

The 2020 Activities of the African Cluster Centres in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa

The international research community around the world was simultaneously affected by the pandemic that swept over the globe in early 2020. Events had to be postponed or switched to another format and plans for research activities had to

be altered. The Cluster's African Cluster Centres (ACCs) at the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Moi University in Eldoret (Kenya), University of Lagos (Nigeria) and Rhodes University in Makhanda (South

Africa) were no exception. However, all four ACCs soon resourcefully adapted to the challenges that COVID-19 imposed on their work and successfully continued with their endeavours as the reports on the following pages show impressively.

Participants of the workshop on project writing received a certificate.

Text YACOUBA BANHORU

In Burkina Faso, the pandemic immobilised the teaching and research actors from March to May 2020. In spite of this challenge, the ACC of the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo of Ouagadougou was able to conduct a series of activities including research, scientific days, and training seminars in 2020.

After the breakout of COVID-19 in Burkina Faso, the pandemic context quickly became part of the African Cluster Centre (ACC) activities at the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Ouagadougou (UJKZ) in 2020.

Three Cluster of Excellence Research Projects

The first project, led by Fernand Bationo, focused on *Screening, Care Pathways and COVID-19 in Ouagadougou*. It mapped the screening centres in Ouagadougou opened during the first months of the epidemic to see which Ouagadougou inhabitants were being screened, for what purpose, and what the representations of COVID-19 and the screening entailed. The conclusion was that candidates for screening were mainly a few people planning to travel abroad.

The second study, conducted by the director of the ACC at UJKZ, Yacouba Banhoru, examined government measures, the reception of these measures among socio-professional categories, the representations of COVID-19, and the impacts of the epidemic control measures on the artisanal mining sector in Burkina Faso. After describing the representations within different professional categories, the study showed how the government decision to stop activities and travel (the lockdown) was interpreted differently

and executed, but also how the economic contraction occurred and affected small-scale actors in the mining sector more compared to more affluent actors.

The third study, conducted by Natewinde Sawadogo, focused on *Epidemics and Modernity in Burkina Faso: Professional Differentiation, Resilience, and Engagement*. It focused on occupational differentiation in Ouagadougou, and how this has created categories of people who are more vulnerable than others.

Panel on Global Health

Around COVID-19 again, and reflecting on one of the research projects on *Global health and health policies in Africa*, the ACC organised a panel around the theme: *Institutions specialised in global health governance in the face of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19)* in Burki-

na Faso. Three panelists made presentations: Banhoru introduced global health and its characteristics. Alimata J. Diarra-Nama, the WHO representative in Burkina Faso, addressed the role of the WHO in the fight against COVID-19, including sharing new science-based information with national health authorities, mobilising international partners to support Burkina Faso, raising funds to contribute financially and materially to the fight against COVID-19, and operationalising COVID-19 screening centres. Issiaka Sombié, who came from Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, made a presentation on the West African Health Organisation and its involvement and contribution in terms of health information, financial and material resources, as well as support and advice to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).



(Photos: ACC Ouagadougou)

Scientific Conference on COVID-19: African ACC /Africa Multiple - ARES - UJKZ Still seeking an understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACC, joining its efforts to those of the UJKZ and the Belgian-Burkinabe cooperation project Higher Academy of Research and Education (ARES) co-organised a scientific conference on COVID-19. About fifty presentations were made on the ongoing research at the UJKZ and elsewhere. It was an interdisciplinary symposium bringing together families of sciences including mainly the humanities, medical and biological sciences, and mathematics. Not only did this colloquium provide an overview of the research conducted in Burkina Faso as well as the provisional results, but it also showed the importance of

ACC Ouagadougou: University Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Burkina Faso

interdisciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity in the face of the pandemic. Members of the ACC are working with their colleagues on the editing of the proceedings.

Call for Papers COVID-19

Finally, COVID-19 mobilised researchers from the five African Cluster Centres. A collective volume coordinated by Susan Arndt, Yacouba Banhoru, Enocent Msindo, Taibat Lawanson, and Peter Simatei which began in April 2020 is being edited. Nearly 30 articles have been selected and are currently being reviewed and corrected. COVID-19 was the global event in 2020 that had a special significance for all countries. It caused not only lockdowns, but it was also a source of inspiration for many researchers around the world. Through research, the members of the ACC have gained more knowledge about pandemics, their societal impacts, as well as policies and strategies to combat them.

ACC Call for Papers: *The Problem of Illness in African Literature*

Throughout 2020, members of the ACC have been working on several calls for papers for collective volumes. One of this series is on *The Problem of Illness in African Literature*. The articles selected for publication in this volume have been reviewed by the authors and in total, about ten articles by African and

European authors of the Africa Multiple system will constitute the book which is ready to be published.

Cultural Heritage Week

The activities of the ACC were extended to various other events including a Cultural Heritage Week. Over the course of a week, cultural heritage specialists from the Ministry of Culture, universities, and other organisations such as the National Museum of Ouagadougou met at the UJKZ. The aim was not only to have a state of scientific knowledge on cultural heritage in Burkina Faso, but also to see the possibilities of future studies. An exhibition of Salfo Dermé's artworks was held, a first at the UJKZ. This exhibition attracted many visitors, including Alkassou Maiga, the Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation of Burkina Faso. An evening of mask dance performance also took place.

This week allowed researchers, cultural professionals, and students to get to know each other and to exchange ideas on the management of cultural heritage in Burkina Faso.

Workshop of Knowledge of the *Boutique des sciences*

Under the supervision of Bationo, a workshop on the discovery and knowledge of the science shop was organised by the ACC. It was punctuated with theoretical presentations on scientific knowledge and practical discovery of numerous tools based on the internet allowing research and bibliographic classification.

Scientific Day on the African Continental Free Trade Area

A scientific day was organised on the African Continental Free Trade Area, which came into force in 2021. Presentations were made by national and inter-

national academic experts, practitioners from the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the Ministry and the Chamber of Commerce of Burkina Faso, among others. Participants could learn and interact with the experts, analysing and discussing the opportunities and challenges of this new zone for UEMOA countries.

Research Methodology Seminar

In preparation for a socio-anthropological research project on endogenous community sources of dialogue and peace against terrorism in Burkina Faso, a methodological seminar was organised by the ACC in the nearby city of Koudougou. This allowed academics and participants from different socio-professional categories to retreat and exchange on the issue of terrorism and insecurity in the Sahel, and to familiarise themselves with more tools and resource persons that can help in the collection of field data.

Financial Support for Doctoral Student and Early Careers

The ACC granted financial assistance to five doctoral students and eight post-doctoral students, some to complete their theses, others to conduct a research project for the publication of scientific articles.

The ACC has organised a training workshop in project writing for the benefit of members and doctoral and post-doctoral students receiving financial support.

Through these activities, the ACC of the UJKZ, in addition to the three projects acquired in 2020 and whose research activities are ongoing, has carried out many activities in an interdisciplinary framework. COVID-19 has been at the centre of concerns in terms of health security, but it has also been the locus of many scientific interests beyond the disciplines and research sections of the Cluster.



Yacouba Banhoru welcomes participants of Cultural Heritage Week.

Text MUYIWA FALAIYE

The African Cluster Centre (ACC) at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) looks back on an eventful and successful year 2020, strengthening its research focus within the Cluster of Excellence by organising a number of events and welcoming new researchers.

PI Lecture Series

To sustain the research focus and agenda of the Cluster, the Lagos ACC organised a monthly lecture series in 2020 featuring ten lectures by the ACC's principal investigators (PIs) and the fellows of the Lagos ACC.

Research Projects and Results 2020

As part of the Lagos ACC projects, the ACC team organised two workshops and a month-long exhibition as well as a round table. The first workshop's theme was *Methodology for Doing Cutting Edge Research in African Studies* and took place from 10 to 11 December 2019. Most of the participants were doctoral students and postdoctoral scholars from the UNILAG.

Facilitators came from various disciplines in UNILAG, with Peter Ndege from Moi University, Kenya as lead presenter.

The second workshop was woven around developing a curriculum at the level of basic education. The workshop, entitled *Beyond Pedagogy: Purposeful and Sustainable Learning in Africa*, was held between 24 to 27 August 2020. Participants were drawn from undergraduate students and scholars in all the faculties of UNILAG. Facilitators were drawn from UNILAG academia and practitioners in the industry, with technical personnel from the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). The keynote was delivered by Rose Ruto-Korir from the Moi University ACC, Eldoret, Kenya.

The third project was a month-long exhibition, roundtables and documentary on *Lagos: Ownership and Identities*. It was organised in November 2020 by Lagos ACC PIs Taibat Lawanson and Abisoye Eleshin, and co-sponsored by the Lagos ACC. The group of participants and facilitators were scholars from all sorts of spe-

cialties such as traditional historians, cultural enthusiasts, artists/photographers, and students.

Cluster Research Grants

Lagos ACC researchers and PIs were awarded five research grants from the ACC. The projects and lead PIs are:

Peju Layiwola – Rethinking the Artistic Trajectory of African Women Artists

Muyiwa Falaiye – Women as Sages: Exploring the Nature and Value of Feminine Wisdom

Ayodele Yusuff – Digitising Yoruba Folktales for Animation and Value Education

Franca Attoh – Intra-Africa Migration and Xenophobia: Imperative for African Integration

Patrick Oloko – African Popular Arts and Entertainment.

At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lagos ACC funded research done by Akinmayowa Akin-Otiko and Ademola Kazeem Fayemi. The project was titled: *The Informal Workers also Fight COVID-19*. The project was done between September and December 2020, and the output will be part of the Cluster's COVID-19 book project.

ACC Lagos: University of Lagos, Nigeria



At the opening of the one-month long photography exhibition of the Lagos Ownership and Identities

(Photos: ACC Lagos)

Table 1: The Principal Investigators' Lecture series at ACC Lagos in 2020

Date	Paper	Lecturer	Research Section
10 February 2020	<i>African Studies in African Universities</i>	Muyiwa Falaiye	Knowledges
13 March 2020	<i>African Languages as Tool of Development in Africa</i>	Ayodele Yusuff	Learning
13 May 2020	<i>Odu Ifa Ose Meji: Orunmila's cosmological deconstruction of political violence stereotype in Ibadan</i>	Kayode Eesuola	Knowledges
10 June 2020	<i>Moralities: Religious Exclusivism and Logical Implication of Religious Pluralism: The Nigerian Context</i>	Akinmayowa Akin-Otiko	Moralities
15 July 2020	<i>Artificial Demarcations, Natural Language: Yoruba in West Africa and its Implications for Research Prospects In African Studies</i>	Abisoye Eleshin	Knowledges
19 August 2020	<i>Cultural Referencing in Selected Online COVID-19 Jokes</i>	Feyi Ademola-Adeoye	Arts & Aesthetics
16 September 2020	<i>Alternative Urbanisms? How Religion is Redefining Planning and Development In Lagos, Nigeria</i>	Taibat Lawanson	Moralities
14 October 2020	<i>ICT Aided Mobility and Migration in West Africa: Imperative for Integration</i>	Franca Attoh	Mobilities
18 November 2020	<i>The African Court on Human and Peoples' Right: An Election Court?</i>	Illy Oussen	Visiting Fellow
16 December 2020	<i>Beyond Syncretism to Acquiring 'Faith-skill': Exploring Religious Hybridism for Survival</i>	Tony Okeregbe	Learning

New Principal Investigators

Lagos ACC added two new PIs to the team, bringing the total number of PIs to 16. The new PIs are Olufunke Adeboye, Professor of Social History and incumbent Dean of Arts, and Moses Yakubu, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of African and Diaspora Studies, University of Lagos, Nigeria.

Lagos ACC Awards (Fellowships and Scholarships)

The Lagos ACC started a fellowship scheme in 2020, and awarded Oussen Illy a two-month Fellowship (October–November 2020). Illy is an Associate Professor of Law at the Thomas Sankara University (formerly the University of Ouagadougou), Burkina Faso, and a Principal Investigator of the Ouagadougou ACC, Joseph Ki-Zerbo University, Burkina Faso. His research focus for the Fellowship was the re-examination of the mandate and mission of the African Court of Justice and the African Continental Free Trade Area. Obádélé Kambon of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana in Legon, was also awarded the Lagos ACC Fellowship for 2020.



Bisoye Eleshin showing the students of the International School Lagos (ISL) round at the art gallery during the Lagos Ownership and Identities workshop

In addition to the Fellowship scheme, Lagos ACC awarded two doctoral scholarships to Bamidele Alabi of the Political Science department, and Ayodeji Adedara of the English department, both

UNILAG. The scholarship scheme is aimed at supporting young promising researchers who are engaged in research related to African Studies and the overarching agenda of the Cluster.



Participants of a workshop on the topic of Mobilities
(Photos: ACC Moi)

Text PETER SIMATEI

The year 2020 started on a hopeful note for the Moi University African Cluster Centre (ACC). Establishing the ACC occupied much of 2019. By the end of the year, Moi University researchers had started participating in Cluster activities. A handful had joined teams undertaking research projects based in the University of Bayreuth; one researcher took up a Fellowship there. Peter Ndege was a Keynote Speaker in an ACC workshop at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. These developments had given Moi University faculty engaged in African Studies an indication of the possibilities in the Africa Multiple. Thus, when a Call for Project Proposals came up in March 2020, the response was enthusiastic.

February 2020 found researchers based in the ACC busy working away at project proposals they hoped would win funding by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. As this was happening, other activities of the ACC took off. The Africa Colloquium, the sem-

Table 1: List of research project proposals submitted by researchers based in the ACC Moi

Project Title	Applicant	Research Section
Regional integration in Eastern and Southern Africa: An appraisal of factors that influence regional integration in Africa: The case of East African community (EAC)	Ken Oluoch	Affiliations
East African Asian writing and the emergence of a diasporic subjectivity	Peter Simatei	Arts and Aesthetics
"Mediated and mediatisation of Islamic knowledge in Kenya: Educational institutions, media technologies and performative aesthetics	Hassan Ndzovu	Learning
Framing identities from human agency mobility on the Kenya-Uganda highway	Omar Egesah	Mobilities
Changing life projects: African identities, moralities and wellbeing	Eunice Kamaara	Moralities

inar series of the ACC, kicked off on 6 February 2020. From 19 to 21 February

ACC Moi: Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

2020, the ACC held its first conference, *Reconfiguring African Studies*. Muiyiwa Falaye, Director of the ACC at the Uni-

versity of Lagos, and Enocent Msindo, Director of the ACC at Rhodes University, South Africa, gave keynote addresses at the conference. On 10 March 2020, Franz Kogelmann, Managing Director of Africa Multiple, and Maria Hennig, the Quality Assurance Manager, visited Moi University and held a talk with the university's Vice-Chancellor, Isaac Kosgey, on the ongoing establishment of the ACC at the institution. All these ac-

Table 2: Program of the Africa Colloquium 2020

Date	Paper Title	Presenter
06.02.2020	<i>The Kenyan Writer and the Discourse of Development</i>	Martina Kopf University of Vienna, Austria
27.02.2020	<i>Towards the Democratisation of Knowledge Production: The "Shared Authority" Approach in Social Science Research</i>	Daniela Waldburger University of Vienna, Austria
27.08.2020	<i>Prospects and Challenges of East African Common Market Protocol</i>	Henry Kibet Mutai Kenya School of Law, Kenya
03.09.2020	<i>Nganya Rides: Travel Imaginaries in Matatu Transport in Ongata Rongai, Kenya</i>	Miriam Maranga-Musonye University of Nairobi, Kenya
10.09.2020	<i>Strange Fruit: Election Violence as Ritual</i>	Wandia Njoya Daystar University, Kenya
24.09.2020	<i>The Evolution of Learning in the Islamic Tradition and its Parallels in Other Ancient Traditions</i>	Mohamed Bakari Raf International University, Kenya
01.10.2020	<i>On the Aesthetics of Language</i>	Daniel Ochieng' Orwenjo The Technical University of Kenya, Kenya
15.10.2020	<i>The Challenge of COVID-19 on Identity, Morality and Well-being in Kenya: An African Culture Based Analysis</i>	Mary Getui Catholic University of East Africa, Kenya
15.10.2020	<i>Conceptualising African Studies in Shifting Theoretical Frameworks</i>	Kembo Sure Rongo University, Kenya
22.10.2020	<i>Academic Mobility for Sustainable University/ Higher Education in Africa</i>	Anne Nangulu Bomet University College, Kenya
29.10.2020	<i>Mainstreaming Kiswahili in the East African Community Agenda for Regional Integration and Sustainable Development</i>	Caroline Asimwe Makerere University, Uganda
05.11.2020	<i>Internationalisation of Academic Mobility in Africa: Annotated Experiences of South-North and South-South Academic Mobility</i>	Yekunoamlak Alemu Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia
12.11.2020	<i>Debating Local Moralities: The Case of Land Inheritance in Buganda</i>	Claire Medard-Amutebi Institute of Research and Development - France
26.11.2020	<i>Imagining the Head of State as Poop: Stella Nyanzi's Scatological Aesthetics in No Roses from my Mouth</i>	Danson Kahyana Makerere University, Uganda
03.12.2020	<i>Knowledge, Learning and Teachings from the Friday Khutuba of Shaykh Al-Amin b. Ali Al-Mazru'i, 1890-1947</i>	Hassan Mwakimako Pwani University, Kenya

The Cluster's managing director Franz Kogelmann and Quality Assurance manager Maria Hennig at a visit at ACC Moi



tivities, interactions, and conversations were firming up the identity of the ACC as an African Studies research hub.

Then COVID-19 happened. The disruption was massive. There was a complete stoppage of work at Moi University, as in all the educational institutions in Kenya.

The second quarter of 2020 thus had an inauspicious beginning. Over the quarter, the interactions with researchers in the other Centres in the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence – University of Bayreuth; University Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Ougadougou, Burkina Faso; University of Lagos; Rhodes University – would be severely curtailed. Logically, the programs planned from the ACC – like Fellowships, etc. – were put on hold. In the meantime, Moi University and the entire university sector in Kenya struggled to adapt to the new circumstances. The university explored ways to use the available digital technology to deliver curricula and run other university programs.

The most important activity at the ACC at this point was the writing of the project proposals. At the end of the second quarter, in June 2020, the awarding of proposal funding was announced. Five research project proposals by researchers based in the ACC had made it in the

Table 3: List of workshop at ACC Moi in 2020

Date	Conference/ Workshop
19.02.2020 – 21.02.2020	Reconfiguring African Studies (The Launch of the Moi University African Cluster Centre)
27.08.2020	Moi University Management Board (MUMB) – Moi University African Cluster Centre (ACC Moi)
29.10.2020 – 30.10.2020	Music, Identity, and History: Reading Kalenjin Popular/ Traditional Music
05.11.2020 – 06.11.2020	Reimagining Kenyan Film: Technologies, Aesthetics, Traditions, Publics and Meanings
15.12.2020 – 17.12.2020	Moi University African Cluster Centre Retreat 2020

highly competitive bidding (see table 1): Planning for the commencement of actual research was fine-tuned even as discussions continued whether the research projects that won funding could start in the social environment created to manage the spread of the virus. The team working on *Framing identities from human agency mobility on the Kenya-Uganda highway* saw an opportunity in the impact of containment measures on human mobilities that could extend their work. They went to the field in early August. Later that same month, the Africa Colloquium resumed in a new, hybrid (part face-to-face, part online) format whose reach enhances

the kind of connections that the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence aspires to create and sustain. For the program of the Africa Colloquium see table 2. In conclusion, in 2020, the Moi ACC was, like other research – and generally all human – organisations, significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The effects were largely adverse. Fortunately, due to the digital technology available, some work got done at the ACC – work that ensured that the Centre kept its focus on its *raison d'être*. 🌍

Principal Investigators and the director of ACC Moi with visitors from the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence



Text ENOCENT MSINDO

2020 started on a very promising note with many programmes lined up, including seminars, colloquiums, and research visits.

The Rhodes University Africa Cluster Centre (ACC) in Makhanda, South Africa started off the year with a visit from 3 to 7 March from the Cluster of Excellence's Vice Deans Ute Fendler and Erdmute Alber; they both presented and reflected on their work at a seminar that the Centre organised.

Their work was well received and their visit invaluable in helping colleagues at the Centre to gain deeper insights into what the Cluster Africa Multiple was about. Visiting Fellowships and an inter-institutional PhD program were discussed, and these are possibilities that the ACC is keen to pursue, but these ideas were hampered by the sudden spread of the corona virus pandemic across the world. Fendler and Alber also had the opportunity to visit the Art Gallery of the National Research Foundation Chair and the *Art and Artivism* project Principal Researcher, Ruth Simbao, witnessing a diversity of artwork from graduate students from across Africa as well as China.

ACC Rhodes: Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa

Decision for self-care

The ACC Rhodes had planned a number of colloquiums, seminars, and workshops,



A goma/dhamal group. (Photo: Rajesh Kumar)

which were cancelled as a gesture of 'self-care' in the light of the sudden imposition of a prolonged lockdown for the greater part of 2020. In hindsight, the ACC was not quick enough to think of switching to online formats of conferencing, which has now become the norm.

Research proposals

In 2020, four colleagues from the Rhodes ACC submitted short-term research proposals for consideration for funding to the Africa Multiple headquarters at the University of Bayreuth. All of them were successful,

thanks to their commitment and to the strong internal review processes overseen by the Director and the rest of the team at the ACC. Nelson Odume submitted a proposal to examine issues of people-river relationalities covering specific case studies in Nigeria and South Africa. Ruth Simbao submitted a project on *Art and Artivism*, which explores the various ways in which art is deployed to speak to contemporary social and political cultures. Lee Watkins' proposal was on archiving the musical sounds of the African diaspora in the Indian Ocean. Lastly, the director of the ACC Rhodes, Enocent Msindo, is working with a diverse team of scholars across Africa and also from UBT to examine the experiences of communities on the margins of African states.

The projects are at different stages of research and require different kinds of fieldwork and data gathering. Watkins could not travel outside of South Africa to conduct research on musical archives. He had to make do with request-

ing his PhD student, Rajesh Kumar, who was locked down in India, to visit some communities and record their musical performances once the lockdown was eased locally in India.

A colloquium planned by Enocent Msindo had to be cancelled. Two of the research collaborators undertook short research visits: Bongani Gumbo in Botswana and Yacouba Cissao in Burkina Faso. Towards the end of October, when the lockdown was eased a bit, Msindo visited the borderlands of South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe to collect some oral information on the experiences of VaTsonga with the colonial state and narratives of marginalisation, as well as their coping mechanisms after displacement from the Kruger National Park.



Enocent Msindo with Elmon Chauke, Research Assistant at Makuleke, October 2020

Simbao and Odume had to postpone their fieldwork and planned collaborative research endeavours to 2021 as they assessed the COVID-19 situation. ACC Rhodes is highly optimistic about 2021 and the many activities lined up. 🌍