



The Chair in Epistemologies of the Global South with Emphasis on Africa at the University of Bayreuth, Germany in collaboration with the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study (JIAS) at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, and the Council for the Development of Social Science in Africa (CODESRIA) based in Dakar, Senegal, launched a **COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT** and **SEMINAR SERIES** on the theme:

The Changing African Idea of Africa and the Future of African Studies Seminar Series 2023

This collaborative research kick-started with a series of seminars in April 2022 consisting of invited speakers to address various aspects of the idea of Africa and the future of African Studies, and indeed expanding to the broader issues of epistemologies of the Global South. Held every month, these seminars are also part of keynote events of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth.



13 July 2023

Finex Ndhlovu

AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND AFRICAN STUDIES – THEORIES, DEBATES AND CONTROVERSIES

Several leading African literary and critical language theorists have contributed quite significantly into the discourse and praxis of African Studies from the mid-1900s to the present. Some such scholars include Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o on decolonising the mind, and the critique of colonial linguistic encirclement; Chinewizu on decolonising the language of African literature; Amos Tutuola on ontologies of incompleteness; Chinua Achebe on the pitfalls of the colonial condition; Ali Mazrui on the micro-linguistics of identity and linguistic diversity in a polycentric world; Kwesi Kwaa Prah, Neville Alexander and Jacob Mfaniselwa Nhlapo on pan-African identities through orthographic harmonisation; and Sinfree Makoni on the disinvention and reconstitution of African languages. Notwithstanding the advances that this body of work on linguistic, cultural, and literary imperatives brings to bear on African Studies, the scholarship remains least acknowledged or appreciated in mainstream debates and conversations. The goal of this seminar is four-fold: (a) reviving and reanimating discussions on the centrality of languages and literatures to the broader project of envisioning what the changing African idea of Africa might look like; (b) drawing attention to those seemingly exhausted questions on the historiography of African languages, literatures and cultures that, nevertheless, remain forever new and relevant to the search for new futures; (c) taking stock of the ongoing sociocultural and linguistic intellectual capital from Africa that must exercise our collective minds as we ponder the future of Africa Studies; and (d) revisiting the debates and controversies around such concepts as African multilingualism, African language ecologies, the political economy of African national language policies and how they sit within the broader African Studies discourse. In reflecting on these four points, I trouble and unsettle the perennial circulation of colonial epistemological and scholarly hegemonies in African studies that have invisibilised important work that is foundational to the field. In my re-appraisal of silenced or ignored voices from language and literary studies, I suggest fruitful pathways we might follow in cultivating an African Studies enterprise that centres conviviality, interconnectedness, interdependence and co-production as key hallmarks.

Join here!

13 July 2023, 4-6 pm CEST

<https://forms.gle/7qH23TH3KECDq1Yt6>

Zoom details will be sent after registration. Email vanessak@uj.ac.za if you encounter problems.



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