso) offers a vital perspective situated at the intersection of education, digital access, and Francophone African discourses on development. Her anthropological contributions illuminate the structural and epistemological challenges faced in integrating digital tools into pedagogical and civic infrastructures across Francophone West Africa. Drissa Tangara's (University of Bamako, Mali) work brings historical depth to the group's exploration

of digitisation. His research examines how digital technologies are reshaping archival practices and modes of knowledge transmission in the West African context, with particular attention to the continuities and ruptures these processes entail. Further, Fulera Issaka-Toure and Gilbert Ndi-Shang (University of Bayreuth) deepen the group's theoretical engagements with gender, religion, and postcoloniality. Their interventions articulate how digital spaces function as contested arenas for the negotiation of identity, power, and embodied experience in African contexts. Contributions from artists such as Carine Bahanag of Cameroon, Gisela Casimiro of Guinea-Bissau, and Nuno Silas of Mozambique have opened critical aesthetic and sensory dimensions of digitality. Their artistic practices interrogate themes of memory, surveillance, migration, and language through the mediums of performance, digital installations, and visual storytelling, thereby challenging conventional epistemic boundaries. Finally, Luisa Schneider and Augustine Gyan, both Junior Fellows at BIGSAS, have brought methodological and ethnographic rigour to the group's discussions. Schneider's work engages digital justice and trauma through feminist and critical legal frameworks, while Gyan examines activist mobilisations and epistemic disobedience in online and offline African publics.

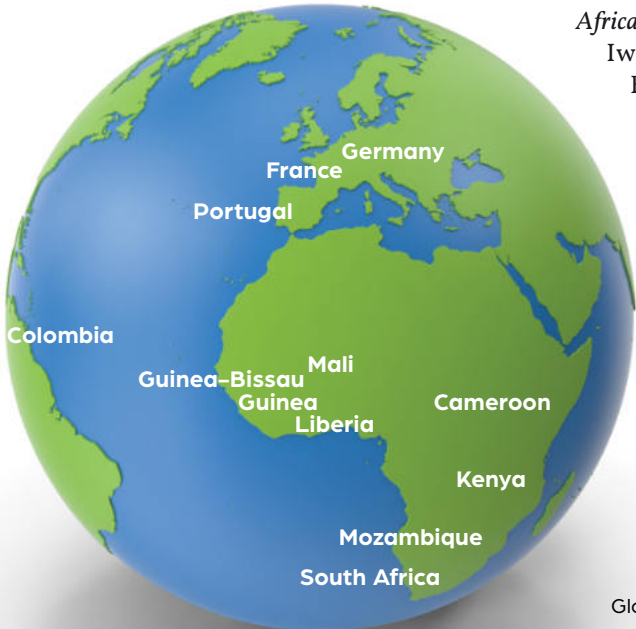
Virtual Meeting and Reading Sessions
Throughout the early months of 2024,

the Digital Trans*formations working group maintained an active programme. On 11, 19, and 25 January the group organised a series of virtual meetings and reading sessions, while February was dedicated to reading groups and discussions. These sessions were instrumental in fostering collective reflection on core themes such as digital spatiality, intersectionality, and epistemic justice within African and Diasporic contexts. In March 2024, the group deepened these exchanges at the Academy Lunch. On 24 June 2024, Emmanuel Dorley (University of Florida, USA) delivered a lecture on how to utilise artificial intelligence methods to build training and learning systems, including their applications to local language acquisition and historical knowledge dissemination in Africa. Furthermore, in July, Jude Juma Omollo, a Senior Engineering Manager at Safaricom, Kenya's largest telecommunications provider, gave a lecture on how artificial intelligence and digital technologies are reshaping African economies through rapid mobile market growth, strategic infrastructure investments, and green energy initiatives, as well as expanding internet access.

Workshop: Practices, Possibilities, and Problems in Digital African Spaces
A defining moment for the group's academic activity in 2024 was the international hybrid workshop *Practices, Possibilities, and Problems in Digital African Spaces*, held 12 – 13 April at Iwalewahaus, University of Bayreuth, with over 15 participants onsite and more than 13 participants online. Organised by Otundo, Alfieri, Doumbia, and Mark-Thiesen, the workshop prompted participants to move beyond techno-optimistic or techno-pessimistic narratives and engage with the multifaceted realities of digitisa-

tion in African contexts. Key questions included: How do digital technologies redefine belonging and mobility in postcolonial African societies? What are the infrastructural and linguistic challenges unique to African digitisation? In what ways do digital spaces serve as platforms for resistance, creativity, or reappropriation? How does the digital reconfigure knowledge hierarchies and epistemic agency? To foster meaningful engagement, participants submitted their draft contributions in advance, facilitating richer feedback sessions and dialogic presentations. The workshop encouraged experimental methodologies, including participatory digital mapping, digital storytelling, and hybrid ethnography.

Thematic Foci and Future: From Land Governance to Language Politics
The group's empirical and theoretical interests cover several crucial domains. One key area is digital land governance, where researchers investigate how mapping technologies, mobile apps, and algorithmic systems mediate access to land, challenge colonial spatial legacies, and introduce new power dynamics surrounding property and sovereignty. Another focal point is language and digital knowledge production. Given the linguistic diversity of the continent, the group is deeply invested in how language barriers shape or hinder participation in digital economies and epistemologies. This interest also engages with broader debates about who gets to produce digital content, under what norms, and with what consequences for African knowledge sovereignty. Other thematic explorations include gendered digital labour, queer online activism, platform governance, and visual archives, each treated not as isolated objects of study, but as interrelated fields within the wider political economies of data and representation. As the group approaches its next phase, it remains committed to establishing scholarly infrastructure that supports horizontal, inclusive, and decolonial modes of inquiry.



Global Reach: Mapping the Diverse Locations of the Participants

Cluster publications: Reading Recommendations

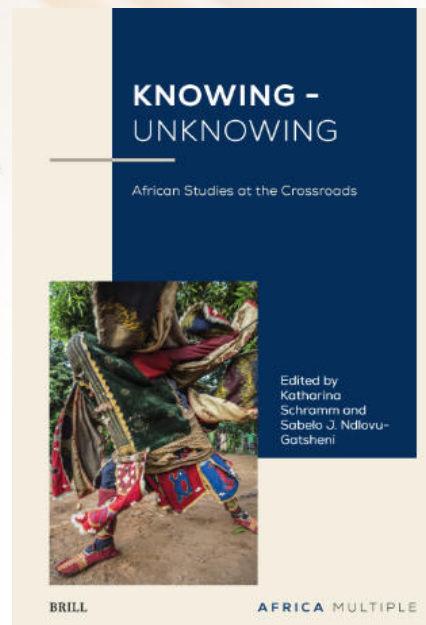
Each year, members of the Institute of African Studies (IAS), the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, along with graduates of the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), share the latest findings from their research in a variety of formats. While a comprehensive list of publications by our affiliated scholars can be accessed via the QR code at the end of this section, the curated selection below features books and monographs published in 2024. We hope you enjoy exploring these recent contributions.

Katharina Schramm, Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Eds.): *Knowing – Unknowing: African Studies at the Crossroads*. Africa Multiple Vol.4. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2024

This book emerges at a time when critical race studies, postcolonial thought, and decolonial theory are under enormous pressure as part of a global conservative backlash. However, this is also an exciting moment, where new horizons of knowledge appear and new epistemic practices (e.g. symmetry, collaboration, undisciplining) gain traction. Through our critical engagements with structural, relational, and personal aspects of knowing and unknowing we work towards a greater multiplicity of knowledges and practices. Calling into question the asymmetrical global economy of knowledge and its uneven division of intellectual labour, our interdisciplinary volume explores what a decolonial horizon could entail for African Studies at the crossroads.

Fendler, Ute, Marie-Anne Kohl, Gilbert Shang Ndi, Christopher O-dhiambo Joseph and Clarissa Verke (Eds.): *Of Worlds and Artworks. A Relational View on Artistic Practices from Africa and the Diaspora*. Leiden: Brill, 2024

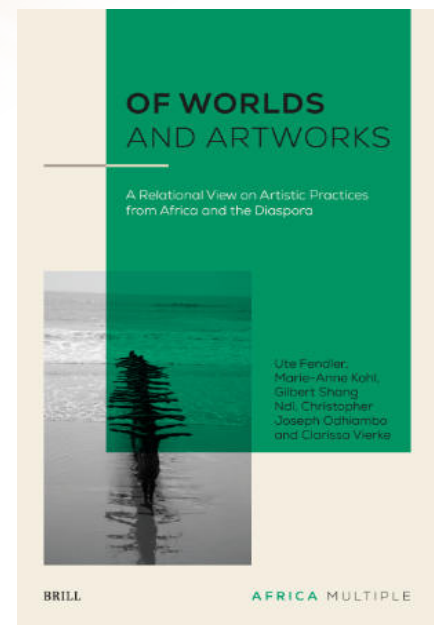
Bringing together 13 contributions, this volume examines artworks – ranging from literature and visual arts to film and performance – as dynamic processes of “worlding,” focusing on how worlds are made, imagined, and related through artistic practices. Rather than viewing Africa as a fixed geographical or cultural space, the book adopts a relational perspective that emphasises movement, interaction, and multiplicity. The multifaceted contributions chal-



lenge colonial legacies, critique global inequalities, and resist Western-centric narratives by highlighting the role of the arts in shaping alternative imaginaries and subjectivities. Through transoceanic dialogues across the Indian Ocean and Atlantic, the volume explores how memory, trauma, identity, and aesthetics are continually negotiated in African and diasporic contexts. Art becomes not only a mirror but a means of transformation – foregrounding new ethical, political, and cultural possibilities.

Susan Arndt, Nihan Duran, Mario Faust-Scalisi, Gülten Gizem Fesli, Louisa Kamrath (Eds.): *Intersectional Knowledges. Roots, Routes and Visions*. Transcript, 2024

Intersectionality is a transformative framework that transcends traditional social categorizations, emphasizing the interconnectedness of identities like class, race, and gender. The contributors to this volume offer profound insights

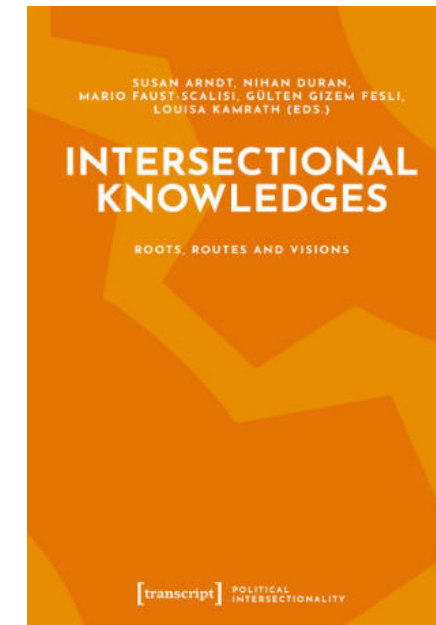


into the complexities of human experiences, social structures, and power dynamics. Unique in its global perspective, their analysis incorporates critical voices from the Global South and examines minority experiences in the Global North. It aims to carry the tradition of intersectionality as a social critical theory to the European context and addresses key issues in German academia, proposing new definitions and structures to advance Intersectionality Studies. This poses an essential invitation to critically engage with and reshape existing power structures in the production of knowledge.

Jana Hönke, Eric Cezne, Yifan Mia Yang (Eds.): *Africa's Global Infrastructures: South-South Transformations in Practice*. London: Hurst Publishers, 2024

Shortlisted for the BCA African Business Book of the Year 2025. The boom in South-South relations since the early

2000s has seen a flurry of investment in African infrastructure from emerging markets across the Global South. While the extent to which these projects spur growth is constantly debated, few studies have addressed their impact on ground-level political and socio-economic practices in Africa – or their consequences for transnational governance more broadly. Through the lens of infrastructure, this book investigates the



developmental ideas, processes and techniques that have travelled to and emerged from Africa as a result of Global South-led projects. How have they been adapted, transformed and contested by local actors? How does this shape business-society relations? And how has this challenged the Western-dominated global order? The contributors zoom in on large-scale Chinese-, Brazilian- and Indian-funded ventures – dams, ports, roads and mines – across countries including Kenya, Mozambique and the DRC. These ‘frontier zones’,

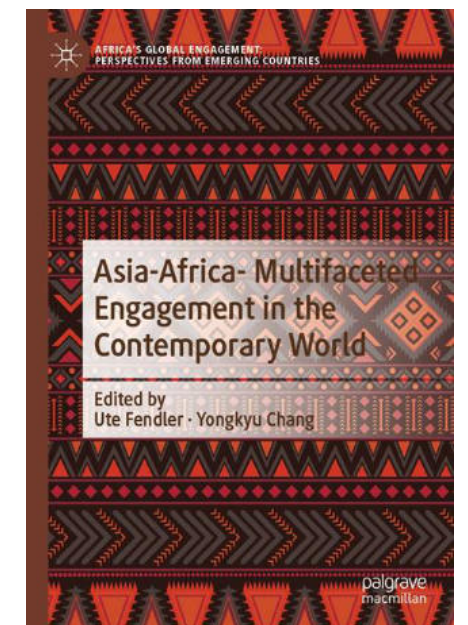
bringing together politicians and practitioners, campaign groups and communities from Africa and elsewhere, offer a unique insight into the global workings of our contemporary world. Taking a bottom-up approach, ‘Africa's Global Infrastructures’ explores the longer-term significance and implications of these pluralistic socio-economic interactions, for the continent and beyond.



Ute Fendler, Yongkyu Chang (Eds.): *Asia-Africa – Multifaceted Engagement in the Contemporary World*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024

This book provides an insight into the complex entanglements between African countries and India, China, and South Korea from multidisciplinary perspectives connecting approaches from cultural, anthropological, literary, and music studies and art history. The three parts present a regional focus, namely Africa-India, Africa-South Korea, and

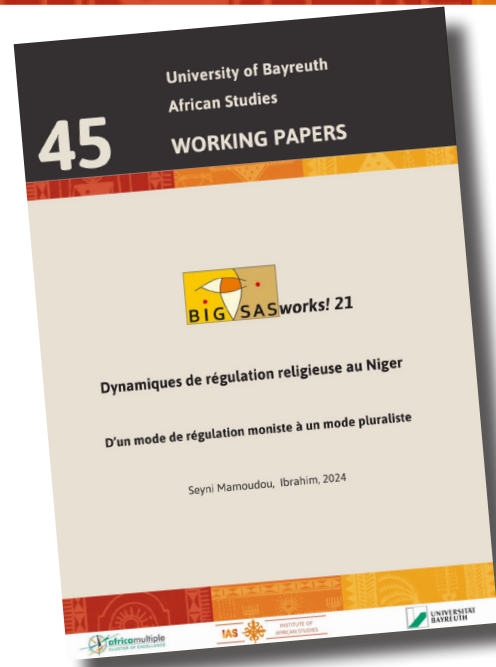
Africa-China while the single contributions speak to each other and offer complementary insights. At the same time, the chapters also link across the regional realms as they deal with similar topics, such as travelling music genres. In part I, for Pombo material culture is the starting point to investigate the connections between the islands of the Indian Ocean and India by questioning the construction of memory. It highlights various as-



pects of the multi-layered history of connections between Africa, the islands, and India. Part II gathers contributions that are complimentary to each other and therefore contribute to the understanding of the complex entanglements in area studies. Part III (Africa-South Korea) explores the impact of African-American arts and artists on South Korea's popular culture as well as the changing perception of artists of African descent in visual popular culture. It shows the impact of Korean content in South Africa.

Please visit the Cluster's publication page:





The IAS Online Publication Series

The Institute of African Studies (IAS) promotes and coordinates the multi-disciplinary field of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth. The IAS publication series provide Bayreuth-based and visiting scholars with opportunities to publish their work on ongoing research and completed projects.

IAS Online Publications are uploaded on the EPub document server at the University of Bayreuth library. They are open access and connected to all common search engines.

University of Bayreuth African Studies Online

University of Bayreuth African Studies Online presents results of Africa-related research at the University of Bayreuth. Publications include articles, edited collections, and single authored monographs – including but not limited to PhD theses.

The series is registered under ISSN 2628-1791 in the online catalogue of the University of Bayreuth library. Submitted documents are subject to external double-blind review.*

The editor-in-chief is Dr. Serawit Debele
(serawit.debele@uni-bayreuth.de)

University of Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers

The *University of Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers* present insights into ongoing research projects in the field of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth and beyond.

In addition to the main series, there are three subseries: *Africa Multiple connects*, *Academy reflects*, and *BIGSASworks!*

IAS members, scholars from the University of Bayreuth as well as national and international cooperation partners are welcome to submit their work to these series. Submitted documents are subject to internal peer review.

The editor-in-chief is Dr. Malick Faye
(IAS@uni-bayreuth.de)

*PhD theses submitted at the University of Bayreuth are not subjected to further review. This facilitates a fast publication process within the series of University of Bayreuth African Studies.

NEWS



New Heisenberg Professorship at the University of Bayreuth

The German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft/DFG) has awarded **Gilbert Shang Ndi** at the University of Bayreuth a prestigious Heisenberg Professorship, as part of its renowned Heisenberg Programme.

This funding stream supports outstanding researchers who are qualification-ready for permanent professorships, granting them the freedom to pursue top-tier projects at their chosen institution. Over up to five years, recipients build their academic profile and prepare for leadership roles. Ndi opted to continue his work in Bayreuth, enriched by his affiliation with the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence.

After completing his Bachelor's and Master's in Yaoundé, Cameroon, Ndi earned his doctorate and habilitation in Bayreuth. He was a Feodor Lynen Research Fellow at the Humboldt Foundation (2017–2019) and conducted postdoctoral work at the African Multiple Cluster of Excellence on UNESCO world heritage sites in Africa and South America.

Ndi's Heisenberg project is entitled *Rails and Mines: Networks of Tropical Coloniality*. Ndi analyses how colonial infrastructures – namely railways and mines – symbolise encounters with Western modernity, globalisation, and postcolonial socio-economic dynamics. His research weaves literary analysis from regions such as Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Republic of Congo, and the Democratic Republic of Congo with field studies in historical archives.

New Academic Coordinator at the Institute of African Studies: Bringing a Global Perspective to Bayreuth

The Institute of African Studies (IAS) at the University of Bayreuth is proud to welcome **Malick Faye** as its new Academic Coordinator. With an impressive academic and professional background spanning three continents, Faye brings a unique blend of scholarly excellence, administrative experience, and intercultural competence to the role.

Born in Senegal and trained in Senegal and Germany, Faye holds a doctorate in political science from Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Germany and a Magister in Ethnology and Agricultural Sciences from the Georg-August University of Göttingen, Germany. His academic journey has focused on collective action, social structures, and empirical social research, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

Faye's previous appointments include positions at universities in Bremen, Oldenburg, and Friedrichshafen, Germany, as well as consultancies with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). A multilingual scholar fluent in German, French, Wolof, and English, he has also led international workshops and contributed to renowned publications on social networks and African Diaspora Studies.

At Bayreuth, Faye will coordinate academic programs, foster research collaboration, and strengthen ties between the Institute and its global partners. His appointment marks an exciting step toward further internationalising African Studies in Germany.

Award of the City of Bayreuth for BIGSAS Alumni Ngozi Blessing Edeagu

Mayor Thomas Ebersberger once again presented the City of Bayreuth Prize during the 2024 President's Dinner at UBT. Among others **Ngozi Blessing Edeagu** received the award for her dissertation, which contributes to the historiography of Nigeria's decolonisation.

The title of her work is *Coalition and Competition in the West African Pilot: The Elite Capture of Nigerian Decolonisation (1937–1960)*. Her research was supervised by Joël Glasman, Chair of History with a focus on Africa, as part of the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS).



The Cluster's International Fellows in 2024

In 2024, the Bayreuth Academy welcomed a diverse group of international fellows, including many Africa-based scholars. With their projects and in collaboration with their respective hosts, they contributed to the research agenda of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence.



Sabelo Mcinziba
(artist in residence)
01.02.2024–31.07.2024
With These Hands.
A photo-essay exhibition



Isabelle Carine Bahanag (artist in residence)
01.10.2023–31.03.2024
"ANLU" – a historical fiction graphic novel. Inspired by Rose Ndengue: "Women public sphere and political power in postcolony: the case of Cameroon (1945–2000s)"



Don Edward Walicek
1.10.2023–31.03.2024
Language Ideologies and Social Contact Involving West Africans and the English on the Gold Coast



Joseph Kasule
01.10.2023–31.03.2024
Public Intellectualism and Decolonial Epistemologies in Contestable Political Imaginations of Buganda (Uganda) and Bergen (Norway)

Yacouba Banhoro
01.02.2024–31.07.2024
Book Historical Approach to Health and Disease Control in Francophone West Africa: The Case of Burkina Faso (1919–2021)



Victor Iwuoha
13.12.2023–12.06.2024
Biometrics Agenda in Africa: Biometric ID Policies, Gendered Dynamics, and Political Mobilization of Migrants in West Africa



Elishifa Elamin
15.11.2023–15.10.2024 The Coloniality of Language in Sudan



Neelima Jeychandran
10.05.2024–31.07.2024
Transits of Objects and Traces of Histories: African Oceanic Linkages



Halil Ibrahim Arpa (associated fellow)
01.10.2023–30.09.2024
Decolonial Hi/stories: Literary Subversion of Colonial and Post-colonial Historiographies



Thandeka Mfinyongo
(artist in residence)
01.12.2024–31.03.2025
INGODUKO "Homecoming" music and workshop project



Habibat Oladosu-Uthman
01.02.2024–31.07.2024
Gender Politics in the "House of God" – Comparing Islam and Traditional Religions in West Africa



Anthony Okeregbe
(annual theme fellow)
01.11.2024–20.12.2024
Annual Theme: Temporalities

Nyindem Nancy Sirih-Nagang
01.04.2024–31.07.2024
The politics of labelling in crises: The case of the two Anglophone regions in Cameroon



Christabel Aba Sam
22.10.2024–10.01.2025
Beyond the tunes: Masculine Representations, Trends and Insights from Contemporary Ghanaian Afrobeats



Katrin Seidel
06.11.2023–31.03.2024
Decentering Peace Mediation



Isabella Villanova
01.10.2024–31.03.2025
Temporal Intersections and Affective Tonalities: The Contemporary African Bildungsroman



Daniel Ochieng Orwenjo
01.10.2024–31.03.2025
Waiting to Die: The Discursive Construction of Competing Moralities in Illness Narratives in End-of-Life Care Contexts in Kenya



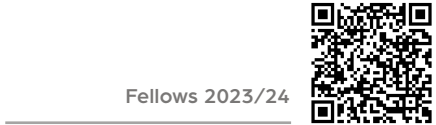
Chembea Suleiman Athuman
01.10.2023–31.03.2024
Poetry (Qasidah) and Women's Bodies in the Creation, Dissemination of Islamic Knowledge and Cultural Identity in Zanzibar



AbdulGafar Olawale Fahm
01.10.2024–31.03.2025
Impact of Digital Technology on Islamic Learning in Contemporary Nigerian Muslim Societies: An Ethical Exploration



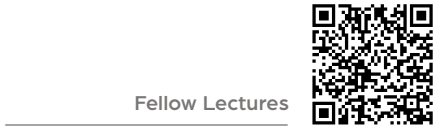
Fellows, hosts and the fellowship scheme coordinator in the summer of 2024



Fellows 2023/24



Fellows 2024/25



Fellow Lectures

Bridging Digital and Traditional Learning:

My Fellowship Journey at Bayreuth

Text **ABDULGAFAR OLAWALE FAHM**

Exploring the ethical frontiers of digital Islamic education, my fellowship at the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence offered rich academic exchange, interdisciplinary collaboration, and transformative insights into how technology is reshaping religious learning in Nigeria.

From October 2024 to March 2025, I had the privilege of being an International Fellow at the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, University of Bayreuth. This six-month fellowship allowed me to immerse myself in a vibrant academic community and advance my research on digital technology and Islamic education. My project, *Impact of Digital Technology on Islamic Learning in Contemporary Nigerian Muslim Societies: An Ethical Exploration*, examines how social media, online learning portals, and mobile applications are transforming traditional religious learning in Nigeria. The digitisation of Islamic knowledge has made teachings more accessible than ever before, opening new opportunities for education across distances and communities. At the same time, it raises critical questions about authenticity, religious

authority, and the inclusion of marginalised voices. Throughout my time in Bayreuth, I explored these dynamics and sought ways to ensure that digital platforms can democratise Islamic education while preserving its integrity.

Research Activities and Highlights

My fellowship was filled with academic engagements that showcased my work and allowed me to learn from others. A cornerstone was the weekly Academy Lunch seminar every Tuesday, where fellows took turns giving short talks about their projects followed by lively discussions over lunch. I presented my project at one of these sessions and received valuable feedback that helped refine my approach. It was equally enlightening to hear other fellows' presentations, which spanned literature, sociology, music, and more – a true reflection of the Cluster's interdisciplinary spirit.

I also delivered a more formal Fellow Lecture in the Cluster's Moralities research section. In this talk, titled *Digital Technology and Gendered Language Choices in Islamic Learning: Marginality and Identity Formation in Nigerian Muslim Communities*, I explored how digital platforms affect gender dynamics in religious learning. I showed how women

in Nigerian Muslim communities increasingly use WhatsApp, YouTube, and other online tools to access and share Islamic knowledge, thereby reshaping traditional authority structures. The lecture sparked great discussions on ethics, language (Hausa, Yoruba, English usage online), and the challenges of ensuring authenticity in digital religious content.

During the fellowship, I had the opportunity to expand my publication portfolio. I authored an article titled *Bridging Divides: The Role of Digital Technology in Democratising Islamic Education in Nigeria*, published in the *Asian Journal of African Studies* (2025). I also prepared a working paper *Navigating Digital Frontiers: Preliminary Ethical Reflections on Islamic Learning*, which I submitted to the Bayreuth Academy's Academy Reflects series. Writing these pieces in Bayreuth meant I could incorporate insights from colleagues and mentors, greatly enriching the final outputs.

Collaboration and knowledge exchange were constant themes. I participated in a multi-regional workshop *Rethinking Accelerated Learning in the Global South* and presented a paper on digital pathways to knowledge equity in Islamic education. This forum, involving scholars from Africa and Asia,

was a fantastic chance to situate my research in a broader educational development context. The Cluster also supported my attendance at the International Conference on Organisational Sociology in Hamburg (ICOS 2025), where I engaged with aspects of digital education, gaining fresh perspectives outside my discipline.

Another highlight was contributing to public outreach through the Cluster's podcast series. I was featured in Episode 29 of *Cluster Conversations*, talking with Britta Frede about how digital technology is transforming Islamic learning. We discussed the opportunities (greater accessibility and community-building) as well as challenges (misinformation, changing authority) that come with online religious engagement. Explaining my research to a general audience in this format was a gratifying experience and underscored the broader societal relevance of the work we do.

Reflections on Research Culture and Growth

Being a Fellow at Bayreuth added an important new dimension to my academic life. The research culture here is strongly committed to decolonial and critical approaches to knowledge. The Cluster encourages rethinking African Studies by valuing perspectives from the Global South and co-creating knowledge. This ethos aligned well with my interest in the ethical aspects of digital religious engagement. I was inspired by how collaborative research is the norm – from interdisciplinary feedback sessions to joint panel discussions. Interacting with scholars across disciplines (linguistics, anthropology, history, media studies, etc.) gave me a holistic view of how digital technology is reshaping learning not just in Nigeria, but in many African contexts.

The fellowship also connected me with peers from various countries and academic backgrounds. Informal conversations and group meetings exposed me to parallel research debates, whether on digital media in Kenyan religious movements or on cultural heritage projects in Ghana. These cross-regional insights often challenged me to rethink assumptions and

consider new angles. For example, discussions with a German colleague led me to refine the ethical framework of my study, adding more context-specific nuance than I had initially considered.

Key Takeaways for My Academic Development

This international fellowship has provided several lasting benefits:

- **Broadened horizons:** Exposure to new academic environments challenged my assumptions and added nuance to my understanding of digital religious engagement.

- **Access to resources:** Germany's extensive archives and libraries provided a wealth of literature and data, strengthening my research with richer sources.

- **Networking:** I forged connections with researchers across Africa, Europe, and Asia – collaborations that will likely continue in future projects, including learning German (thanks to Thorsten Parchent).

- **Teaching inspiration:** Seeing different educational approaches (in Nigeria's traditional classes, Malaysia's blended learning, and Germany's critical discussions) inspired me to adopt more interactive and inclusive teaching methods for Islamic studies back home.

Personal Reflections and Conclusion

On a personal note, adapting to the German winter was a unique challenge – coming from Nigeria, I had to get used to the cold and short days! My schedule was quite packed, so I didn't travel around Germany as much as I'd hoped. Nonetheless, the warmth of the Bayreuth community made me feel at home. Colleagues and staff were welcoming and always ready to help, whether in navigating the library system or recommending the best local tea for a sore throat.

Overall, this fellowship has been a truly transformative experience. It allowed me to advance my research with new insights and grow as a scholar with a more global outlook. I return to Nigeria with a renewed sense of purpose and a network of colleagues spanning continents. The lessons learned and relationships built from October 2024 to March 2025 will continue to shape my work in the years to come. I am deeply grateful to the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and the Bayreuth Academy for this opportunity, and I look forward to building on this journey in my future endeavors. 🌍

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Fellow AbdulGafar Olawale Fahm and his host Britta Frede



February

01.02.2024 – Public Roundtable: ICDL Round Table – Queer African Citizenship: Working through Unbelonging and Unhoming in Bayreuth
Anima Adjepong, Stella Nyanzi, DeLovie Kwagala

07.02.2024 – Public Roundtable: Digital Global History in Bayreuth
Astrid Swenson, Haakon A. Ikonomo, Robert Lee, Jessica Parr

07.02.2024 – Lecture: Antiracist Genomics (ANTIGEN): From Ethnographic Insights to Speculative Design in Bayreuth
Ernesto Schwartz-Marin

08.02.2024 – Lecture: Intimate Colonialities: Public Intellectualism & Political revolution in Buganda/ Bergen in Bayreuth
Joseph Kasule

12.02.2024 – Seminar: Reinvention of Lyre Music and Dance for Knowledge Preservation and Political Mitigation: The Case of the Bukusu of Kenya in Eldoret, Kenya and ACC Moi
Mary Longyangapuo, Simon Nganga, Samuel M. Obuchi, Stella Onyiego

14.02.2024 – Lecture: Interrogating Migration and Resilience Building in Lagos Urban Margins: Focus on IDP Communities in Lagos, Nigeria and ACC Lagos
Taibat O. Lawanson

16.02.2024 – Lecture: Mustakabali wa Kiswahili Kama Lughaya Kimataifa (The Future of Kiswahili as an International Language) in Eldoret, Kenya
Abdilatif Abdalla, Magdalene Wafula, Mark Mosol Kandagor

22.–23.02.2024 – Workshop: Making a Living – Educations and Societies and Missing Links in Bayreuth
Iris Clemens, Adeline Masquelier, Issa Tamou, Erdmute Alber, Dorte Thorsen, Anette Fasang, Binda Niati, Luca Maria Pesando



New Year Lecture (18.01.24)

January

09.01.–06.02.2024 – Lecture: Transgressing Borders: Anthropology Lecture Series WS23/24
in Bayreuth
Arne Harms, Sahana Udupa, Andrea Mühlebach, Manuela Bauche

16.–17.01.2024 – Lecture: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Men’s Narratives of Street Harassment in Lagos Transit Environments in Eldoret, Kenya
Helen Ugah

16.01.2024 – Workshop: The Politics of Publishing
in Bayreuth
Stefan Ouma

18.01.2024 – Lecture: New Year Lecture 2024: “Crazy Tings: Can we be true to an African Agenda and Survive in today’s Academy?”
in Bayreuth
Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Fulera Issaka-Toure, Grace Musila, Rüdiger Seesemann

21.–24.01.2024 – Film screening, Discussion: Cinema Africa 2024: African Film Festival in Bayreuth
Seydou Boundaoné

23.01.2024 – Lecture: Anthropology Lecture Series – Transgressing Borders: Do Waves Have Rights? in Bayreuth
Andrea Mühlebach

25.01.2024 – Presentation: Religious Activism and the Vision of an Ideal Society in Niger: Ethnography of a Project of Social Transformation Pursued by the Association Ihyaous Sunnah in Bayreuth
Hamissou Rhissa Achaffert

25.–26.01.2024 – Workshop and Concert: Critical: Hope. Exercises in Borderlands in Bayreuth
Robert Machiri (Chi), Malcolm Jiyane, Asher Gamedze, Simon-Mary Vincent, Mihir Sharma

25.–26.01.2024 – Film screening: AfriKaleidoskop: 3 film screenings in Bayreuth



Cinema Africa: Marie Tsogo (21.–24.01.24)



New Year Lecture (18.01.24)

March

13.03.2024 – Discussion: The Politics of Popular Music Heritage & What’s the ‘Pop’ in Popular Music Heritage? in Accra, Ghana
Markus Coester, Daniel Kodzo Avorgbedor, Eric Sunu, Grace Takyi, Kofi Kudonu

13.03.2024 – Discussion: Screening & Discussion: Beyond the Digital Return: New Heritage/s, Sustainability and the Decolonisation of Music Archives in South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana
Kofi Kudonu, Avorgbedor, Abena Kyere, Eric Sunu Doe, Grace Takyi

20.03.2024 – Lecture: Understanding Violence, Insurgency, and Counter-insurgency in Northern

Nigeria: A Clausewitzian Analysis of ‘War by Other Means.’ in Lagos, Nigeria
Moses Yakubu

20.03.2024 – Film Screening and Discussion: AfriKaleidoskop meets ARTE: Senegal: From Paris to Dakar in Bayreuth
Lamine Doumbia, Ibrahima Sene

26.03.2024 – Seminar: Africa Colloquium Seminar – The Path Towards A Political Integration In The East African Community: Prospects And Challenges 20 Years Later

April

12.–13.04.2024 – Workshop: Conflict and Collaboration in Digital African Spaces
Aidas Sanogo, Augustine Gyan, Tangara Drissa, Faisal Garba, Billian Khalayi Otundo, Brenda Chiteri, Gilbert Shang Ndi, Isabel Casimiro, Luisa Schneider, Nuno Silas, Fulera Issaka-Toure

17.04.2024 – Lecture: FEMI OLUGBILE’S PELEWURA: Historicity and Imagination in the Re-evaluation of Ordinariness in Lagos in Lagos, Nigeria
Patrick Oloko

19.04.2024 – Discussion: Africa, Digitality, Data and Technology I in Bayreuth

22.–23.04.2024 – Workshop: Mvua, Nyanja, Mbambulaan: The Words Of Water in Bayreuth

23.04.2024 – Seminar: Gender Power Politics In Ritual Dance Performance Around Sexuality in Eldoret, Kenya
Kimingichi Wabende

23.–24.04.2024 – Concert Screening, Live Performance, Public Roundtable: Sounding African Music Heritage #2 in Bayreuth

Lee William Watkins, Markus Coester, Frank Karikari, Eko Alabi, Kwame Sometimer, Barbara Alge, Daniel Kodzo Avorgbedor, Angela Impey, Nicole Pooley, Tabitha Osoro, Fidelia Ameteewe, Cassandra Mark Thiesen

23.04.2024 – Lecture: On the Brink of Techno Capitalism: Lifescaping Toxic Chemical Exposure among Informal Electronic Waste Recyclers in Dar es Salaam in Bayreuth Samwel Moses Ntapanta

25.04.2024 – Book Launch Event to celebrate the achievements of Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni in Bayreuth; Toyin Falola, Shose Kessi, Ramon Ramon Grosfoguel

30.04.2024 – Seminar: Speech Act Theory and Benign Politics of World Order in the EAC Regional Integration in Eldoret, Kenya and ACC Moi; Bramwel Matui

30.04.2024 – Discussion: Postcolonial thinkers in discussion: The Bodies That Don’t Count in Bayreuth Swati Parashar, Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Adam Sandor

30.04.2024 – Lecture: The Nuclear Bunker as an Archive of the Future: On the Brink of Time
Maria Rentetzi



Book Launch: Christine Vogt-William, Toyin Falola, Shose Kessi, Rüdiger Seesemann (25.04.24)

Sangan Vital Cédric Yao (22.05.24)



May

03.05.2024 – Workshop: Jeunes, Genre, Crise (Youth, Gender, Crisis)
in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and ACC Ouagadougou Bouraiman Zongo, Eveline Sawadogo, Joschka Philipps

07.05.2024 – Lecture: Voyagers from the Depths of Time: Spirits, Plastics, and the Living Tide of an Indian Ocean Island in Bayreuth
Saskia Abrahms-Kavunenkeno

09.–11.05.2024 – Symposium: Well-being, knowledge and plural care practices in Abidjan, Ivory Coast

13.05.2024 – Discussion: Conversation with Umar Timol – “How to Capture the Soul” in Bayreuth
Umar Timol

14.05.2024 – Seminar: Postmortem as Critical Trope of Reading War Literature in Eastern Africa in Eldoret, Kenya, ACC Moi
Christopher Joseph Odhiambo

15.05.2024 – Lecture: Delineating Laughter In African Spaces in Lagos, Nigeria Peter Isaiah Oni

16.05.2024 – Exhibition: Vernissage of the exhibition “Twins Seven Seven and his Yorùbá Universe” in Bayreuth

17.–19.05.2024 – Colloquium: 36th Swahili Colloquium – Decolonizing the Mind. Rethinking the role of African languages in Bayreuth
Gabriele Sommer, Jacky Kosgei, Alamin Mazrui, Clarissa Vierke

18.05.2024 – Workshop: Theatre Workshop in Bayreuth – The Theatre of Listening: Between games and improvisations in Bayreuth
Pingdewindé Issiaka Tiendrébéogo

18.05.2024 – Presentation: Connectivity and Contestation - Africa in a Networked World - Presentation by Joschka Philipps at the

Umar Timol, Ute Fendler (13.05.24)



Weingartener Afrikagespräche 2024 in Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart

22.05.2024 – Film Screening and Discussion: AfriKaleidoskop meets ARTE – Stadt Land Kunst: Spezial Elfenbeinküste in Bayreuth

23.05.2024 – Lecture: Lecture Series: African FeminismS Past and Present: Femocracy and the Proverbs 31 Woman Reconsidered in Bayreuth
Grace Musila, Clarissa Vierke, Sabelo Mcinziba

23.05.2024 – Discussion: Conversations on Theatre: “Writing, mise-en-scène, public” in Bayreuth
Umar Timol, Pingdewindé Issiaka Tiendrébéogo

24.05.2024 – Discussion: Africa, Digitality, Data and Technology II in Bayreuth

25.05.2024 – Workshop: THEATRE WORKSHOP – The Theatre of Listening: Between Games and Improvisations in Bayreuth

28.05.2024 – Lecture: Breathing Hearts: On the Brink of Suffocation
Nasim Selim, Omar Kasmani

29.05.2024 – Lecture: In the Rhythm of the Black Man: African Traditional Dances and Their Resurgence in Afrobeat and Hip-Pop in Lagos, Nigeria
Deji Akinpelu



Cluster chronicler Umar Timol (May 24)

June

04.06.2024 – Lecture: Doing Public Anthropology in Turbulent Times
Paul Stoller

05.06.2024 – Seminar: The Islamist Discovery of Africa: Shi’a Islamist Movements and Decolonization, 1960s–1980s in Bayreuth
Timothy Nunan

10.06.2024 – Presentation: Special Protection Of Human And Peoples’ Rights In Africa: Case Of Children, Women’s Rights And Environment
Dennis Dominic Adjei, Robert Eno

10.06.2024 – Discussion: Chair of African Legal Studies to host guests from the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights in Bayreuth

11.06.2024 – Seminar: Nation, Culture and Race: Kenya and the FESTAC '77 in Eldoret, Kenya, ACC Moi
Fábio Baqueiro Figueiredo

13.06.2024 – Book Launch: Legacies of Trade and Empire: Breaking Silences
Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya

13.06.2024 – Lecture, Knowledge Lab: ICDL Lecture and Roundtable on Academic Freedom (2024) in Bayreuth
Stefan Ouma, Tendayi Sithole, Olajamuke Yacob Hailiso, Catherine Jematia Kiprop, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni

18.06.2024 – Seminar: Revitalizing Kalenjin Indigenous Knowledge: The Impact of the Digital Baraza #AskKokweet in Eldoret, Kenya and ACC Moi
Caroline Sambai

18.06.2024 – Lecture: Colonial Inhalations: E-waste work and Wastemen in Necropolitical Ghana in Bayreuth
Kwame Otu



19.06.2024 – Lecture: Assessing the Return of Benin Treasures: Matters and Questions Arising in Bayreuth
Peju Layiwola

21.06.2024 – Discussion: Africa, Digitality, Data and Technology III in Bayreuth

24.06.2024 – Lecture: The Practices, Possibilities and Problems of AI in Digital Spaces in Africa
Emmanuel Dorley

24.06.2024 – Lecture: Postdoc Working Group “Digital Transformations in Africa”: The Practices, Possibilities and Problems of AI in Digital Spaces in Africa by Emmanuel Dorley in Bayreuth

25.–26.06.2024 – Workshop: Orunmila in Contexts: A workshop on Ifa within the global knowledge system in Lagos, Nigeria

25.06.2024 – Seminar: Documentary films and Social Change: A Reflection on Comedy and Canvas in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
Cherotich Kibet

25.06.2024 – Lecture: The Productive Power of Backlogs: Building a Forensic DNA Database in South Africa
Noah Tamarkin

27.–28.06.2024 – Workshop: Afrika im Bayreuther Alltag: Geschichte und Erinnerungskultur in Bayreuth

27.06.2024 – Guest Lecture: “Translation And The Ethics Of Horizontal Universalism” by Souleyman Bachir Diagne in Bayreuth

Robert Eno (left) and Dennis Dominic Adjei (10.06.24)



July

03.07.–28.08.2024 – Exhibition: Iwalewahaus: Die Welt ist ein Markt – Fotos aus Nigeria in Bayreuth

11.07.2024 – Film presentation and Discussion: AfriKaleidoskop: “Der vermessene Mensch” in Bayreuth
Carmen Letz

16.07.2024 – Seminar: Multiple Indigenous Healthcare Epistems – Comparing Yoruba and Maasai Traditional Therapies of Preventive Medicine in Eldoret, Kenya and ACC Moi Akinmayowa
Paul Akin-Otiko

17.07.2024 – Lecture: The Fourth Okwui Enwezor Distinguished Lecture “Invisible (Hi)Story.



Carmen Letz, Thierry Boudjekeu (11.07.24)

Exploring Black East German History” in Bayreuth
Katharina Warda

19.07.2024 – Discussion, Reading: Africa, Digitality, Data and Technology IV in Bayreuth

22.07.2024 – Lecture Series: Postdoc Working Group “Digital Transformations in Africa: Leapfrogging the Divide: How AI and Digital Technologies Are Reshaping African Societies” in Bayreuth
Jude Juma Omollo

30.07.2024 – Seminar: Gendered Identity Discourses in the Akamba Non-Formative Family Structures in Eldoret, Kenya and ACC Moi



Fellows, hosts and coordinator (July 24)

August

08.–09.08.2024 – Workshop: Traditional Music/ Musical Traditions: Past(ness) in African Music Today – Substance and Significance in Eldoret, Kenya and ACC Moi

13.08.2024 – Workshop: Land and Power: Interrogating Material and Ideological Contestations for Ownership of Lagos in Lagos, Nigeria and ACC Lagos
Supo Shasore San

13.08.2024 – Seminar: Commodification of Traditional Medicinical and Knowledge Practices among the Marakwet Community in Kenya in Eldoret, Kenya and ACC Moi

Katharina Warda (17.07.24)



IAS Guests 2024		
Fwatshak, Satiumaru	Nigeria	01.04.–31.05.2024
Mallam Mudi Yahaya	Nigeria	02.04.–19.04.2024
Tiendrébéogo, Pingdewindé Issiaka	Burkina Faso	05.05.–01.06.2024
Mallam Mudi Yahaya,	Nigeria	13.05.–23.05.2024
Otu, Kwami	USA	16.06.–21.06.2024
Ouma, Marion Atieno	Kenya	01.07.–15.07.2024
Najoum, Alhassane	Niger	02.07.–02.08.2024
Wahu, Milka	Kenya	01.08.–30.08.2024
Ben Amara, Ramzi	Tunisia	02.08.–30.09.2024
Ogunyemi, Adebayo Oludare	Tunisia	29.09.–04.10.2024
Okorie, Ihuoma	Nigeria	29.09.–04.10.2024
Clark, Michaela	Germany	27.09.–02.10.2024
Raharimanana, Jean Luc	France	01.10.–30.10.2024
Samuel, Kayode	Nigeria	01.10.–29.11.2024
Olorunyomi, Sola	Nigeria	01.10.–29.11.2024
Oladosu, Afis, Nigeria	Nigeria	15.10.–15.12.2024
Malara, Diego Maria	Great Britain	05.11.–09.11.2024
du Plessis, Rory Frederick	South Africa	30.11.–06.12.2024

September

10.09.2024 – Colloquium: Africa Colloquium: Amateurism, Sport, and Decolonization: Setting Up Athletics in Post-War Kenya 1945–1963 by Chepchirchir Tirop (Stanford University) in Nairobi, Kenya

29.09.–02.10.2024 – Conference: VAD-Conference 2024 “Reconfigurations in Africa – and in African Studies” in Bayreuth
Grace Musila, Mactar Ndoye, Amanda Hammar, Andrea Behrends, Michael McEachrane and many others

October

01.10.2024 – Lecture: Inaugural Lecture “Water for Ecological and Social Justice” by Nelson Odume in Rhodes, South Africa and South Africa

02.10.2024 – Discussion: Iwalewahaus: PreLaunch Event for the Exhibition “With these hands” in Bayreuth
Sabelo Mcinziba

15.10.2024 – Roundtable: Table Ronde “In/securités et la nouvelle Alliance des États du Sahel (AES)” in Bayreuth
Joschka Philipps, Zakaria Soré, Nestor Zante, Adam Sandor



VAD Conference (29.09.–02.10.24)

November

04.11.2024 – Roundtable: Interdisciplinary Roundtable: “With these hands” with in Bayreuth
Sabelo Mcinziba

07.11.2024 – Ceremony: BIGSAS Journalist Award 2024 (5th edition) in Bayreuth
Eugene Boateng, Sona Diabaté, Thierry Boudjekeu, Fatima Elmardiya Ahmed, Birte Mensing, Ruona Meyer, Bettina Rühl

08.11.2024 – Roundtable: Connecting Continents: How can African Studies and Journalism benefit from each other? in Bayreuth
Billian Otundo, Joschka Philipps

14.11.2024 – Lecture Series: African FeminismS Past and Present | Moving Beyond “African Feminisms” to Embrace Humanity: Insights from Naked Agency in Bayreuth; Naminata Diabate

19.11.2024 – Guest Lecture: Strates sociales: Entre les feuilles des Corans de Harari (Éthiopie) in Bayreuth; Anne Regourd, Britta Frede

Public Roundtable, Film Screening: Sounding African Music Heritage #3 in Bayreuth

December

02.–06.12.2024 – Workshop: “Making Meaning, Shaping Knowledge” in Mombasa, Kenya

05.12.2024 – Roundtable: Debating the question of objectivity in African Studies: A Roundtable in Bayreuth
Serawit Debele, Joschka Philipps, Gerd Spittler, Semeneh A. Asfaw, Mamadou Diawara, Stephanie Lämmert, Rüdiger Seesemann

09.12.2024 – Opening event: Meet the Artist Thandeka Mfinyongo in Bayreuth; Thandeka Mfinyongo

11.12.2024 – Lecture: Accelerated learning and Fast Policy Learning in Southeast Asian Higher Education: Insights from Selected Southeast Asian Countries in Bayreuth
Que Anh Dang, Roger Chao jr.

12.–13.12.2024 – Workshop: Black Diasporic Knowledges before 1800: Writing Subjects, Intersectional Interventions in Bayreuth

12.12.2024 – Discussion: Annual Theme on Temporalities Lecture in Bayreuth

Tiago de Oliveira Pinto, Markus Coester, Sona Diabaté, Lee William Watkins

21.11.2024 – Discussion, Reading: Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously (Book Reading) in Bayreuth
Anthony Okeregebe, Patrick Oloko, Paul Opondo

24.–29.11.2024 – Workshop: Thinking Critical Diversity Literacy, Rethinking African Studies in Johannesburg, South Africa

25.11.2024 – Lecture: The Trop(e)cality of Being: Intertextual Readings of Latin American and African Novels by Gilbert Shang Ndi in Bayreuth

29.11.2024 – Discussion: Musical Musings on Hands with Kesivan Naidoo and Sabelo Mcinziba in Bayreuth
Kesivan Naidoo, Sabelo Mcinziba

Fatima Elmardiya Ahmed (07.11.24)



Thando Njovane, Olabode Ibironke, Anthony Okeregebe, Olufemi Taiwo

12.12.2024 – Lecture/Book reading: “Mein Name sei AMO” von Ottmar Ette in Bayreuth
Ottmar Ette

12.–13.12.2024 – Concert: Aras Hesso Trio in Bayreuth
Aras Hesso, Jonas Hermes, Felix Schneider-Restschikow

18.12.2024 – Film Screening and Discussion: AfriKaleidoskop meets ARTE: “Operation Afrika: Die Jagd nach den Rohstoffen der Zukunft” in Bayreuth
Philipp Sandner, Jan Sändig, Joschka Philipps, Juliet Gudhlanga



Panel AfriKaleidoskop meets ARTE (18.12.24)



IWALEWAIUS

