

The 2021 Activities of the African Cluster Centres in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa

With the COVID-19 restrictions slowly being lifted in 2021 the 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 able to go full speed ahead with their projects and collaborations driving forward the Cluster's agenda.



The four ACC directors (from left): Muyiwa Falaiye, Peter Simatei, Yacouba Banhoro, and Enocent Msindo

Text YACOUBA BANHORO

Apart from conducting its various research projects, the ACC Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso organised various events within its Research Sections (RS) and worked on areas like supporting early career scholars, and strengthening the partnership with the other ACCs.

RS Learning

Under the leadership of Pierre Malgoubri and Emilie F. Sanou-Ouattara, the RS Learning held a workshop on *The Issue of Languages in Education in Burkina Faso: Bilingual Education and Second Language Teaching* that took place in June 2021. The workshop featured administrators in curriculum development and the implementation of school programmes as well as scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds. The discussions revealed that language choices depend on the quality of the diplomatic relationships of the country with the rest of the world. Burkina Faso – with French being the official administrative and educational language – appears to be an open laboratory where pedagogical experiments take place.

In collaboration with the Institute for Social Studies (INSS/CNRST) the RS Learning organised a training workshop on cultural heritage research in Burkina Faso for 30 doctoral and post-doctoral students that was held from 25 to 26 November 2021. The main objective was to strengthen research capacities on the theoretical and practical knowledge of doctoral students and post-doctoral students working in the field of cultural heritage.

The RS also organised a panel discussion on *Communication in a Context of Crisis: the Case of COVID-19 and Ter-*

ACC Ouagadougou: University Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

rorism which was held on 10 November 2021. The last event organised by the RS Learning was a panel discussion on *Faced with Fake News, How Newsrooms Are Organising Themselves* held on 16 December 2021. In this panel, four presentations were made by journalists and researchers from Bayreuth and Ouagadougou.

RS Mobilities

On 17 October 2021, the RS Mobilities conducted a panel to question the practices of pedestrian mobility in the two biggest cities of Burkina Faso to help define research and action on the question. Chaired by Lassane Yaméogo, the panel brought together professionals in charge of communal strategy for pedestrian mobility in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso, professionals from the Ministry of Urbanism and Habitat, and scholars of the ACC and the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo. In a context of strong urban growth and horizontal extension of the city, people have developed individual modes of transport based on two-wheeled vehicles to the detriment of pedestrian mobility. The decryption made by the panellists made it possible to understand that the city's mobility policy is mainly based on motorised mobility by public transport.

A collaboration with the city of Ouagadougou on the topic is set to be developed.

RS Moralities

One of the events organised in the RS Moralities was a workshop on *University-Business-Community Relations* held at Bobo-Dioulasso University on 29 October 2021 and organised by Fernand

Bationo. The workshop's concept of a "science shop" is a mechanism linking civil society to the public research sector through collaborative research projects that respond to societal issues expressed by the communities. The aim of this science shop was to highlight the moral issues of collaboration between universities and the community. The university-company-community approach which was presented and discussed was welcomed by the students, who felt that the communities have knowledge that is not valued or is only very little valued by researchers and that university teaching applies little or nothing to the social context.

Under the leadership of Cyrille Semde, a panel discussion on *Technoscientific Progress, Personal Identity, and African Cultures* was organised on 22 December 2021. This multidisciplinary panel brought together a sociologist, a legal expert, a philosopher, and a historian around the question of transgender or bisexual people with the objective of contributing to reflections on the LGBT issues in relation with African cultures.

The last panel discussion with Semde was on the topic *Around the Concept of Generation: Variations in Meaning and Consequences on the Idea of 'Sustaina-*

ble Development', and it was held on 23 December 2021. The objective was to highlight the complexity of the notion of sustainable development based on the multivocal character of the concept of generation.

RS Knowledges

Two important events were conducted within the RS Knowledges in 2021. The first one was on *Cultural Heritage Knowledge* led by Lassina Simporé and the second an international conference on terrorism from 13 to 15 December under the leadership of Boniface Somé.

The first event was a panel discussion which took place from 3 to 11 November 2021 in the framework of "The Knowledge Café on Cultural Heritage". One of the panel communications of the Café was on *Putting the Cultural Heritage of Burkina Faso in Tourism*. This revealed the potential of the cultural heritage in Burkina Faso to be transformed into a tourism product or a tourism destination. It briefly addressed the legal framework of the tourism sector before focusing on the conditions of tourism development and its impacts on cultural heritage. The other panel was focused on *What Role Can Women Play in the Protection and Transmission of Cultural Heritage?*

The second event was the most preeminent of ACC Ouagadougou in 2021. In fact, this international conference on terrorism united 40 communicators and more than 625 participants, including 116 online. It brought together researchers, teacher-researchers, religious and customary leaders, professionals from the world of associations and NGOs, from Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo, Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Mauritania, Germany, and France. On the one hand, most of the participants subscribed to the idea of negotiating with terrorist groups using appropriate methods and know-how, but without compromising national sovereignty, people's rights, freedom, and democracy. On the other hand, others did not advise negotiating with terrorist groups as it could be an admission of failure.

Gender and Diversity

The Gender and Diversity Research Section at the ACC Ouagadougou is led by Fatoumata Badini Kinda and Eveline Compaoré-Sawodogo. They organised a workshop on 28 December 2021 on the preliminary results of an internal research project. This first activity was on *Female Identity and Moral Philosophy in the Academic Profession*. The study documented the experiences of teachers and/or researchers, the causes of frustra-

tions in the academic careers of teachers/researchers, the institutional initiatives put in place in this framework, the forms of constraints and challenges, and the experiences of teachers/researchers.

Early career

In order to support the Cluster’s Early Career programme, a seminar for the post-doc and doctoral fellows was organised by the ACC and was co-led by post-doc fellow Emilie F. Sanou-Ouattara. The objective was to allow the fellows to present the results of the research carried out within the framework of the doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships offered by the ACC. During the workshop’s two days, 13 presentations were delivered, covering topics of civil engagement, health issues, children in conflict with the law, road harassment, education, and gender issues.

Strengthening the relationships with African ACCs

One of the core principles of the Cluster of Excellence is to strengthen the relationship with both the ACC Bayreuth and the Africa Multiple partner institutes, but also between the four ACCs

in Africa. On this basis, ACC Ouagadougou hosted three scholars from the University of Bayreuth and two from the University of Eldoret, Kenya. These scholars participated in the working groups of research projects. Scholars from partners universities were also hosted by ACC Ouagadougou.

One important aspect of the cooperation was the hosting of the ACC Directors in Ouagadougou between 28 February and 5 March 2021. This was a unique opportunity for the four ACC leaders and the leading staff of different faculties and offices of the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo to physically meet with guests and discuss the importance of academic cooperation in the framework of the Cluster of Excellence.

Two academic fellows from ACC Lagos were hosted at ACC Ouagadougou thanks to the mobility fellowship programme of the Cluster. Each of them came for one month in October 2021 and each presented the preliminary results of his prospective research project. Feyi Ademola-Adeoye presented on *Sankara’s Pan-Africanism, University*

Students, and the Future of Left-Wing Ideological Politics in Burkina Faso and Yakubu Moses shared his research on *Premarital Pregnancy and Parturition in Burkina Faso*. For both presentations, the discussions with Burkinabe students and lecturers helped presenters to contextualise their works to better fit the Burkinabe context and consider some aspects which were previously left out.

Book publication

Two books related to the ACC funding system have been published so far: One book on COVID-19 which is the proceeding of the conference held on the subject in October 2020 under the co-leadership of ACC Ouagadougou, and one collective volume on the problematic of disease in African written literature.

In the end, the ACC leadership remain very hopeful that more research outputs will come out of the internal small grant research projects as well as the six short-term research projects financed by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and hosted at ACC Ouagadougou.

Text PETER SIMATEI

The year 2021 was very busy for the African Cluster Centre at Moi University, Kenya. During the course of the year numerous events took place and a total number of ten Cluster projects were driven forward.

2021 was a most active year at the Moi University African Cluster Centre (Moi-ACC). To pick out the most obvious of the events that happened at the Centre: ten workshops (one of them a major regional conference) and 18 seminars were held over the course of a year that also had researchers at the Centre engaged in ten Cluster-funded research projects. There were several other events. For instance, a researcher based in Moi University, Peter Odhiambo Ndege, sadly now deceased, made a presentation in the Knowledge Lab of the Cluster, and Moi-ACC co-hosted the Swahili Colloquium of the University of Bayreuth at which several Moi University researchers participated.

2021 also saw Moi-ACC host two research fellows and one local artist in residence. The research fellows, Ademola Kazeem Fayemi and Peter Oni, are both

scholars of philosophy based at the University of Lagos. Their residencies were most productive, and they continue to participate in the activities of Moi-ACC. A scholar based at Moi University, Bernard Sorre, made the reverse journey and had his fellowship at the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

In the midst of this uplifting release of energy that characterised 2021 at Moi-ACC there was heartbreak. The Centre lost two of its pillars: Omar Egesah and Peter Odhiambo Ndege. The anthropologist and professor Egesah was a Cluster Member, a Principal Investigator who also doubled up as the spokesperson for the Research Section Mobilities and a member of the Moi-ACC Board. The historian and professor Peter Odhiambo Ndege, a scholar of note in Kenya, gave guidance and, especially, mentorship by example to the researchers engaged in Cluster work.

There have been several major outcomes of the intense activity at Moi-ACC over 2021. The first has been the creation of awareness in the East African region about Africa Multiple: Reconfiguring African Studies Cluster of Excellence and its work. This awareness has triggered an important debate on the defi-

nitions, histories, practices, and uses of African Studies in the African academy that is ongoing in Kenya.



Peter Oni makes his contribution at the East African Community: Drivers of Cooperation and Integration workshop on 13.10.2021.



The late Prof. Egesah makes a point at the East African Community: Challenges and Opportunities workshop on 26 February 2021.

ACC Moi: Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

The Cluster’s PI Martin Doevenspeck on a visit at the ACC Ouagadougou.



Table 1: Workshops 2021 of the Moi-ACC.

Date	Title	Convener(s)
25-26.02.2021	East African Community: Challenges and Opportunities	RS Affiliations
26-27.03.2021	Human Agentive Mobility and Identities: Emerging Patterns in East Africa	RS Mobilities
06-07.05.2021	Ways of Knowing: Indigenous Knowledges, Decoloniality, and Worlding of Alternative Realities	RS Knowledges
06-07.07.2021	The Multiplicity and Relationality of Learning in Africa: The Roles of Language, Digital Platforms, and Religious Imaginations	RS Learning
29-30.07.2021	Interrogating Gender and Diversity in Research	Catherine Kiprop, Moi University
06-08.09.2021	On Radical Joy – The 5th Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies Conference	Peter Simatei
30.09.2021-01.10.2021	Personhood and Morality in Contemporary Africa	RS Moralities
13-14.10.2021	East African Community: Drivers of Cooperation and Integration	RS Affiliations
11-12.11.2021	Art, Aesthetics, and Cultural Productions during the Pandemic	RS Arts and Aesthetics
02-03.12.2021	Tafsiri na Ukalimani: Nafasi na Changamoto Zake	Mosol Kandagor

Table 2: Seminars 2021 of the Moi-ACC

Date	Title	Presenter
09.02.2021	<i>Regional integration, peace, and development in Africa with specific focus on ECOWAS and SADC</i>	Frank Matanga, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technol. Kakamega, Kenya
15.02.2021	<i>Some necessary but incomplete reflections on critical diversity work by a Gender and Diversity Officer of a research community doing African Studies: the beginning of a much-needed conversation?</i>	Christine Vogt-William, University of Bayreuth
16.02.2021	<i>Making films in 21st Century Kenya: a personal journey</i>	Bob Nyanja, Film Director and Producer
16.03.2021	<i>Moralities and Identities of Africa's Urban Centres</i>	Jesse N.K. Mugambi, University of Nairobi, Kenya
23.02.2021	<i>Local Community Interaction and Change in Africa: The case of Hadzabe in North-Western Tanzania</i>	Amani Lusekelo, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
20.04.2021		Damaris S. Parsitau, Egerton Univ., Kenya
04.05.2021	<i>A reflection on the role of naming in constructing gendered ideologies among the Bakiga</i>	Allen Asiiimwe, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda
18.05.2021	<i>Strategies and challenges of communicating gender information in a non-gender marking language: the case of Kiswahili</i>	Iribe Mwangi, University of Nairobi, Kenya
22.06.2021	<i>Morality and Film Censorship in Kenya</i>	Susan Nyawira Gitimu, Kenyatta University, Kenya
27.07.2021	<i>Lockdown Literature: Writing as Intervention</i>	Moraa Gitaa, Writer
10.08.2021	<i>Literary Translation and Knowledge of Language in Uganda: A Contextual Analysis in Relation to Language Preservation and Growth</i>	Edith Natukunda-Togboa, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda
24.08.2021	<i>Kiswahili dhidi ya Ukoloni wa Maarifa katika Afrika</i>	Aldin Mutembei, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
31.08.2021	<i>Regional Integration in East Africa: Past, Present Challenges and Future Prospects</i>	Philip Nying'uro, University of Nairobi
14.09.2021	<i>Globalisation and the Mobility of Ideas: A Critical Analysis of the Academia in Africa</i>	Margaret Nasambu Barasa, Kisii University, Kenya
19.10.2021	<i>A Reflection on Film Pedagogy in Kenya</i>	Rachael Diang'a, United States International University – Africa
22.10.2021	<i>Climbing the Mountain of God: The Multiple Aesthetic in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Kenda Muiyuri: Rugano rwa Gikuyu na Mumbi (The Perfect Nine)</i>	Njogu Waita, Chuka University, Kenya
16.11.2021	<i>Land, Gender, and Personhood: A Moral Perspective</i>	Michael Ntabo Mabururu, Rongo University, Kenya
30.11.2021	<i>Rethinking the Role of the Soapstone Industry in Cultural Tourism in Africa: Experiences and Lessons from Kenya</i>	John Sorana Akama, Kisii University, Kenya

Table 3: Projects of the Moi-ACC

Duration	Title	Directors
18 months	<i>East African Asian Writing</i>	Peter T. Simatei
12 months	<i>Changing Life Projects: African Identities, Moralities, and Wellbeing</i>	Eunice Kamaara
18 months	<i>Framing Identities from Human Agency Mobility on the Kenya-Uganda Highway</i>	Omar Egesah (deceased)
24 months	<i>Regional Integration in Africa: The Case of East African Community</i>	Kenneth K. Oluoch (deceased)
12 months	<i>Mediated and Mediatisation of Islamic Knowledge</i>	Hassan J. Ndzovu
first-year funding	<i>Indigenous Intelligence and Livelihoods</i>	Mosol Kandagor
first-year funding	<i>Pots, Fire, and Gourds: A (Re)presentation of Cultural Knowledge Systems</i>	Justine Sikuku
first-year funding	<i>Ethics and Legitimacies in Modification of Moving Material Cultures in North Rift, Kenya</i>	Joram Kareithi
48 months	<i>Beyond the Digital Return: "New Heritage(s)", Sustainability, and the Decolonisation of Music Archives</i>	Markus Coester, Tom Mboya, Lee Watkins
48 months	<i>Islamic Popular Culture and Public Performance Practices</i>	Hassan J. Ndzovu

Text and photo AKINMAYOWA AKIN-OTIKO

In 2021, Lagos-ACC proved once more to be committed to the Cluster's agenda by encouraging exchange, mentoring emerging scholars and organising various events.

Early Careers Mentorship

Lagos-ACC remains highly committed to equipping and inspiring emerging generations of African Studies scholars. In line with this vision, Lagos-ACC hosted its inaugural graduate conference: a two-day event with the theme *Studying Contemporary Africa: Politics, Society, and Decoloniality*. The conference brought together 30 Ph.D. candidates from various parts of Nigeria. The students were able to present their work and receive feedback from established scholars through a series of workshops and mentoring sessions. Lagos-ACC provided accommodation and transportation for the 30 graduate-scholars, a relatively unprecedented provision. At the conclusion of the conference, many of the participants expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to participate in such a generously sponsored and well organised event.

In addition to the graduate conference, Lagos-ACC established a doctoral completion scholarship to support PhD candidates in the humanities whose work contributes to reconfiguring African Studies. Since 2020, six students have

received this scholarship, which has vastly assisted them in completing their degrees.

In the second half of 2022, Lagos-ACC will commence its MPhil/PhD programme in African and Diaspora studies.

Collaboration

In line with both the conceptual and structural mission of the cluster to have Cluster Centres and Principal Investigators collaborate, Lagos-ACC has used this past year to take advantage of opportunities for the cross-pollination of ideas with other ACCs. In 2022, Peter Oni (RS Affiliations) and Ademola Kazeem Fayemi (RS Morality) completed visiting fellowships at Moi-ACC in Kenya. In response to the call for PIs to collaborate,

ACC Lagos: University of Lagos, Nigeria

Kayode Eesuola (RS Knowledges) and Moses Yakubu (RS Affiliations) took advantage of the mobilities programme, and spent some weeks researching at Joseph Ki-Zerbo University in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Eesuola researched the theme Sankara's Pan-Africanism, Public University Students, and the Future of Left-Wing Ideological Politics in Burkina Faso, while Yakubu researched the theme, Premarital Pregnancy and Parturition in Burkina Faso and Nigeria: Pre-requisite for Modern Marriage?

Academic Coordinator's Forum

In a bid to foster greater collaboration among the ACCs, Lagos-ACC hosted the inaugural Academic Coordinator's Forum from 4 to 8 October 2021. In

attendance were Tom Mboya from Moi University, Kenya, Émilie Sanon-Ouattara from Joseph Ki-Zerbo University, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and Ayo Yusuff from Lagos-ACC. The four-day programme was conceptualised and led by Yusuff. The programme allowed academic coordinators to compare notes and share best practices for enhancing and supporting research activities in their various ACCs. Lagos-ACC hopes that the Forum marks the beginning of further collaboration to come.

Cluster Conference

Lagos-ACC organised two panels for the 2021 annual Conference of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence entitled *African and Relations: Modalities Reflected* on 15 July 2021. The panels had the theme Thinking and Acting.

Documentaries

As part of its research agenda, Lagos-ACC has explored different media of disseminating PIs' research findings as they emerge from research projects. Documentaries have been a medium that has allowed the general public to easily access Lagos-ACC's research. In the past two years, Lagos-ACC has produced three documentaries. These include: *Lagos Ownership & Identities* and *African Conceptions of Development*, both by Taibat Lawanson and Abisoye Eleshin, and *Nkuho – The Fattening Room*, a documentary about traditional Efik initiation practices, by Akinmayowa Akin-Otiko and Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James. The three documentaries have reached a combined total of over 12,000 views on YouTube and it is a medium that the Centre desires to pursue further.



Members of the IADS with visitors from Moi and the head of Goethe-Institut Lagos Nadine Siegert.



Participants of the Graduate Conference that scrutinized the topic „Studying Contemporary Africa: Politics, Society and Decoloniality“.

Text: ELIJAH MADIBA, BOUDINA MCCONNACHIE, RUTH SIMBAO, ZINZI SIXABA, LEE WATKINS

The de-escalation of the pandemic and the associated relaxation of lockdown restrictions have presented the Rhodes-ACC with an opportunity to accelerate work in terms of their research endeavours. Below a few initiatives from the projects funded by the Cluster are highlighted.

Ruth Simbao

Ruth Simbao, Professor in the Fine Art Department at Rhodes University, collaborated with Zambian artist, Stary Mwaba, to create a photography essay, “Abapakati: Chinese Intermediaries and Artisanal Mining on the Zambian Copperbelt”. This essay is published in the book, *Visualising China in Southern Africa: Biography, Circulation, Transgression*, which is edited by Juliette Leeb-du Toit, Ruth Simbao and Ross Anthony (Wits University Press, 2022). The book also includes Simbao’s chapter, “A Letter to My Cousin in China: Migrancy and Dilemmas of Burial”, and the Editors’ introduction, “Geopolitics by Other Means: Navigating the Chinese Presence in Southern Africa through Art”.

In December 2021, Simbao and Mwaba ran an artists’ workshop in Kitwe, Zambia, and invited Lusaka-based artists Mulenga Mulenga and Boyd Bishonga to work with Kitwe creatives including Nalipapa Obby, Norton Musonda, and Stephen and John Kalaba. And in April 2022, Simbao filmed the art competition that took place at the new Tazara Memorial Park in Chongwe District,

which is due to open to the public later this year. In extension of this, she is currently creating a documentary film that commemorates the Zambian and Chinese people who died while building the Tazara Railway in the early 1970s. Focusing on artistic interpretations of Africa-China encounters and the Tazara, as well as Zambian and Chinese ways of mourning and commemorating, she is collaborating with the artists Stary Mwaba and Gladys Kalichini, and PhD candidate Binjun Hu.

Boudina McConnachie

In December 2021, Elijah Madiba and Boudina McConnachie travelled to Mozambique, Inhambane District, to record a timbila orchestra with a Rhodes African Ensemble Masters student, Venancio Mbande Junior. Timbila instruments are indigenous Mozambican xylophones which are played in both traditional and contemporary styles in villages and cities around the country. In Mbande Junior’s home village of Zavala, they recorded a final recital and new content for an album and this programme was historic for many reasons. Firstly, the recording of a traditional timbila orchestra is unusual, because the art of performing on these xylophone shaped instruments in a traditional manner has not been culturally supported for decades. The orchestras are made up of over seven instruments and are accompanied by carefully choreographed dances. Sec-

ACC Rhodes: Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa

ondly, the performance took place in the same homestead on the same site that former directors of ILAM, Hugh Tracey and his son Andrew Tracey, recorded Venancio’s father (Venancio Mbande Senior). The initial recordings were made in Zavala by Hugh Tracey in 1955 and Andrew Tracey followed some years later to visit Mbande senior and record him with his (then) young son, Venancio Junior. Finally, a handful of the musicians playing with Venancio Junior were in his father’s orchestra and remembered earlier field trips by the Tracey family. This collective memory made the recording expedition particularly rewarding and a poignant moment in ILAM’s history. As timbila music and performers become fewer and fewer due, amongst other reasons, to political neglect and globalization, the privilege of recording a full timbila orchestra in Zavala, the traditional home of timbila performance, cannot be understated. This was an honour and Rhodes University is a leading timbila research institute due to Mbande Junior and the International Library of African Music (ILAM).

This trip was the final event in an innovative approach to learning and teaching at ILAM where an African master musician was accepted to complete a Masters degree in Ethnomusicology, based on his musical prowess and skill. Mbande Junior is awaiting his graduation in October where he will receive his Masters degree with distinction.



Visiting Professor Ayotunde Bewaji hosted a public on lecture on The Dire Future of Humanity – the Ubuntu/Omoluabi Alternative to the Destructive Individualism of Western Culture.

Lee Watkins

The project “Sounding Africa on the Indian Ocean littoral and in the Southwestern Indian Ocean” headed by Lee Watkins is about researching African music and its vestiges on the Indian Ocean littoral and the islands of the southwestern Indian Ocean. The project commenced in 2020 with the intention of doing research on a particular community of African descendants, a group of people referred to as the Sidis.

In the original proposal for the project, Watkins had intended doing fieldwork only. Following a visit to Reunion in May 2022, however, he realised there is a greater urgency with archiving and publication. The archive in Reunion has connections with other archives that are in a poor state. One such case is in Madagascar where there is great interest in digitisation but no human and technological resources are available. The archive in Reunion, called La Phonotéque Historique de l’Océan Indien (PHOI), itself has poor facilities and their holdings have little protection against the

elements. The research team are in the process of purchasing mobile digitisation equipment so that digitisation can be expanded to Madagascar. Through ILAM they are collaborating with the PHOI as a primary partner – and through them work with the archives in Madagascar, for example. Zanzibar is another island where resources are inadequate.

Visiting Professor Ayotunde Bewaji

In July 2022, the Rhodes University African Studies Centre had the privilege of hosting Emeritus Prof. Bewaji as a Visiting Research Fellow, who is currently a Distinguished Researcher at the PJ Patterson Institute for Africa Caribbean Advocacy, University of the West Indies, Jamaica.

As part of the Centre’s seminar series Bewaji hosted a public lecture on The Dire Future of Humanity – the Ubuntu/Omoluabi Alternative to the Destructive Individualism of Western Culture. In his discussion he speaks about the trajectory of human development since the dominance of Western soci-

ety gained ascendancy, and the certain disaster that lurks in plain sight should this Western narrative and tradition continue without let or hindrance. He is particularly concerned about the fact that the dominance of Western traditions has not be fully challenged and this impacts on ways we perceive Africa today. Bewaji referred to the intellectual/mythical legs on which the Western tradition rests which include economics, religion, politics and science. In his discussion Bewaji mentions how Western culture is projected as superior and is universally accepted. He disputes this notion and indicates that these foundations are neither valid verities nor universal, and he further mentions how these set mythical legs of Western tradition are leading the African society in the direction of destruction. However, he offers restorative alternatives in Ubuntu/Omoluabi where he suggested ways of coming up with African Knowledge Systems, emphasizing on the importance of reeducating ourselves in African traditions and channeling our energies into developing the African society.



Left: Artists’ workshop on the Copperbelt, 2021 – Boyd Bishonga with an artwork made from materials collected around the Black Mountain mining slag. Right: Photographer Norton Musonda also participated in the Artists’ workshop.