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Four African Cluster Centres in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa collaborate with the Cluster in its core objectives: collaborative research and reconfiguring African Studies.

“Africa Multiple” – the name of the Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth reflects the multifaceted goals set by the research organization upon its founding. At

Yearlong selection process

A yearlong decision process preceded the selection of the Cluster of Excellence’s African partner universities. The application phase began in May 2018. An impressive number of 55 institutions responded to the call for applications, indicating interest in becoming a part of this special network. Subsequently, a preliminary selection of possible institutions was made by an external committee. After screening, ten institutions were then visited by a delegation to begin conversations about possible

One of the many highlights on the visit’s agenda was an official meeting with the executive board of the University of Bayreuth, where the delegations each had the opportunity to give presentations on their respective institutions and sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the president of the University of Bayreuth, Stefan Leible; stressing the ACCs’ commitment to a fruitful and synergetic cooperation with the Cluster of Excellence and the University of Bayreuth.

African Cluster Centres – Four Essential Pillars of the Cluster’s Network

the core of the Cluster’s strategy to reconfigure African Studies is the idea to create a unique global network of researcher, aiming to give the Cluster an important and valuable additional dimension.

During the first year of the Cluster’s existence, the research network was established and has gradually expanded. While the Cluster is supported by various renowned and well-established institutions in Bayreuth like the IAS, BIGSAS, and the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies, the research organization has also joined forces with a considerable number of international institutions. The most important partnerships, however, are “African Cluster Centres” (ACC), as members of the Cluster. In 2019, as envisioned by the Cluster’s founders, these four partner institutions became increasingly vital pillars within the Cluster’s research network. They are:

- The University of Lagos (Lagos, Nigeria)
 - Moi University (Eldoret, Kenya)
 - Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso)
- as well as
- Rhodes University (Makhanda/ Grahamstown, South Africa).

collaborations. Evaluating the applications, the committee focused not only on the institutions’ commitment to the Cluster goals, but also considered their infrastructure, regional network, research capacities, as well as their dedication to developing their own focal points of research. Finally, in April 2019, four African institutions in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa became members of the Cluster, turning it into a transnational network of five institutions.

July 2019: First Intensive Discussions in Bayreuth

Following the announcement, the Cluster of Excellence invited representatives of the newly established ACCs for an inaugural visit, just before the University of Bayreuth’s summer semester came to an end in July 2019. During their stay, the eight delegates met with a considerable number of members of the Cluster of Excellence and the University of Bayreuth, getting to know one another, as well as examining the different institutions in Bayreuth that make up the Cluster’s unique organizational structure. During these meetings, common goals and routes were defined, possible first research projects were discussed, and various research and communication methods were developed, all with the aim of realizing the Cluster’s core idea – creating a global research network that will contribute towards reconfiguring African Studies.

October 2019: Official Signing of the ACC Contracts

On Thursday, 24 October 2019, the cooperation between the University of Bayreuth and the four African Cluster Centres was made official. In the days leading up to the Cluster’s kick-off conference, the representatives of the four African universities visited the Cluster to explore ideas of cooperation, work on existing projects, and ultimately sign the contracts that would be the basis of working together for the coming years. The ceremony took place in the presence of a considerable number of members of the Cluster. Signing for the University of Bayreuth and the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence were the President, Stefan Leible and Provost Markus Zanner.

The agreements signed that day specified the goals and the responsibilities of the cooperation. It was stipulated in writing that the ACCs would serve as nodes for joint research initiatives and networks within the Cluster. The contracts also stated that the ACCs would initiate and coordinate their own research endeavours that have close ties to the Cluster’s work. All parties agreed that they would do their best to intensify the exchange of ideas and experience, creating synergies and knowledge transfer. Furthermore, the implementation of joint access points to research data was announced.

The four African Cluster Centres of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence

ACC at Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

The Ouagadougou ACC is hosted by the Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo and its Training and Research unit. Drawing from various research sections, the Ouagadougou ACC contributes to the Knowledge Lab of the Africa Multiple Cluster. The Ouagadougou ACC is specialized in the fields of History, Sociology, and Linguistics. It further enriches the Africa Multiple Cluster by its contributions in the fields of Archaeology and Media, among its other research specializations.

Yacouba Banhero,
Associate Professor of Contemporary History and Director of the ACC at the Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo:

"The Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence is unique in its own way, connecting so many researchers from different fields and geographical areas. It gives us not only the occasion to develop and implement research projects, but also to contribute to create a more research-friendly environment."



Photo: Sabine Greiner

ACC at Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa

The Rhodes University ACC is hosted by the Rhodes African Studies Centre of Rhodes University in South Africa. The ACC has a diverse team of scholars covering many disciplines, such as French and English literature, African languages, Social and Political history, Gender Studies, Trauma Theory, African Politics, Water Research, Climate Change, Environmental Learning, Arts and Aesthetics, African Musicology, and others. It hosts many rated researchers and other seasoned scholars from the listed fields.

Enocent Msindo,
Associate Professor of African History, Director of the ACC at the Rhodes University:

"Since the Rhodes ACC and three other ACCs from Africa have entered into an exciting collaboration with the University of Bayreuth, the key goal has been to reconfigure African Studies. Personally, I am excited about this partnership as it strengthens our global reach, as we broaden our intellectual voice continentally and internationally."



Photo: Sabine Greiner

Rhodes University in Makhanda, South Africa



Photo: Rhodes University

ACC at Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

The Moi University African Cluster Centre (Moi ACC) is housed in the School of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS) of Moi University. The primary objectives of the Moi University School of Arts and Social Sciences are to offer interdisciplinary teaching and research in the broad field of African studies, and to act as the centre where all other Africa-focused scholarship coalesce. Within the context of these objectives, and building on the very strong tradition of exploring and interrogating diverse ways of knowing Africa which has developed in the School in the three and a half decades of its existence, the Moi ACC is envisioned as a hub of outstanding inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary research. The Moi ACC promotes conversations that contribute to the greater understanding of Africa in ways that enable addressing significant issues affecting the continent. At Moi ACC, research is carried out under sections that mirror those at the Centre in Bayreuth: Affiliations, Arts and Aesthetics, Mobilities, Moralities, Knowledge and Learning. Moi University, through its School of Arts and Social Sciences, is also a partner university of the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), which provides training opportunities for doctoral students.

Peter Simatei,
Professor of Comparative Literatures and Director of the ACC at Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya:

"It is gratifying to note that Moi University is part of the new platform of research cooperation with UBT, under the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence initiative. As one of the ACCs, Moi will serve as a node for joint research initiatives and networks with University of Bayreuth, as it participates in the overarching aim of the Africa Multiple Cluster, which is to reconfigure African studies on both the conceptual and the structural levels. With this cooperation platform in place, one can only look forward to a robust research environment."



Photo: Sabine Greiner

ACC at the University of Lagos, Nigeria

The ACC Lagos is hosted by the University of Lagos in Nigeria and its Institute for African and Diaspora Studies (IADS). Drawing from various research sections, the Lagos ACC is poised to contribute to the Knowledge Lab of the Africa Multiple Cluster across different research projects, by galvanizing collaborative and interdisciplinary research among African scholars, as well as developing and implementing policies for the training of early-career scholars. The Lagos ACC offers courses in Philosophy, African Languages and Literatures, Culture and Anthropology, Religion, Politics and Governance, African Traditional Medicine, Race, Gender and Identity, Film and Theatre Studies, and Music and Visual Arts. The Cluster's research agenda is further enriched with contributions from the fields of Geography, Sociology, History, and Law.

Muyiwa Falaiye,
Professor for Socio-Political Philosophy and African Diaspora and Director of the ACC University of Lagos:

"I am very excited to be working with the University of Bayreuth on the very important project of Reconfiguring African Studies. In my opinion, this is the most important project embarked upon in the African Studies community in recent times. Changing the narratives, structure, and form of African Studies to reflect the reality of this time requires a lot of reflexivity, relationality, and multiplicity. Since October 2019, when the ACCs formally joined the Cluster system, the conceptual and practical expectations of the ACC about the reconfiguring process have progressed steadily. Synergies are emerging; research endeavours are reflecting the North-South collaborations in a magnitude never thought possible before now. African Studies under the auspices of the Africa Multiple is talking with and not talking down to Africans. After all, one cannot shave the head of another in his/her absence."



Photo: Sabine Greiner



Staff and Principal Investigators at the African Cluster Centre at the University of Lagos, Nigeria

Photo: University of Lagos

Visit of the Cluster's Managing Director Franz Kogelmann and the Cluster's Financial Manager Stefanie Jost at the Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso



Photo: Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo

The entrance of Moi University in Eldoret, Kenya



Photo: Moi University