

# NAB

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

## Africa Multiple 2.0

## Reconfiguring African Studies at New Levels



Including News from the



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Dear reader,

Thank you for opening this new issue of our newsletter on African Studies in Bayreuth (NAB XXIV), devoted to the activities of the past year. The year 2025 ushered in several significant developments in African Studies that brought the field to new heights. Generally speaking, the field has moved further in the direction of innovation and decolonisation. At the University of Bayreuth, our endeavour to take the reconfiguration of African Studies to new levels has made great strides.

We started our year with the annual New Year Lecture of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, this time delivered by Mirrianne Mahn, city councillor, Afro-German political activist, author, and playwright from Frankfurt am Main (see the report on p. 6–11).

The two most exciting news for African Studies in Bayreuth came in May. On the 23rd, we learned that our application for the extension of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence was approved, ensuring our Africa Multiple Research Centers in Bayreuth, Lagos, Eldoret, Ouagadougou, and Makhanda seven more years of funding, focused on the study of “world-making” from the vantage point of Africa. (\*Read title story and articles on p. 6–11).

Just a few days earlier, on 14 May, we officially opened the doors of our new Research Centre for Africa (Forschungszentrum Afrika, FZA), the state-of-the-art home for African Studies in Bayreuth (discover our new building on p. 12–15). The opening of the FZA was followed by the first event held in the new premises: the annual conference of the Africa Multiple Cluster on the theme of Temporalities, Youth, (Im)Mobilities and Agencies: Africa on the Move, convened by Anthony Okeregbe from the Africa Multiple Research Centre at the University of Lagos (\*get a glimpse of the conference proceedings on p. 24–25).

At the Institute of African Studies, Gabriele Sommer phased out as Director. Sommer was succeeded by her previous Deputy Stefan Ouma, while Joël Glasman came in as the new Vice Director.

A long anticipated change in leadership also occurred at Iwalewaha. We were able to welcome Xenia Ressos as Managing Director and Natasha A. Kelly as Academic Director. Kelly also holds the newly created professorship of Global African Arts (find out about her vision for Global African Arts on p. 44–46).

Among the fortunate developments of the past year was the creation of three additional professorships with a focus on Africa. Gilbert Shang Ndi became Heisenberg Professor of Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies. At the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Serawit Debele was appointed Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Religion, and Joschka Philipps became Professor of Sociology of Insecurity and Uncertainty. With these new appointments, we now have the first Black women professors at the University of Bayreuth.

In 2025, we also had to bid farewell to two pillars of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. Martina Drescher, former Vice Dean of Early Career and Equal Opportunity and head of BIGSAS, retired from her professorship in Romance Linguistics. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, the previous holder of the Chair in Epistemologies of the Global South and Vice Dean of Research from 2022 until 2024, took up a new position at the University of Calgary, Canada.

Large parts of the rich history of African Studies in Bayreuth have now been documented in an exhibition compiled by Ibrahima Sene. We invite you to learn more about Bayreuth's connections with some of the most defining moments in the development of African Studies in the article on the exhibition (p. 38–39).



Stefan Ouma



Rüdiger Seesemann

**Stefan Ouma**

Director Institute of African Studies

**Rüdiger Seesemann**

Spokesperson Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence



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IWALEWAIIAUS



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Africa Multiple 2.0

Reconfiguring African Studies at New Levels



## Africa Multiple 2.0:

Celebrating in ... Bayreuth, Germany

# African Studies at New Levels



Photo: Robert Götze

Text SABINE GREINER

**The success story of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth continues: the Cluster of Excellence Africa Multiple: Reconfiguring African Studies, established in 2019, successfully competed in a rigorous selection process and will receive funding for a further seven years (2026–2032).**

On 22 May 2025, a wave of anticipation swept across the University of Bayreuth (UBT) – and far beyond. After months of intense preparation, evaluation, and quiet hope, the decision finally arrived: the Cluster of Excellence Africa Multiple: Reconfiguring African Studies will continue to be funded for another seven years under the prestigious Excellence Strategy coordinated by the German Research Foundation (DFG – Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft).

What followed was not just relief, but genuine celebration. From Bayreuth to Lagos, Nigeria; Eldoret, Kenya; Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; and Makhanda, South Africa, scholars, students and partners across five locations shared a moment of collective joy. The renewal marks a decisive milestone for a project that has, since its

launch in 2019, redefined how African Studies can be practised: collaborative, globally connected, and firmly rooted in partnership with African institutions.

Hosted at UBT, the Cluster is embedded in the long-standing Institute of African Studies (IAS), one of Europe's most established centres in the field. This institutional foundation has provided fertile ground for Africa Multiple's innovative approach, combining decades of expertise with new forms of transcontinental and interdisciplinary collaboration.

## A Network Across Continents

At its core, Africa Multiple has always aimed to move beyond traditional academic boundaries. Rather than studying Africa from a distance, the Cluster has built a network of institutions, where scholars work together across continents. In addition to the University of Bayreuth four key Cluster

Centres on the African continent form the backbone of this network: Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Moi University in Eldoret (Kenya), the University of Lagos (Nigeria), and Rhodes University in Makhanda (South Africa). These institutions are not mere peripheral partners, but equal contributors shaping research agendas and outcomes.

During its first funding phase, the Cluster conducted research via six thematic fields, organized in Research Sections: Art and Aesthetics, Knowledge, Mobilities, Affiliation, Moralities, and Learning. These research foci generated a remarkable body of work: hundreds of events, international conferences, and publications that reached both academic audiences and the wider public. In Bayreuth, outreach also extended into schools, fostering new, more nuanced perspectives on Africa among younger generations.

The newly secured second phase – referred to as Africa Multiple 2.0 – star-

... in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso



... in Eldoret, Kenya



... in Lagos, Nigeria

... in Makhanda, South Africa.





ted in January 2026. It promises to build on this foundation with renewed ambition. Six new thematic fields – Digitalities, Ecologies, Accumulation, In/Securities, Re:remembering, and Translating – have been jointly developed across all partner locations. They reflect both emerging global challenges and the Cluster's commitment to addressing them through diverse, interdisciplinary perspectives.

Equally important is the Cluster's investment in sustainable structures. New platforms will support early-career researchers, enhance transcontinental mobility between partner institutions, and strengthen shared research data practices. Initiatives promoting gender equity and diversity will be further expanded, ensuring that excellence in research goes hand in hand with inclusivity.

For the University of Bayreuth, the renewed funding is more than a prestigi-

ous endorsement. It consolidates the university's role as a leading international hub for African Studies and reinforces its broader strategy of global engagement. As University President Stefan Leible emphasised at the time of the renewal decision, the extension is "a momentous achievement and a testament to the exceptional efforts of our researchers," adding that Bayreuth is advancing "with renewed vigour" as a centre for innovative African Studies research whose impact reaches far beyond academia.

Cluster Spokesperson Rüdiger Seesemann highlighted the collective dimension of this academic success: "Our journey into new dimensions of African Studies continues." He described the renewal as "a wonderful acknowledgment of all those who have contributed to this scholarly endeavour," expressing gratitude to researchers, partners and supporters alike.

The decision itself is part of Germany's wider Excellence Strategy, a highly competitive programme coordinated by the German Research Foundation and designed to strengthen cutting-edge research. With substantial annual funding allocated to Clusters of Excellence nationwide, the initiative underscores the importance of long-term, innovative research environments.

For Africa Multiple, however, the significance of the renewal goes beyond funding. It is a recognition of a vision: that knowledge about Africa is best produced through collaboration, mutual respect and shared intellectual leadership. As the next phase unfolds, the sense of excitement felt on that day in May continues to resonate – fuelling a project that is not only "Reconfiguring African Studies," but also reshaping what global research collaboration can look like.



## Africa Multiple 1.0: Looking Back and Forward

# Highlights

Text DORIS LÖHR

**Looking back on six years of innovation, collaboration, and cutting-edge research. This retrospective highlights some of the key achievements of Africa Multiple 1.0, ranging from conceptual advances and institutional transformation to landmark conferences, publications, and artistic collaborations, before looking ahead to the next phase of the Cluster and its new research agenda.**

Established in 2019 within the framework of the German Excellence Strategy, the Cluster set out to fundamentally rethink African Studies. Its guiding idea – conceiving of Africa as multiple – challenges the notion of

Africa as a single, bounded entity. Instead, it highlights Africa as dynamic, diverse, and shaped by as well as actively shaping ongoing relationships, exchanges, and global entanglements. From the outset, the Cluster engaged with growing postcolonial and decolonial critiques of the field. It identified continuing challenges such as unequal power structures in knowledge production and limitations to the understanding of Africa's diversity. To address these, the Cluster developed a twofold approach: conceptual and structural.

Conceptually, the Cluster introduced a relational framework that understands Africa as constantly emerging through relations across time and space. This perspective informed the

research programme of Africa Multiple 1.0 (AM 1.0) with its research sections Affiliations, Arts & Aesthetics, Learning, Knowledges, Mobilities, and Moralities, and guided its interdisciplinary work.

Research in Africa Multiple revolved around three conceptual axes: multiplicity, relationality, and reflexivity.

■ **Multiplicity** means that people, knowledge, and fields are not fixed or separate, but are shaped through relationships and are always changing and multiple. This helps move beyond simple binaries or essentialist views.

■ **Relationality** signals the shift of the analytical focus from entities or phenomena that *have* connections, to-

wards the relations involved in their production, highlighting that all phenomena emerge through past, present, and future relationships, while also recognising that some worlds are marginalised or silenced.

■ **Reflexivity** calls our attention to the reflexive character of social worlds and requires us, as researchers, to reflect on our own positionalities and the power structures in which they are embedded.

Structurally, the Cluster broke new ground by establishing four "African Cluster Centres" (ACCs) as equal partners following a competitive selection process. This model moved beyond traditional Global North-South hierarchies and enabled more equitable forms of collaboration and knowledge production. Over time, this transcontinental structure has contributed to shifting the balance of epistemic authority and brought about a significant strengthening of partnerships with African institutions.

The Cluster operationalized its research through three main analytical angles:

■ **Modalities:** focuses on the different ways, or modes, of relating, the various forms and qualities of relations, and the multiple outcomes of processes of relating.

■ **Spatialities:** foregrounds concrete connections, positions and processes in space, to understand how social and material interrelations constitute lifeworlds through the production of space.

■ **Temporalities:** examines the temporal dynamics and processuality of relations, as well as the simultaneity of multiple options and orders in the world.

A fourth dimension, Medialities, cuts across these angles, emphasising the mediated character of relations, all of which take specific material forms.

Together, these perspectives form a flexible analytical toolkit for under-

standing Africa as globally interconnected and in flux. This approach builds on decolonial scholarship, including the work of Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018 ff.), and resonates with broader debates on power, subjectivity, and knowledge production.

Since 2019, the Cluster has developed into a major international research hub. It combines the humanities and social sciences with artistic practices, expanding both the scope and methods of research. A key feature is its annual thematic cycle, which links conceptual development, empirical research, and dissemination. Each cycle includes a central theme, collaborative work in the Knowledge Lab, an international conference, and resulting publications (e.g. Vierke & Seesemann, 2024; Fendler, Mwepu & Ritzer 2024). The Knowledge Lab serves as a central platform for interdisciplinary exchange, fostering collaboration across disciplines, regions, and career stages.

The Cluster's annual conferences are central to its intellectual agenda and the annual themes.

### Key conferences include:

■ *Africa Multiple: Conversations and Building Networks* (2019)

■ *Africa\*n Relations: Modalities Reflected* (2021), published as Vierke & Seesemann, eds. 2024

■ *Medialities* (2022), published as Fendler, Mwepu & Ritzer eds. 2024

■ *Reconfiguring African Studies through Spatialities* (2023)

■ *Temporalities, Youth (Im)mobilities and Agencies* (2025)

The Cluster also made major contributions to the African Studies Association Germany (VAD – Vereinigung für Afrikawissenschaften in Deutschland) conference *Reconfigurations in Africa – and in African Studies* (2024), as UBT was the host of this biennial conference.

In all these events, the Cluster com-

- 1 Artist residence Mbongeni Buthelezi in 2020.
- 2 Book reading with Toyin Falola in 2024
- 3 Keynote speaker Patricia Daley at the 2023 International Cluster Conference on „Spatialities“
- 4 In 2022, Fatou Sow (second from left) was awarded the BIGSAS honorary doctorate.
- 5 Over the years, the Cluster was visited by various politicians – here former Minister of State Claudia Roth (middle) in 2022.





bined academic and artistic practices, reflecting its commitment to multimodal knowledge production.

The Cluster also built a strong publication profile, particularly through its AFMU series (Brill).

Key titles include:

■ Fendler et al., eds. 2024. *Of Worlds and Artworks*. Leiden: Brill.

■ Schramm & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, eds. 2024. *Knowing – Unknowing*. Leiden: Brill.

Further important Cluster outputs include:

■ Arndt et al., eds. 2023. *Covid-19 in Africa: Governance and Containment*. Cham: Springer.

■ Arndt et al., eds. 2023. *Covid-19 in Africa: Societal and Economic Implications*. Cham: Springer.

■ Fendler & Chang, eds. 2024. *Asia-Africa – Multifaceted Engagement*. New Delhi: Palgrave.

■ Dreiser & Samimi, eds. 2022. *Frontiers in African Digital Research*. Bayreuth, as proceedings of the corresponding conference of the DRE.

■ Hönke, Cezne & Yang, eds. 2024. *Africa's Global Infrastructures*. London: Hurst.

■ Sawadogo-Compaoré et al., eds. 2024. *Genre, société et développe-*

ment en Afrique. Paris: L'Harmattan.

■ Oloko et al., eds. 2023. *Decolonial Aesthetics II*. Berlin/Heidelberg: Metzler.

■ Some, Désiré Boniface. 2022. *Le Terrorisme au Burkina Faso: négocier ou pas?* (Tomes 1–2). Harmattan Burkina Faso.

■ Fayemi & Atin-Atiko, eds. 2023. *African Studies Without Ethics Dumping*. Africa Multiple Project Report.

A defining feature of the Cluster is its integration of artistic practices into research. Through exhibitions, performances, and multimedia outputs, it challenges conventional distinctions between academic and artistic knowledge and engages wider publics.

Key lecture series have also contributed to its impact. The Changing African Idea of Africa and the Future of African Studies (2022–2024), organized with partners in Johannesburg, South Africa, created an important platform for African perspectives. The Intersectionality and Critical Diversity Literacy (ICDL) series, launched in 2019, brought attention to debates that had long been marginalized. The annual New Year Lecture and the Okwui Enwezor Distinguished Lecture in cooperation with Iwalewahaus give insights in vibrant and overall conceptual reflections. In his 2023 New Year Lecture, Ndlovu-Gatsheni outlined key challenges for the field, including the persistence of colonial knowledge systems, the divide between theory and empirical research, the dominance of colonial languages, and the marginalisation of

African women's scholarship. Addressing these challenges remains central to the Cluster's mission.

Since the initial Cluster proposal in 2018, broader developments have reinforced the Cluster's direction. There is increasing recognition of Global South epistemologies and stronger support for the participation of African scholars and institutions. The Cluster's commitment to amplifying African voices is reflected in its Advisory Board of AM 1.0, chaired by Akosua Adomako Ampofo and including scholars such as Alcinda Honwana, Grace Musila, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, and Birgit Meyer. In 2022, the Cluster awarded the BIGSAS honorary doctorate to Senegalese sociologist Fatou Sow in recognition of her contributions to African feminism.

In sum, Africa Multiple has created a distinctive model of collaborative, interdisciplinary, and globally connected research. By combining conceptual innovation with structural change, it has contributed to reshaping African Studies. Building on these achievements, Africa Multiple 2.0 will further develop this agenda, with the aim of strengthening collaborative, equitable, and innovative approaches to knowledge production. Under the canopy of the new research sections Accumulation, Digitalities, Ecologies, In/securities, Re:memobering, and Translating, the multidisciplinary teams of AM 2.0 will comprise members of all Cluster locations to give answers to burning issues and take the reconfiguration of African Studies to new levels. 🌍



The Cluster's activities always give ample opportunities for networking and exchange.



Awaiting the DFG's decision in May 2025: UBT's president Stefan Leible and the spokesperson of the Cluster Rüdiger Seesemann (Photos: Robert Götze)

# Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence Celebrated Among Bavaria's Outstanding Research Clusters

Text **SABINE GREINER**

**On 30 October 2025 the Bavarian government held a reception in Munich honouring Bayreuth's Cluster of Excellence as part of a historic success in Germany's Excellence Strategy.**

The Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth (UBT) has been recognised among Bavaria's leading research initiatives, following the state's unprecedented success in the German Excellence Strategy. All twelve Bavarian Clusters that applied to the programme were successful – a record-breaking achievement that underscores Bavaria's growing strength in science and innovation.

At a ceremony hosted in the Bavarian State Chancellery in Munich, State Minister for Science and the Arts Markus Blume and Minister of State for Federal and European Affairs and the Media Florian Herrmann extended their congratulations to representatives of the successful Clusters. The Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence was represented by Managing Director Franz Kogelmann, Vice Dean of Research Eva Spies, Vice Dean of Early Career and Equal Opportunity Susanne Mühleisen, as well as the Cluster's Principal Investigators Eric Anchimbe, Jana Hönke, and Clarissa Vierke.

Representing the UBT were President Stefan Leible and Vice President for Internationalisation, Gender Equality, and Diversity Nina Nestler, who joined the celebration marking what the ministers called a "historic success" for Bavarian higher education. Minister Blume emphasised that this achieve-

ment "proves that long-term commitment pays off," noting that Bavaria's strong showing reflects years of strategic investment in cutting-edge research and academic excellence.

**A New Phase for African Studies and Research Cooperation Across Continents**

The success in the Excellence Strategy not only secures further support for the Cluster's innovative agenda but also enhances its global visibility. It strengthens Bayreuth's reputation as a hub for transformative research that engages critically with Africa's diverse realities and global entanglements.

For the UBT, and particularly for the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence with its five locations in Bayreuth; Makhanda, South Africa; Eldoret, Kenya; Lagos, Nigeria; and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, this recognition reinforces a leading role in African Studies worldwide. It affirms the Cluster's vision to generate new knowledge about Africa's dynamic presence in the world, from cultural

creativity and social transformations to political, linguistic, and economic innovations. Africa Multiple 2.0 will continue its endeavour to reconfigure African Studies through systematically reflecting on its epistemological foundations and by studying current global challenges and concomitant power dynamics, relationalities, and agencies as they pertain to Africa and the multiple worlds Africa co-constitutes. As the Cluster enters its second funding phase, it will take cooperation between the five participating research centres to a whole new level, continue to expand its networks across disciplines and continents, and deepen its support for early-career scholars.

The UBT and the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence express their gratitude to the Bavarian State Government for its continued support of research and innovation. Together, they look ahead to strengthening excellence, fostering collaboration, and shaping the future of global scholarship from Bayreuth. 🌍



The delegation from the University of Bayreuth at the Bavarian State Chancellery in Munich (f.l.t.r.: Eric Anchimbe, Susanne Mühleisen, Stefan Leible, Franz Kogelmann, Markus Blume, Jana Hönke, Clarissa Vierke, Eva Spies, Nina Nestler) (Photo: Eva Spies)



# Opening of FZA

**Research Centre for Society, Technology and Ecology in Africa Officially Opened in May 2025**

Text: CYRUS SAMIMI, MATTHIAS CHRISTEN, SANDRA CALKINS, MALICK FAYE, EVA SPIES

**In January 2026, the Institute of African Studies (IAS) marked one year since its move into its new building, the Research Centre for Society, Technology, and Ecology in Africa (Forschungszentrum Afrika, FZA). The building was completed**

**on schedule after a two-year construction phase and officially opened on 14 May 2025.**

The move into the FZA was the culmination of extensive preparation and years of collaborative work both within the University of Bayreuth (UBT) and with external partners. The origins of the FZA date back to 2018, when the IAS began preparing a pro-

posal for the joint funding initiative of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Länder, with the Free State of Bavaria serving as the state partner. Work on the pre-proposal and full proposal required close coordination among researchers, administrative units, and external planning partners. Once the proposal received a positive evaluation and funding approval, detailed planning

began, involving university staff, architects, and construction teams. Their combined efforts, supported by substantial financial resources, made it possible to complete an architecturally distinctive and purpose-designed research building within the planned timeframe.

Shortly after the winter break, IAS units relocated in January 2025 from their previously dispersed locations across Bayreuth into the new centre. The only unit that remains outside the campus is Iwalewaha, which continues to operate from the city centre but maintains a presence within the FZA through a dedicated exhibition room. The consolidation of almost all IAS units in one central place brings clear

benefits for interdisciplinary exchange and cooperation. Open creative labs, shared offices, and flexible communal areas were designed to support interaction among researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds and academic status groups. The building also includes modern facilities such as the Media Lab, conference areas, and meeting rooms, which are accessible to the broader university community. These facilities were used to their full extent in the days surrounding the opening, including during the international conference of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence on *Temporalities, Youth (Im)mobilities, and Agencies: Africa on the Move*, 14 to 16 May 2025 (see page 15), demonstrating the building's capacity to host complex academic programmes.

The official opening day was designed to highlight both the academic importance of the IAS and the level of support it receives from the Free State of Bavaria. The programme began in the morning with a formal opening ceremony for invited guests, followed by an Open House in the afternoon and concluding with an evening event featuring live music. The day attracted considerable interest from academics, university staff, students, and citizens of Bayreuth, underscoring the visibility of the IAS and the importance of the new building for the university.

During the morning ceremony, welcome addresses were given by UBT President Stefan Leible, Bavarian State Minister for Housing, Construction





and Transport Christian Bernreiter, and Rolf Dieter Jungk, who in 2025 served as Head of Department in the Bavarian State Ministry of Science, Research, and the Arts and has since been appointed State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology, and Space. All three speakers emphasised the international standing of African Studies at Bayreuth and expressed appreciation for the commitment shown by the IAS over many years.

The second half of the formal ceremony highlighted the planning and construction processes. University Provost Nicole Kaiser, FZA Director Cyrus Samimi, Senior Construction Director Uwe Zeuschel from the Bayreuth State Building Authority, and Liborius Gräßmann, Commercial Director of Markgraf construction company, spoke about the intense phases of planning, the cooperation required across institutional boundaries, and the innovative architectural concept that emerged from these collaborations. Their reflections underscored the importance of sustained coordination and communication in bringing the project to completion on schedule and meeting the functional needs of an interdisciplinary research institute.

A short historical overview of African Studies at Bayreuth was then provided by Akosua Adomako Ampofo from the University of Ghana and Gabriele Sommer, Director of the IAS in 2025. They traced the development of African Studies at UBT over recent decades, highlighting the institute’s long-standing partnerships with African univer-

sities and research institutions. Ampofo emphasised the IAS’s commitment to engaging in research *with* Africa rather than merely *about* Africa, a perspective that has shaped the institute’s academic identity and strengthened its ties with networks across the African continent. She concluded, “When it comes to African Studies, Bayreuth is the place to be,” noting that the new FZA embodies the institute’s collaborative ethos and provides an infrastructure suited to its diverse forms of research and engagement.

Following these academic reflections, the official ceremony concluded with the unveiling of the sculpture *Protective Tree (Schutzbaum)* by artist Ralf Vizethum, created to mark 50 years of African Studies at UBT. Two additional artworks funded by the Bavarian Art at Buildings programme were also presented during the ceremony. The first, *Transmutations* by Nigerian artist Adéṣíṣà Ṣàṣàṣà, is a photographic project that explores psychological transformation through the alchemical principle of *solve et coagula*. The second, *Strained Tail* by Andrew Esiebo, also from Nigeria, forms part of the larger project *Pneumacity: “A Tyre Never Dies”*, a multidisciplinary work tracing the end-of-life journey of tyres in Lagos and their role in shaping the city’s material environment. Both works are now permanently exhibited in the FZA and originally formed part of the opening exhibition *worlds un/making*, curated by Eva Maria Ocherbauer and featuring photographers associated with the FotoFactory.Lagos.

The artistic programme of the opening day featured Les Sœurs Doga, twin sisters Haoua and Azera Doga from Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, known for their dynamic performances and songs primarily in their native language Mooré. Their music often addresses political and social challenges in Burkina Faso, and their performances at the FZA were both vibrant and thematically relevant. Les Sœurs Doga closed the day with a concert in the evening. They performed together with Hamburg-based musician Viktor Marek. The project of the three musicians and performers illustrate the potential of artistic practices to contribute to political discussions and eventually also transdisciplinary research. This was discussed at a roundtable of the Cluster Conference the following day with the participation of Les Sœurs Doga.

The afternoon Open House provided an opportunity for visitors to learn more about the building and the research conducted within the IAS. Guided tours presented the architectural concept and addressed questions about the structure, layout, and construction process. A poster exhibition showcased research projects from colleagues across different academic fields, demonstrating the breadth of topics that fall under the umbrella of African Studies at Bayreuth. These interactions stimulated lively exchanges between researchers and members of the public, reflecting the IAS’s ongoing commitment to outreach and science communication. Interactive activities demonstrated the capabilities of the Media Lab. Another highlight of the afternoon

was a reading by Heisenberg Professor Gilbert Ndi Shang from his book *The Radio and Other Stories*, which added a literary component to the event’s academic and artistic elements. Many international colleagues, already in Bayreuth for the Cluster Conference, also visited the new centre, giving the event a distinctly international atmosphere.

The early months in the new building clearly demonstrated the advantages of co-locating research groups and central services. The Media Lab, meeting spaces, and conference facilities were immediately integrated into ongoing academic activities, and their use during the opening events confirmed the building’s suitability for both small and large-scale academic formats. The opening also spotlighted the advantage of having an exhibition room operated by Iwalewaha in the FZA, because it provides opportunities for intensified collaboration between curatorial and academic work, supporting new forms of public engagement with Africa-focused research.

The consolidation of IAS units within the FZA also contributes to strengthening the institute’s visibility, both within the university and internationally. Concentrating research infrastructures, scholars, and administrative services in one place facilitates communication, supports interdisciplinary collaboration, and enhances the clarity with which the IAS can present its academic profile to partners, visitors, and funding bodies. The strong attendance during the opening and the successful use of the new facilities for



## worlds – un / making

15.05.–11.07.2025

Exhibition space of Iwalewaha at the Research Centre FZA, Campus, University of Bayreuth

The exhibition “worlds – un/making” reflects the FZA’s research program, exploring social, political, economic, and ecological transformation processes and highlighting the resulting practical challenges of the 21st century. The theme outlines the design, imagination, and construction of futures in the 21st century. The analysis and critique of imperialist world-building form the basis for the development of alternative systems. Artists play a central role in this process, as they and their works represent, within the cultural and artistic context, the shaping of worlds through the revival of indigenous cultures and knowledge systems as an alternative to Eurocentric dominance.

Text: Sigrid Horsch-Albert  
Curator: Eva Maria Ocherbauer  
Cooperation: FotoFactory.Lagos, Institute of African Studies (IAS), Iwalewaha, University of Bayreuth

national and international academic events signal promising developments for the coming years.

Overall, the move into the FZA building marks both the successful completion of a major institutional project and the beginning of a new phase for African Studies at Bayreuth. From the preparation of the funding proposals and the planning

of the building to its construction and inauguration, the project represents a coordinated effort across multiple levels of the university and beyond. With its modern facilities, open working environments, and integration of artistic and academic elements, the FZA provides a strong foundation for continued trans- and interdisciplinary research, teaching, and international cooperation. 🌍



Cluster dean Rüdiger Seesemann, minister Christian Bernreiter and President of UBT Stefan Leible (f.l.t.r.) / The discussion shed light on the concept of FZA



The opening of the new research centre was an opportunity for networking and exchange. / Les Soeurs Doga provided the musical framework for the event.



Photos: Robert Götz



Gift Mauluka presenting at the closing conference of the „Intractable Human Rights“ project  
 Photo: David Ikpo

# News from the Chair of African Legal Studies

Text ARISTID BANYURWAHE

**2025 was a special year for the Chair of African Legal Studies at the University of Bayreuth. After five years of institutional development, the year offered an opportunity to reflect collectively on past achievements while also setting new impulses for future endeavours in research and teaching.**

**Conference: Law and Belonging as a Relational Praxis**  
 At the heart of the year stood the international conference *Law and Belonging as a Relational Praxis*, which also served as the central celebration of the Chair's five-year anniversary. The conference took place from 5 to 7 May 2025, and combined an institutional retrospective with lively, forward-looking debates on belonging, law, and power in African and global contexts. Discussions addressed issues of migration and minority rights, sustain-

ability, mineral resource extraction, indigenous epistemologies, citizenship, as well as interdisciplinary perspectives at the intersection of law, sociology, and political science. The Chair was pleased to welcome several distinguished guests, including Tshepo Madlingozi, Commissioner of the South African Human Rights Commission, and Fareda Banda from School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, UK. The strong resonance of the conference confirmed the Chair's role as a space for

critical exchange and international scholarly engagement.

**Conference: Final Project Meeting**  
 Another major milestone in 2025 was the conclusion of the two-year research project *Intractable Human Rights*, marked by a dedicated closing conference in November. The project examined persistent and difficult-to-resolve challenges in human rights protection and critically engaged with the structural limitations of existing legal frameworks. As a key outcome,

the edited volume *Intractable Problems of Human Rights* was published by the Pretoria University Law Press (PULP), and edited by Thoko Kaime and Bonolo Dinokopila. The closing conference also provided a forum for reflection and for the development of ideas for future research initiatives.

**Teaching and Academic Work**  
 Teaching saw consolidation and growth throughout the year. The International Legal Studies (ILS) Programme continued to strengthen its position and again attracted strong student interest. Evaluations reflected sustained enthusiasm for Critical and African Legal Studies. The programme benefited from the involvement of international guest lecturers. Abraham John Hamman from the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, taught Constitutional Law and Constitutionalism in Africa, offering a distinctly Global South and critically reflective view on constitutionalism. Robert Doya Nanima, also from the Faculty of Law at the University of the Western Cape, and a member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, taught Introduction to Public International Law, providing students with valuable insights through a developing world perspective on international law.

For the first time, the ILS Programme also facilitated an internship in co-operation with the Rwandan Institute of Legal Practice and Development



(f.l.t.r.) Professors Tshepo Madlingozi, Thoko Kaime, Joschka Philipps and Alexander Stroh-Steckelberg at the Sociology Colloquium of Summer Semester 2025

(ILPD). In this context, an ILS student was sent to the Rwandan Supreme Court for a four-week internship. The student reported very positively on both the professional and personal experiences gained.

**Featuring Early Career Researchers and Outlook**  
 A further highlight of the year was the Chair's first Essay Writing Competition, organised to support early academics. Students and early-career researchers from African Union member states were invited to submit essays on the theme of "Your Voice in Tackling Human Trafficking in Africa."

The selected contributions were published in an collection edited by Gift Mauluka and Kaime. Among the winning authors was Grace Sitati from Kenya, who joined the Chair in October as part of a new cohort of PhD candidates.

With a successful anniversary conference, the completion of a major research project, and a strengthened teaching profile, 2025 marked an important moment of consolidation and transition for the Chair of African Legal Studies and laid a solid foundation for future work.



Participants of the Conference: Law and Belonging as a Relational Praxis Photo: Philipp Bogensperger



The project „Intractable Human Rights“ held a closing conference in November 2025. Photo: David Ikpo



Text **VICTORIA AMAECHI**

**Africa’s 2025 elections reveal a mixed democratic landscape, where moments of genuine political competition coexist with increasingly sophisticated forms of electoral control that challenge accountability and long-term democratic development.**

The 2025 electoral cycle in Africa presented a compressed depiction of the continent’s democratic state: instances of authentic power alternation existed alongside elections that mostly served to legitimise established authority. Looking at six countries, Guinea, the Central African Republic (CAR), Cameroon, Tanzania, Malawi, and Seychelles, reveals recurring patterns in how elections are structured, contested, and concluded, as well as the implications for democratic institutions and long-term political development.

Although there was no clear restora-

tion to pluralist civilian administration, Guinea’s December 2025 presidential election signalled the official conclusion of the transition that followed the military coup in 2021. Following a constitutional referendum that eliminated obstacles to *junta* involvement, extended presidential terms, and disbanded the independent electoral commission in favour of an executive-controlled Directorate of Elections, General Mamady Doumbouya emerged victorious (86.7%). Opposition parties and civil society described the electoral process as exclusionary, citing prohibitions on protests, media restrictions, and the marginalisation or exile of rival political figures, while international actors applauded the lack of widespread viol-

**Africa’s  
Democratic  
Future:  
Elections  
2025**

ence and the restoration of constitutional form. Thus, the election in Guinea serves as an example of how institutional capture and constitutional engineering can provide electoral calm while undermining accountability and competitiveness.

Elections in the CAR, where Faustin-Archange Touadéra won a third presidential term following the abolition of term limits in a 2023 referendum, followed a similar rationale. Compared to the violence that marred the 2020–2021 elections, the December 2025 votes were noticeably more quiet, indicating better territorial control by the government and its allies. However, political transparency was sacrificed for this stability. Turnout was slightly over 50%, the main opposition abstained from voting, and Touadéra’s 76% triumph was more the result of unfair competition than of widespread engagement. In one of the most vulnerable governments in Africa, reliance on foreign security actors, especially those with

ties to Russia, complicates the democratic picture and raises concerns about accountability, sovereignty, and the viability of security-driven legitimacy.

The October 2025 election in Cameroon demonstrated the limitations of electoralism under long-standing authoritarian governance. At the age of 92, Paul Biya, who has held presidential office since 1982, was proclaimed the winner with 53.7% of the vote. Biya’s effective control over electoral institutions, the exclusion or intimidation of opposition candidates, and the implausible results reported in Anglophone regions afflicted by separatist war all contributed to the process’s lack of credibility. Mass arrests and the use of deadly force against demonstrators were part of the violent post-election crackdown, which exposed a government becoming more and more dependent on force rather than legitimacy. Instead of bringing stability to the political system, the election exacerbated resentment among young people who are unemployed and excluded from politics, raising concerns about an unruly succession.

Tanzania’s 2025 general elections were an example of further advanced electoral authoritarianism. Observers saw advancements in electoral technology and logistics, but these were eclipsed by a politically closed environment. Through arrests, party deregistration, stringent codes of behaviour, and media suspensions, the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party neutralised its principal opponents. Following President Samia Suluhu Hassan’s victory, there was the worst post-election violence in the nation’s history, including reliable accounts of extrajudicial executions and internet outages. Technical efficiency cannot make up for the lack of political liberties and institutional independence, as demonstrated by the African Union Election Observation Mission’s conclusion that the polls did not fulfil continental and international standards.

Against this backdrop, Malawi and the Seychelles stand out as partial coun-

terpoints in this context. Under the constitutionally mandated “50%+1” system, Peter Mutharika won an outright majority in Malawi’s September 2025 elections, resulting in a peaceful transfer of power. The incumbent quickly conceded defeat. The reliability of institutions, especially the court and electoral commission, helped prevent post-election confrontation and reinforced norms of alternation, even though the outcome was mostly determined by economic discontent rather than thematic debate. However, in the absence of further institutional consolidation, worries about unequal media access and campaign finance enforcement highlight how brittle these achievements are.

Perhaps the best example of democratic resilience is found in the Seychelles. The incumbent was defeated and the opposition United Seychelles party peacefully regained power in the 2025 presidential election, which went smoothly from a contested first round to a runoff required by the constitution. The process, which was carried out under active Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) monitoring and with widespread agreement of the outcomes, directed controversial policy issues from environmental governance to cost-of-living pressures, via the legal system, public discourse, and the voting booth rather than through repression. Seychelles shows how reliable institutions, unambiguous electoral laws, and political discipline may convert procedural compliance into substantive legitimacy, even while structural issues still exist.

Across these cases, several themes emerge. First, incumbents and transitional authorities now use constitutional manipulation as a primary instrument to extend their control while upholding a façade of legitimacy. Second, the key factor that distinguishes controlled results from competitive elections is institutional independence, especially that of electoral commissions, courts, and media regulators. Third, even while these tactics run the risk of solidifying marginalisation and potential instability, security and stability narratives are commonly used to defend political closure, particularly in states plagued by conflict. Lastly, the fact that voters continue to cast ballots despite limitations shows that the public’s commitment to electoral democracy remains strong.

Thus, the implications for the advancement of democracy are ambivalent but clear. Elections must be integrated within a larger ecosystem of rights, accountability, and inclusive governance in order to bring about democracy. Regional organisations like the African Union and SADC have a significant role to play, but their legitimacy rests on the regular application of standards rather than the selective support of “peaceful” but exclusive surveys. Africa’s democratic future will depend on preventing the normalisation of constitutional manipulation, bolstering institutional autonomy, and making sure that elections serve as real means for political renewal and choice rather than just ceremonial exercises.



Photos: envato.com



Mercy Onyango and Maureen Karanja cooked Pilau on camera and thereby helped create a great learning opportunity for our students enrolled in the Swahili 4 afriZert language course.



# 2025

## A Year of Growth, Innovation and Encounters for afriZert

Text **CLAUDIA GEBAUER**

**2025 began with a significant change for afriZert: The programme gratefully left its base at Iwalewahauss and moved into the newly built Research Centre for Society, Technology, and Ecology in Africa (FZA) on campus. Walking through the empty rooms, who could imagine how quickly they would fill with creative energy, ideas, and lively exchange.**

For all those who are not yet familiar with afriZert: afriZert is a supplementary study programme offered by the Institute of African Studies (IAS) at the University of Bayreuth (UBT). It is open to all students from Bavarian universities and universities of applied sciences and aims at perceiving and getting to know the African continent in all its diversity: as a diverse

space for discourse, as a home to a wide variety of living and working environments, and in the context of global political, social, and economic interdependencies.

### Securing Our Future

At the beginning of the new year, afriZert prepared its renewal application addressed to the Bavarian State Ministry of Science and the Arts, allowing the programme, if successful, to offer more students the chance to participate in afriZert. After a few weeks of waiting came the wonderful news: funding was extended until summer 2027. And even better: Seventeen new students were able to enrich the programme with fresh perspectives and great enthusiasm in the winter semester 2025/26.

In spring 2025, Felicia Frempong strengthened the team and took over

the administration of the scholarship programme of the Bavarian Youth Exchange Foundation (SJB). Her timing couldn't have been better, as she joined just as hosting the annual workshop in May began, which is a key building block for cross-cultural contextualisation, travel preparation, and critical discussions about perceptions of the African continent.

### Connecting Cultures Through Dialogue

To broaden horizons beyond the diverse realities of African nations, afriZert continued its tradition of small discussion groups led by UBT colleagues from the countries where students spend their academic or professional stay abroad. The afriZert staff are grateful to everyone who has participated in these enriching sessions over the years and look forward to the continuation.

In addition, the workshop offered further inspiring contributions: Elizabeth Horlemann discussed aspects of intercultural communication with students, Julia Schöneberg led a stimulating discussion on the critical consideration of development concepts and perspectives, and UBT physician Katrin Pietschmann-Berr provided the students with important medical advice in preparation for their trips.

### Expanding Linguistic Diversity

Inspired by the dynamics of a productive year, afriZert decided to expand its language offerings. The programme was able to win Klaudia Dombrowsky-Hahn to develop a digital Bambara learning unit for first-time learners: another contribution to our toolbox for afriZert students and particularly relevant for the exchange with West African communities.

### Listening to Students

How does one measure the success of afriZert? By asking students directly. In comprehensive surveys, afriZert received very good marks from students overall. "The mix of face-to-face workshops and asynchronous learning elements allows me to exchange ideas with other students and still be flexible. I particularly like the diversity of afriZert," says Amelie, afriZert student from the 2025/26 cohort. The programme administrators were particularly pleased to learn that all learning content remained easily accessible

both when located in Germany and abroad. The programme is grateful for the constructive criticism, which will initiate important restructuring in the coming months and which will develop afriZert further.

### Creative Content for Language Learning

In addition, two Swahili speakers, Mercy Onyango and Maureen Karanja, were brought in front of the camera to shoot the programme's first Swahili cooking video in the Adalbert Raps Library in Mönchshof, Kulmbach, Germany. While preparing Kenyan pilau and kachumbari, they created an innovative, creative learning tool for the Swahili language course.

### International Networking

In September, afriZert welcomed special guests: Poncelet Ileleji, CEO of Jokkolabs Banjul in The Gambia, and Paddy Kinyera, a former UBT colleague. Study Programme Coordinator Claudia Gebauer participated in the European Interdisciplinary Master African Studies (EIMAS) closing event in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the headquarters of the African Union and at the Goethe Institute. Between the conference sessions, she reconnected with former colleagues and partners from local institutions such as Addis Ababa University, strengthening the networks that make the programme possible.

### Welcoming New Voices

The annual inaugural workshop from 6 to 8 November brought together the seventeen new students with alumni who were invited to discuss the evaluation results of the year. "It was nice to exchange ideas with other former afriZert students and to reflect together on what the additional studies have brought us," shared Jana, afriZert alumna. New students took part in a workshop on the development of critical media literacy, led by Bayreuth International Graduation School of African Studies (BIGSAS) journalism award winner Ruona Meyer and aspiring artist Kharis Ikoko, who enriched the workshop again this year.

### Outlook for 2026

Towards the end of 2025, afriZert celebrated another success: confirmation that the scholarship programme will be continued in 2026. This news came along with a record number of scholarship applications. Students continue to explore diverse environments; for example, university life in Nairobi, Kenya; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; road construction in Tanzania, and work in German embassies across the African continent.

If you would like to learn more about the diverse stays abroad of our students, follow us on Instagram. Here's to an exciting 2026!



In May 2025 we were happy to host our students to prepare their stay abroad during the M4 workshop.



# New Year Lecture 2025: Mirrianne Mahn's Call for Necessary Trouble in Cultural and Political Spaces

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

**On 23 January 2025, activist, author, and Frankfurt city councillor Mirrianne Mahn delivered a lecture that transcended academic debate, focusing on lived political realities and concrete interventions capable of transforming society.**

Entitled *Intersectionality as a Living Practice: Beyond Labels and Boundaries*, her talk marked the sixth annual New Year Lecture organised by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. For the first time in the series' history, the Cluster invited a speaker from outside its academic network – signalling not merely a procedural shift, but a clear statement of intent. Mahn, a Black German woman of Cameroonian heritage, demonstrated that intersectionality is not simply a theory for seminars but a practice that must be lived. Interweaving biographical reflections, political struggles, and literary work, she presented intersectionality as a framework for survival, resistance, and transformation.

## The Roots of Resistance: A Personal Story

Mahn began by reflecting on her upbringing in Germany. Raised by grandparents who believed cultural education was key to success, she was immersed in theatres, museums, and the works of Goethe and Schiller before she fully understood them. Her grandmother once told her that museums reveal “where we come from, who we are, and where we are going.” Years later, Mahn recognises both the power and the contradiction in those words. Museums are also sites of colonial violence and erasure, housing looted artefacts and glorifying histories that excluded people like her.

Questions of race and belonging followed her into adulthood. She recalled her mother's pragmatic question: “Why make your life harder by constantly

arguing with white people?” Her mother's strategy for survival had been silence and endurance. Arriving in Germany pregnant and without speaking the language, she focused on getting by. Mahn chose a different path. Drawing strength from her mother's resilience, she embraced confrontation and change rather than quiet adaptation.

## Claiming Space in Hostile Terrain

For Mahn, intersectionality is not abstract theory; it is the compass guiding her work as a Black woman in German politics, a writer in a largely white publishing industry and a cultural consultant challenging resistant institutions. When she entered Frankfurt's city council as its only Black woman, she encountered what she described as “1990s-style racism”: assumptions about her competence, tone, and legitimacy.

Instead of retreating, she acted. Mahn introduced a motion to ban racial slurs – specifically the “N-word” and the “M-word” – in Frankfurt's schools and public institutions. The backlash was fierce. She was accused of oversensitivity and of undermining tradition. Although the motion ultimately passed in diluted form, the symbolic shift mattered. For Mahn, the achievement lay in refusing to accept a status quo that routinely debates the dignity of marginalised communities.

“Institutional racism doesn't shout from the street,” she observed. “It wears a tie, it wears high heels, and it speaks calmly.” Structural racism, she argued, often hides behind civility and bureaucracy. Its polite tone conceals entrenched exclusion – precisely why intersectional awareness is vital in policymaking.

## Art as Activism, Storytelling as Resistance

Mahn's activism extends beyond political chambers. Her debut novel *Issa*, published in spring 2024, traces a multigenerational story beginning in colonial Cameroon and following five women bound by trauma and resilience.

The novel explores colonialism, racism, and gendered violence while celebrating inherited strength. Writing *Issa* was, in her words, “a desperate act of self-healing.” It enabled her to process her identity as a Black German woman while illuminating histories often marginalised in mainstream literature. Moving between Germany and Cameroon, the novel bridges continents and perspectives. Its success – more than seventy public readings and widespread acclaim – exposed a paradox. Media outlets that praised her literary voice had previously dismissed her activism as “too loud.” Diversity, she noted, is often welcomed when packaged as art but resisted when it directly challenges power. Yet storytelling can reach where debate cannot. Mahn urged the audience to “choose your trouble” – and sometimes that trouble is storytelling.

## Speaking Truth to Power

National attention followed her intervention at the 2021 German Book Prize ceremony honouring Tsitsi Danga-rembga in Frankfurt's Paulskirche. Protesting the presence of far-right publishers at the book fair, Mahn sparked controversy and faced threats severe enough to force her family to relocate. Nevertheless, she stood by her actions. “Inclusion without protection is hollow,” she argued. Her intervention was about accountability, not disruption. Across politics and literature, she views intersectionality as both shield and tool: a means of analysing oppression and dismantling it.

## Reimagining Cultural Narratives

Even within progressive publishing spaces, Mahn has encountered subtle bias – stereotypical cover designs and marketing strategies that exoticised her identity. Representation, she stressed, is not mere visibility but power: who tells stories and who shapes them. Marginalised individuals are often welcomed as performers but excluded from decision-making. True representation means enabling people to narrate



Cluster spokesperson Rüdiger Seesemann with keynote speaker Mirrianne Mahn

their own experiences without distortion. Mahn quoted John Lewis and called on academics, artists, and policy-makers to embrace discomfort, create “necessary trouble” and act without waiting for permission.

## A Global Perspective

Situating her argument historically, Mahn referenced African feminist traditions, particularly Nigerian activist Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, whose anti-colonial organising mobilised thousands of women in the 1940s. Such models, she noted, were marginalised by colonialism and patriarchy yet remain instructive. “Colonialism was a child of patriarchy,” she remarked, linking racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression through shared roots. She concluded with a tribute to the women who shaped her thinking, reminding the audience not to delay recognition. “Let's give people their flowers while they're still with us.”

## Intersectionality as Daily Practice

Mahn's lecture closed on a note both urgent and hopeful. Intersectionality is not a fashionable term or checklist, but a daily commitment. It demands that we connect struggles, confront discomfort, and insist on accountability. In classrooms, cultural institutions, and city halls alike, it must move from theory into lived reality. “We must continue,” she said, “to challenge the status quo and build a more inclusive future – one story at a time.”

# Living Intersectionality



Dissake Endurance at a panel discussion on the second day of the conference

## Navigating Waitthood: African Youth, Temporalities, and the Future at the Cluster's 2025 Annual Conference

Text ANTHONY OKEREGBE,  
SABINE GREINER

**The Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence Annual Conference 2025, held from 14 to 16 May 2025 at the University of Bayreuth (UBT) in the newly opened Research Centre for Society, Technology and Ecology in Africa (FZA) building on campus, convened scholars, artists, and practitioners to explore the theme *Temporalities, Youth (Im)mobilities, and Agencies: Africa on the Move*.**

Bringing together more than 250 international participants both on-site and online, this interdisciplinary conference delved into the complex temporal experiences of African youth, particularly focusing on the concept of “waitthood” – a prolonged period of transition to adulthood characterised by uncertainty and systemic challenges.

### Keynote Address: Navigating the Complexities of Waitthood

The conference commenced on Wednesday evening 14 May with a keynote lecture by Grace Adeniyi-Ogunyankin from Queen's University, Kingston, Canada. Her presentation, entitled *The (Im)possibilities of Waiting: Precarity, Creativity, and Embodied Youth Labour in Africa*, examined how African youth navigate the uncertainties of waitthood. She highlighted how young people strategically utilise breaks in existing

power structures to forge alternative life paths, embracing new forms of self-determination beyond traditional linear life courses. A riveting concert featuring Les Soeurs Doga and DJ Marek closed the concert's inaugural day. Hailing from Burkina Faso, the musicians made perfect use of the new FZA space and greatly enriched the conference's cultural dimensions.

### Diverse Panels and Roundtables: Exploring Youth Agency and Temporalities

The beginning of the second conference day saw a roundtable with discussions on transdisciplinary approaches and collaborative research, as implied in the broader reflections on the conference's structure. It brought together perspectives from Europe and Africa. This roundtable featured, among others, the musicians from the opening night, and addressed the challenges and potentials of fostering collaborative scholarship bridging disciplinary boundaries and geographic divides, with an emphasis on creating more inclusive and critically engaged research paradigms.

Subsequently, the conference featured twelve thematic panels, each offering unique insights into the lived experiences of African youth. This diverse range of panels explored various dimensions of African youth temporalities, mobilities, and agencies. One of

the central discussions focused on migration as a form of waitthood, highlighting how young Africans navigate uncertain journeys across cities and regions in search of opportunity, often finding themselves trapped in prolonged states of liminality. Another panel explored the language of youth engagement, investigating how communication strategies and generational discourses shape youth participation in governance and activism.

Themes of continuity and transformation emerged in the panel on African knowledge traditions, which examined how indigenous epistemologies persist and evolve in contemporary contexts, particularly through youth reinterpretations. The panel on social movements and temporalities analysed how youth-led movements challenge dominant narratives of time and development, creating new temporal logics of resistance and solidarity. In a forward-looking exploration, the post-waitthood futures panel speculated on how youth trajectories might unfold in the near and distant future, offering critical insights into what comes after prolonged transitions. The panel on emerging moralities addressed how rapid social change is giving rise to new ethical frameworks among youth, often caught between traditional values and neoliberal influences.

Another key area of discussion was

how youth identities and languages intersect in multilingual societies, with participants examining how language becomes a tool for both belonging and resistance. The “glocal crises” panel looked at how global challenges such as climate change and economic instability intersect with local realities, shaping the futures of African societies and their youth.

Historical memory featured prominently in the panel that revisited the legacies of Biafra, where intergenerational trauma and historical consciousness were unpacked through the lens of affective temporalities. The panel on popular cultures and religion illuminated how youth engage with music, media, and spiritual practices to forge identities and articulate agency in rapidly changing environments.

A case study of political mobilisation was offered in the Kenyan youth protest panel, which analysed the “Ruto Must Go” movement as a dynamic example of youth political engagement and state contestation. Lastly, the navigating waitthood panel returned to the conference's core theme, exploring how African youths experience and respond to the entangled pressures of systemic delay, structural exclusion, and precarious futures.

Closing this year's conference agenda, the roundtable convened by Christine Vogt-William, Director of the Cluster's Gender and Diversity Office, created a space for imagining African futurist visions through transgenerational Black feminist and Afro-feminist perspectives. The session explored the gendered dimensions of waitthood and youth agency. While gender was not a central theme across most panels, this discussion underscored the significance of intersectional feminist frameworks in shaping alternative futures and in illuminating how young people navigate temporal and socio-political structures from marginalized positions.

Additionally, a vernissage was held on 14 May for the exhibition *The Tree of Oblivion: Transatlantic Memorial Echoes*. The presentation is part of a Cluster project

and brings together sound and visual fragments from Togo and Benin, enabling an immersion in the memorial echoes of the transatlantic slave trade.

### Concluding Reflections: Bridging Scholarship and Experience

In his concluding speech, Anthony Okeregbe, Annual Theme Fellow from the African Cluster Centre at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, emphasised the conference's role in fostering dynamic exchanges on youth temporalities and mobilities. He highlighted the critical examination of waitthood, not as a passive condition but as a complex

temporal state fostering both negative and creative agencies. Okeregbe also noted the under-representation of youth among panellists, prompting reflections on who defines youth and how youthhood is conceptualised in Africa. He underscored the importance of North-South collaborations in enriching discussions and perspectives. For him, the conference's cultural events, such as the concert and the vernissage, symbolised the bridging of gaps between scholarship and lived experience, emphasising the need for academic detachment to give way to interpersonal engagement. 



The Cluster's spokesperson Rüdiger Seesemann and Advisory Board Chair Akosua Adomako Ampofo at the conference



Grace Adeniyi-Ogunyankin (right) held the inaugural keynote lecture on African youth.



The international conference fostered interesting debate and insightful exchange.

Photos: Robert Götze





## Connecting Disciplines and Perspectives: IAS events at UBT

Text and photos MALICK FAYE

**At the University of Bayreuth (UBT), the Institute of African Studies (IAS) organised events in 2025 that connected academic perspectives with practical engagement. An interactive student information event and a series of diversity workshops with the City of Bayreuth created spaces for exchange, learning, and institutional collaboration.**

African Studies at the University of Bayreuth (UBT) extend far beyond language and cultural studies. In addition to the humanities and social sciences, the university offers Africa-related teaching and research in the life sciences, health sciences, engineering, economics, political science, law, geography, and climatology. This interdisciplinary breadth represents a distinctive feature of the university's academic profile.

### African Studies @UBT

Against this background, the event *African Studies @UBT* took place on 20 November 2025 at the Research Centre for Society, Technology and Ecology in Africa (FZA) building. The event was designed to present the diversity of African Studies at the UBT and to provide information on study and

exchange opportunities with an Africa focus. It was aimed at BA and MA students and served as a low-threshold orientation format for those interested in Africa-related academic pathways.

The programme followed an open and interactive format combining short lectures, opportunities for direct exchange, and a study fair featuring the International Office and the Botanical Garden. Brief presentations introduced Africa-related study tracks from a range of disciplines and highlighted their thematic focuses and possible study trajectories. The event concluded with a guided tour of the Media Lab. *The African Studies @UBT* format highlights opportunities for outreach beyond the university context, including potential engagement with schools.

**City of Bayreuth Workshops: Diversity as a Challenge in the Workplace** Since 2023, the City of Bayreuth and the University of Bayreuth have been cooperating under the coordination of the IAS to promote diversity awareness and discrimination-sensitive practices in administrative contexts. A central aim of this cooperation is to strengthen competencies for dealing with diversity in everyday working environments within both municipal and university structures.

As part of this cooperation, two workshops were held: *Diversity as a Challenge in the Workplace* in March 2025 and *Diversity in the Workplace: Opportunities and Challenges* in November 2025. The workshops were aimed at administrative staff from the city and the university, particularly employees in academic support roles, and were organised by the Department for Social Affairs, Integration, Housing, and Inclusion of the City of Bayreuth and the Diversity Service Centre of the University of Bayreuth.

The workshops led by Lorenz Narku Laing from the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Bochum, Germany, combined theoretical input with practice-oriented methods. Participants explored key concepts of discrimination research and reflected on how structural and institutional forms of discrimination continue to operate in administrative settings. Building on this foundation, interactive elements such as identity-based exercises, case study discussions, and action-oriented group work were used to develop concrete strategies for discrimination-critical action. The workshops provided a protected space for exchange and reflection and form part of an ongoing process that will be continued in future formats.

# Between Resource Hunger and Responsibility

## Review of the 2025 Africa Talks in Hohenheim

Text CHRISTOPH HELBIG,  
MALICK FAYE

**Copper, cobalt, lithium: Africa's resources are powering the global energy transition – but at what cost? The 2025 Africa Talks in Hohenheim explored the tensions between climate action, geopolitical interests, and social responsibility, asking how truly equitable partnerships can succeed.**

The African continent is once again at the centre of global interest. Yet today the focus is no longer primarily on gold or ivory, but on the materials underpinning the global energy and mobility transition: copper, cobalt, platinum, and lithium. Under the title *Resource Policy in and Around Africa – Challenges and Opportunities*, the 2025 Africa Talks, held from 5 to 7 December in Stuttgart-Hohenheim, examined a pressing question: How can Africa expand its role in global supply chains without sacrificing environmental integrity and social justice?

In the opening session, Godelive Bataño and Christoph Helbig outlined the core dilemma. The world relies on African raw materials for climate technologies, yet extraction often occurs under precarious social and ecological conditions. Is a new form of "green co-

lonialism" emerging, in which the Global North externalises the costs of decarbonisation to the Global South? This question shaped the debates throughout the weekend.

Saturday began with a fact-based assessment. Jürgen Vasters from the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources provided an overview of critical materials, followed by insights into bauxite mining in Guinea presented by Penda Diallo. The discussion made clear that geological scarcity is rarely the central issue; rather, governance structures, regulatory frameworks, and political stability determine outcomes.

Johannes Knierzinger addressed the geopolitical dimension, showing how African states increasingly navigate between China and the European Union. While the risk of new dependencies is tangible, so too is the opportunity for African governments to assert greater control and demand local value creation. Thérèse Mema Mapenzi shared her personal experience of persecution after exposing sexual violence in eastern Congo, underscoring the human cost embedded in resource extraction. Meike Schulze emphasised the need for strong civil society actors and binding regulations, while Martin Kofi Mensah highlighted local training ini-

tiatives aimed at addressing mining legacies and confronting Europe's colonial past.

A cultural highlight was the screening of Johannes Meier, Philipp Sandner, and Jan-Philipp Scholz's 2024 documentary *Operation Africa: The Race for Tomorrow's Resources*, which translated abstract supply chains into lived realities and deepened the collective reflection.

Sunday focused on possible pathways forward. Willi Haas and Hendrik Schnittker discussed the potential of circular economy strategies. The conclusion was clear: the dilemma cannot be resolved through "better mining" alone. Europe and other industrialised regions must reduce their resource consumption through recycling, efficiency, and structural transformation.

The closing discussion reaffirmed that there are no simple solutions. However, the conference demonstrated that sustained dialogue between academia, civil society, and policymakers is essential. Africa is not merely a supplier of raw materials, but a central actor in shaping a global transformation. For Europe, this implies rethinking consumption patterns and practicing partnerships based on technological and political equity rather than rhetorical commitment.



Photos: Diözese Rottenburg/Stuttgart



The longstanding Africa Talks in Hohenheim brought together a diverse group of participants.





# Africa Talks Environment

## A Successful Collaboration of the BAdW and Africa Multiple

Text **SABINE GREINER, DORIS LÖHR**  
Photos **KAI NEUNERT**

**Held in November 2025 at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Munich, this interdisciplinary conference – co-organised with the Cluster of Excellence – brought together international scholars to rethink environmental change across Africa.**

Set up as a one-day interdisciplinary network conference, *Africa Talks Environment* was held on 19 November 2025 at the historic Munich Residence, hosted by the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BAdW) and co-organised by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. The event combined two complementary formats: an English-language academic workshop during the day and a public evening lecture in German by the Kenyan scholar and activist Auma Obama, designed to reach a broader audience. The conference also marked the beginning of a prospective long-term collaboration between the BAdW and the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence.

During the day, the international and interdisciplinary group of scholars discussed environmental transformations across the African continent, from the social effects of changing rainfall patterns to the cultural dimensions of land use and the political economies that shape responses to environmental stress.

Presentations explored how ecological change intersects with questions of governance, migration, food security, and indigenous knowledge systems. The symposium sought to situate African environmental issues within global frameworks while resisting the tendency to universalise western models of sustainability.

The conference opened with welcome addresses by Markus Schwaiger, President of the BAdW, and Rüdiger Seesemann, Dean of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth (UBT). Opening remarks by Lisa Hülsmann and Eric Anchimbe, both from UBT, outlined the aims of the conference and emphasised its interdisciplinary scope.



UBT president Stefan Leible with keynote speaker Auma Obama

The first roundtable, chaired by Eveline Sawadogo-Compaoré from the University Joseph Ki-Zerbo (UJKZ), Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, focused on resources and environmental justice. Starting from Africa's long-standing characterisation as a continent rich in "natural resources," the discussion examined historical and contemporary extractive projects, including those linked to the green energy transition, and their social and environmental consequences. Contributions were made by Lesley J. F. Green from the University of Cape Town, South Africa; Shadrach Kerwillain from the Rachel Carson Centre, Ludwig Maximilians University (LMU) Munich; Nelson Odume from Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa; and Cyrus Samimi from UBT.

< Participants and panellists of the academic workshop

The second roundtable on agriculture and innovation, chaired by Ben Kirby from UBT, addressed the growing risks to agricultural production posed by erratic rainfall, drought, heat, extreme climate events, and biological threats. The session explored adaptive strategies, technological and social innovations, and ongoing challenges across the African continent. Speakers included Sandra Calkins from UBT; Moses Chundu from the Africa Leadership and Management Academy, University of Zimbabwe; Sawadogo-Compaoré from UJKZ; and Jimmy Moses Tindamanyire from Kabale University, Uganda.

The final roundtable focused on biodiversity loss and restoration was chaired by Hülsmann. The discussion examined how industrial agriculture, deforestation, climate change, pollution, and invasive species have contributed to global biodiversity decline, with particular attention to debates and contested approaches to ecological restoration in Africa. The panel brought together Bram Büscher from Wageningen University, The Netherlands; Steve Higgins from UBT; Camille Jahel of the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), Montpellier, France; Charles Kilawe from the Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania; and Maano Ramutsindela from the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

All participants enjoyed the lively discussions and the networking character, identifying regional synergies via the meeting in the Global North. Panellists emphasised that African Studies – particularly in its environmental focus – is moving increasingly to the centre of academic debates, not as a peripheral field but as a key site for understanding the future of global climate policy. The conversation throughout the day repeatedly returned to the need for research partnerships that acknowledge expertise across continents and challenge longstanding hierarchies in knowledge production.

The day concluded with a public evening lecture by Obama, with a welcome by the host Schwaiger, followed by an introduction of the speaker by Stefan Leible, President of UBT.

Obama – an alumna of the University of Bayreuth, where she earned her PhD in 1996 – delivered her keynote lecture, *The Bull in the China Shop – How External Interventions Affect African Agriculture and its Sustainability* (*Der Elefant im Porzellanladen – Wie externe Eingriffe die afrikanische Landwirtschaft und ihre Nachhaltigkeit beeinflussen*) in German. She described decades of external interventions in African agriculture as a "bull in a china shop" – a force that, despite good intentions, often disrupts the systems it aims to support. She argued that international political and economic agendas continue to shape agricultural policies across African countries, frequently sidelining the knowledge of local farmers, communities, and researchers.

As the day concluded, the significance

of this emerging alliance became clear. With environmental pressures intensifying across the globe, the institutions behind the conference argue that a new model of knowledge exchange is needed – one that treats Africa not as an object of policy intervention but as a full partner in shaping global environmental futures. Obama's closing message captured the spirit of that ambition. Sustainable agriculture, she insisted, cannot be built from afar. It must take root in the lived realities of those who tend the land. For international actors, the challenge may now be to step more carefully, listen more intently and begin constructing partnerships that respect the fragile – yet resilient – systems they hope to support.

Following this successful start, the co-operation between the BAdW and the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence is set to be continued through annual meetings at alternating locations, further strengthening long-term academic exchange and collaboration.



A recording of Obama's keynote can be found here:





# Cinema Africa Festival 24/25

## A Festival in Extended Focus

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

**Curated by Ute Fendler, the 16th Cinema Africa Festival in Bayreuth unfolded from October 2024 to January 2025, combining monthly screenings with a four-day finale at Cineplex Bayreuth and placing filmmakers and performers in direct conversation with audiences.**

Film festivals are usually built around compression: a few intense days, a crowded schedule, and little time between screenings. The 16th edition of *Cinema Africa* in Bayreuth took a different approach. Rather than being confined to a single festival week, it stretched across several months, beginning in October 2024 and concluding with a concentrated January 2025 programme. That extended structure altered the rhythm of the festival

without changing its central ambition: to present contemporary African cinema in ways that foreground both the films themselves and the conversations around them.

Curated by Ute Fendler, Deputy Spokesperson of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and specialist in African film studies, and organised within the framework of the Cluster at the University of Bayreuth (UBT), the festival opened in October with two films from Madagascar, immediately setting out the breadth of its interests. *Disco Afrika – A Malagasy Story* (2023), directed by Luck Razanajaona, follows Kwame, a young man working in Madagascar's illegal sapphire mines who returns to his home town and confronts corruption, political struggle, and the lingering effects of colonial history. The film ties an individual story to wider questions of resistance

and postcolonial disillusionment. It was paired with *Zaho Zay*, a 2020 docu-fiction by Maéva Ranaivojaona and Georg Tiller, written by Jean-Luc Raharimanana, a more elusive and formally hybrid work that moves between documentary, fiction, and poetic reflection. At that screening, Ranaivojaona and Raharimanana were present for the discussion afterwards, giving the opening event a distinctly dialogic tone.

The November instalment shifted the festival's geography and mood. *Dilli Dark* (2025), directed by Dibakar Das Roy, follows Michael Okeke, a Nigerian student trying to build a life in New Delhi while being pushed into a double existence. The film's setting in India widened the festival's scope beyond straightforward continental frameworks, bringing migration, racialisation, and precarious belonging into view in

the relation between Africa and India. Significantly, the Bayreuth screening was accompanied by Samuel Abiola Robinson, the film's Nigerian lead actor, whose presence added another layer to the discussion around performance and the social pressures the film dramatises.

In December came *Black Tea* (2024) by Abderrahmane Sissako, the first fiction film on China-Africa relations: a romantic drama centred on Aya, an Ivorian woman who leaves for Guangzhou, China, and begins a relationship with a man she meets while working in a tea shop. The film moves away from overt political confrontation and instead explores intimacy, migration, and cultural negotiation across continents. Its inclusion in the programme broadened the festival's register again, pointing to transnational African experience rather than a narrowly territorial understanding of African cinema.

Running from 26 to 29 January 2025, the January finale brought the programme into sharper focus with four films shown over consecutive evenings. *Goodbye Julia* (2023), directed by Mohamed Kordofani, examines the relationship between two Sudanese women divided by class, culture, and a concealed act of violence. The film connects personal guilt to wider

national tensions, avoiding clear resolution. Kordofani's presence at the screening grounded these themes in a broader reflection on responsibility and social fracture.

With *Nome* (2024), director Sana Na N'Hada returned to Guinea-Bissau's war of independence, but from the perspective of its aftermath. The film traces the trajectory of a young revolutionary whose certainties give way to disillusionment, using archival material to underscore its reflective tone. N'Hada's participation in the discussion shifted attention towards memory and the complexities of representing liberation on screen, and critically addressed the legacy of independence.

*The Village Next to Paradise*, a feature film from 2024 directed by Mo Harawe, offered a quieter counterpoint. Set in rural Somalia, it follows a family negotiating economic precarity, environmental instability, and the distant presence of drone warfare. The film's observational style avoids narrative escalation, allowing structural pressures to emerge indirectly. Harawe's presence at the festival reinforced the film's attention to detail and its balance between local experience and global context.

Finally, 2023's *The Wall Street Boy* by Charles Uwagbai introduced a more overtly narrative-driven story, follo-

wing a Kenyan mathematics prodigy whose financial success draws him into international circuits of capital. While more conventional in structure, the film raises questions about mobility, innovation, and unequal access within a globalised economy. *The Wall Street Boy* is a Canadian-Kenyan co-production by a Nigerian filmmaker which brings to the forefront the impact of international productions on film genres and aesthetics.

Across the programme, the presence of filmmakers and actors was an integral part of the festival's structure. The rather intimate atmosphere of the festival allows reflective exchanges on production, storytelling, and distribution, and anchored the screenings in specific regional and socio-political contexts.

The festival primarily features recent films that have already won awards and often set new trends and address critical issues. The monthly screenings focused on relationships between Africa and Asia. During the final festival week, debut films such as *Goodbye Julia* and *A Village Next to Paradise* shed light on countries and histories that rarely produce films, such as Sudan and Somalia. Guinea-Bissau is also rarely represented at festivals. In addition, the event commemorated Guinea-Bissau's 50th anniversary of independence. 🇬🇼



Impressions from the Cinema Africa Festival





# BAYMAU25

## Simulating Africa's Future in a Changing World

Text **KIBOUNI KONÉ**

**BAYMAU25 at the University of Bayreuth brought together participants to debate Africa's role in a shifting global landscape – fostering diplomacy, dialogue, and new perspectives.**

From 23 to 27 April 2025, the University of Bayreuth (UBT) hosted the *Model African Union Conference (BAYMAU25)*, organised by the student association Model African Union (MAU) Bayreuth. This year's conference brought together students, academics, and practitioners under the theme *Africa and the Shifting Geopolitical Landscape: Tackling Insecurities and Seizing Opportunities in a Multipolarising World*. Over five days, participants engaged in committee simulations, keynote sessions, workshops, and cultural events that highlighted Africa's role in global affairs. The conference provided a platform

for young people to engage with African issues in a realistic and solution-oriented way. Through committee debates, keynote speeches, and interactive workshops, BAYMAU25 brought together diverse perspectives and fostered a spirit of collaboration, diplomacy, and cultural exchange.

### Opening Ceremony

The conference began with an opening ceremony attended by representatives of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, with Rüdiger Seesemann, spokesperson of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, with Stefan Ouma, Deputy Director of the IAS. Distinguished keynote speakers set the tone for the days ahead. Among them were Stella Mokaya Orina, Ambassador of Kenya to Germany, and Salah S. Hammad, Head of the Secretariat of the African Governance Architecture of the African Union (AU). Their speeches highlighted both the chal-

lenges and the opportunities facing African states in a multipolarising world, from navigating shifting global alliances to addressing security, governance, and economic resilience. Amzat Boukari-Yabara's opening keynote on the topic *Roadmap to a United and More Robust Pan-African Front in the Global Scene* revisited the idea of Pan-Africanism under current power shifts and reasserted the need for Africa to craft its potential.

BAYMAU25 complemented the political and academic programme with cultural events. An art exhibition featuring Sabelo Mcinziba's curated photo essay exhibition, *(With) These Hands*, at the opening of the conference in addition to social gatherings created opportunities for informal dialogue and cross-cultural appreciation. The gala night, a highlight of the week, celebrated African music in its diversity.

< The BAYMAU2025 participants and guests

### Workshops and Panel Discussions

Workshops such as *Regional (Dis)integration in Africa* by Diana Kisakye and *Planetary Health Risks in Africa – Adapting Health Systems*, *Achieving Climate Justice* by Melvine Otieno equipped participants with analytical tools and broadened their understanding beyond the committee simulations. Ouma's workshop on *Africa and the Shadow of the Global Far Right* was impactful, connecting African futures to global ideological shifts. In the workshop on *Exposure, Reception, and Response to Information Flows Amidst Sociopolitical Turmoil* with Saïkou Oumar Sagnane, participants discussed and practiced how individuals deal with Information under specific socio-political contexts. These sessions not only provided academic grounding but also encouraged delegates to think creatively about long-term implications of policy-making.

The first panel, *From Dependency to Strategic Autonomy: Strengthening Africa's Economic Sovereignty for Regional Integration and Collective Prosperity*, examined how African states can move beyond structural dependency toward genuine economic sovereignty. Moderated by Fiona Faye, the discussion featured Samuel Ojo Olorunfoba, Mehari Taddele Maru, and Tin Hinane El Kadi. The panellists explored the urgent need to reduce reliance on external financing and trade imbalances, while promoting stronger regional integration through instruments like the African Continental Free Trade Area. The second panel, *Forging Africa's Path: Toward a Development Paradigm Aligned with Domestic Needs in Africa*, shifted the focus to development models and their alignment with African realities. Moderated by Pedro Affonso Ivo Franco, with contributions from Seyi Adisa, Cynthia Chigwenya, and Jane Ayeko-Kümmeth, the discussion highlighted the limitations of external aid frameworks that often impose priorities disconnected from local contexts.

Students take on the role of African Union delegates. >

### Committee Sessions

At the core of BAYMAU25 were the committee sessions, modelled on the AU's specialised technical committees (STC). Delegates represented AU member states and debated pressing issues through position papers, negotiations, and draft resolutions. This year's committees included:

The STC on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration focused on food self-sufficiency, economic sovereignty, and regional integration. Its resolution called for a "Made in Africa" certification to strengthen intra-African trade, the removal of 90% of intra-African tariffs and non-tariff barriers, and concrete agronomic and climate adaptation strategies to enhance resilience. The resolution urged investments in transport, energy, and digital infrastructure, supported by public-private partnerships and collaboration with the African Development Bank.

The STC on Education, Science and Technology adopted a resolution establishing the African Leadership Exchange Programme (ALEP). This initiative aims to create an AU-wide mobility and exchange system for students, educators, and researchers, with special emphasis on marginalised groups such as rural youth, women, and those from conflict-affected regions. ALEP envisions scholarships, training hubs,

and a Pan-African Qualifications Framework to harmonise degrees and facilitate professional mobility.

### Sponsors and Support

The 2025 MAU Bayreuth conference was made possible through the generous financial and logistical support of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, which has been a longstanding partner of the association. Additional funding was kindly provided by Bread for the World (*Brot für die Welt*) and the UBT'S University Club (*Universitätsverein*). MAU would also like to express our gratitude to the Chair of Political Geography at UBT for its financial contribution and assistance with logistical arrangements.

### Outcomes and Reflections

BAYMAU25 succeeded in cultivating leadership skills among participants such as public speaking, negotiation, and cross-cultural communication, while deepening awareness of Africa's complex realities. For many, it was both a learning experience and a call to action to engage more actively with global affairs. The BAYMAU25 conference affirmed the growing importance of student-led diplomacy simulations in bridging knowledge gaps. By combining academic rigour, diplomatic practice, and cultural exchange, the MAU Bayreuth continues to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Africa's role in global politics. 





## Creative Encounters in Bayreuth Schools:

# Comics, Music, and Film in 2025

Text DORIS LÖHR

**From Afro-Brazilian comics to Mozambican music and powerful film dialogue – 2025 brought the world into Bayreuth classrooms, inspiring students to rethink culture, identity, and connection.**

Throughout 2025, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence deepened its engagement with schools in Bayreuth through a series of creative encounters that brought research, art, and intercultural dialogue into the classroom. Renowned artists from the African and Afro-diasporic worlds worked directly with pupils, encouraging reflection on identity, history, and cultural exchange.

### **Afro-Brazilian Mythology Through Comics: Hugo Canuto**

In mid-May 2025, Brazilian comic artist Hugo Canuto led a series of creative workshops at three Bayreuth schools: Fachoberschule/Berufsober-schule Bayreuth (FOSBOS), Markgräfin Wilhelmine Gymnasium (MWG), and Mittelschule Bayreuth-Altstadt.

Organised in collaboration with the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and the Project Learning and Resource Platform Africa (PLURA), the workshops involved schoolchildren from grades 6, 7, and 11.

Canuto, widely known for his *Tales of the Orishas*, a comic series reimagining West African Yoruba deities within the Afro-Brazilian context, was invited to Bayreuth as part of the Africa Multiple workshop *From Oblivion to Memory: Transatlantic Memorial Echoes*. His visit was connected to a team project led by Ute Fendler under the research focus *Black Atlantic Revisited*, and to an accompanying exhibition at Iwalewahaush on 15 May.

During the school sessions, students explored African Diasporic heritage through visual storytelling, stepping outside traditional classroom routines. Canuto introduced the orixás – goddesses and deities from the West African Yoruba religious tradition whose legacies remain central to Brazilian culture – and guided students in translating mythological

narratives into contemporary comic art.

The response was overwhelmingly positive. “It was amazing to learn about the orixás and to see how myth and art can tell stories that aren’t in our textbooks,” one student commented. Teacher Katrin Wittenbeck from FOSBOS highlighted the workshop’s impact, noting that final-year students preparing for their Practical Design exams found it especially encouraging to receive professional feedback from an internationally recognised artist. An Erasmus exchange group from Turkey also took part, describing Canuto’s session as one of the highlights of their visit. At MWG, art teacher Stefan Mayer emphasised how strongly the workshops motivated and inspired younger pupils.

### **Music, Movement, and Cultural Exchange: Matchume Zango**

In July 2025, Mozambican musician Matchume Zango returned to Bayreuth in a dual role: as a performer at the Afrika-Karibik Festival where he collaborated with musicians from



Matchume Zango, Mo Asumang and Hugo Canuto engaged with pupils sharing with them their respective artistic voices: music, film, and comic art.  
Photos: Robert Götze

South Korea, Madagascar, and Mozambique in a concert that was met with great enthusiasm, and as a visiting artist in local schools. As an IAS Guest, Zango also engaged with academics participating in Cluster programmes. Following the festival, Zango led several workshops at FOSBOS, MWG, and Altstadtschule, working with pupils from diverse grade levels and backgrounds, including exchange students from Ukraine, Russia, Syria, and Bosnia. Together, they discussed cultural values, danced, sang, and played a variety of musical instruments that Zango had brought with him, especially the wooden xylophone timbila. Students and teachers alike responded with strong interest and appreciation, expressing a desire to continue integrating these musical and cultural practices into secondary school education in Bayreuth.

### **Film, Dialogue, and Courageous Conversations: Mo Asumang**

The series of school-related collaborations concluded in November 2025 with the visit of filmmaker and activist

Mo Asumang as guest of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, who hosted screening of her award-winning 2014 documentary *The Aryans (Die Arier)* at the Research Centre for Society, Technology and Ecology in Africa (FZA) of the University of Bayreuth (UBT), once for a wider academic audience and once exclusively for school children. It was Asumang’s third visit to Bayreuth, as Doris Löhr pointed out in her words of welcome.

The screening on 11 November was followed by a well-attended open dialogue with the film director and formed part of the *AfriKaleidoskop* series, which foregrounds African and Afro-diasporic perspectives through film. Moderated by Natasha A. Kelly, Professor of Global African Arts and Director of Iwalewahaush, the evening addressed sensitive but urgent questions surrounding racism, right-wing extremism, and social responsibility.

In *The Aryans*, Asumang confronts racist ideologies head-on, exploring what draws individuals to extremist

groups while opening spaces for dialogue and reflection. Her work seeks to dismantle fear and demonstrate that humanity and empathy can overcome hatred. For her sustained commitment to social justice and democratic values, Asumang has received numerous accolades, including the German Federal Order of Merit.

The following morning, Kirstin Wolf from the Centre for Global Learning UBT and Asumang invited 450 pupils from five schools to a screening of *The Aryans* at the Cineplex cinema in Bayreuth. The students (aged 12 and above) engaged actively with the film, asking numerous questions and contributing to lively discussions. Both events invited the audiences not only to learn, but to reflect on prejudice, civic responsibility, and the role each individual plays in fostering an open and democratic society. With its focus on dialogue and education, *AfriKaleidoskop* continues to serve as a platform that connects cultural learning with social and political engagement, particularly for young people, students, and the wider public. 





African Studies scholars with an affiliation to UBT enjoy ECAS 2025.

# From Bayreuth to Prague

**Strengthening International Networks at the European Conference of African Studies 2025**

Text **DORIS LÖHR**

Photo **BIRUK TERREFE**

**The 10th European Conference of African Studies (ECAS) 2025 in Prague, Czechia, African, Afropean, and Afropolitan – Belongings and Identities marked 20 years of African Studies exchange and bringing global scholars together. The University of Bayreuth (UBT) stood out with strong, interdisciplinary contributions.**

The 10th European Conference on African Studies (ECAS), held from 25 to 28 June 2025 at Charles University, Prague, Czechia, marked a significant moment for the field, not least because it coincided with the 20th anniversary of the ECAS conference series. Organised by the Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies (AEGIS), the conference convened a large and diverse body of scholars under the theme African, Afropean, and Afropolitan – Belongings and Identities. The hybrid conference highlighted key debates on identity, mobility, and knowledge transformation, placing African Studies within global, interconnected frameworks. It featured great keynotes, and over 250 panels covering topics from decolonial theory and identity to politics, culture, economics, environment, and digital methods.

Among the most visible institutional

contributors was the University of Bayreuth (UBT), whose long-standing commitment to interdisciplinary African Studies was reflected in a wide range of panels and presentations. Scholars affiliated with the Institute of African Studies (IAS), the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, the Chair for Sociology in Africa, or the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) played a vital role in shaping discussions across multiple thematic streams, complemented by Bayreuth alumni and former Fellows.

Panels explored Afropolitanism and evolving forms of urban belonging in Africa, showing how identities are shaped through digital media, mobility, and cultural production. Examples from the continent highlighted networked, less place-bound notions of citizenship. Bayreuth's contributions also addressed governance, conflict, and political change, using ethnographic, practice-oriented approaches to emphasise context-sensitive analysis. In cultural and literary studies, scholars examined African and Afropean literature, performance, and visual arts as sites of memory, identity, and postcolonial critique, underscoring how artists challenge dominant epistemologies and offer alternative narratives.

The Africa Multiple Cluster's contri-

butions advanced meta-theoretical and methodological debates, focusing on epistemic plurality, decolonising knowledge production, and foregrounding African intellectual traditions. Panels discussed “multiple modernities” and “entangled histories,” exploring Africa-Europe interdependencies, as well as digital transformations shaping economies, politics, and social life. Further contributions by early scholars on climate adaptation, youth cultures, digital entrepreneurship, and resource governance showcased the strength of Bayreuth's research and training environment.

Beyond the formal programme and academic exchange, ECAS 2025 functioned as a crucial site of network-building. The participants actively engaged in discussions on future collaborative projects, thus strengthening the Africa Multiple Cluster's international partnerships and networks. Informal interactions during cultural activities, exhibitions, and evening events, including a boat dinner while cruising on the Vltava, contributed to an atmosphere of intellectual openness and exchange. The staffed book booth exhibiting Cluster-related publications, working papers, and flyers became a lively meeting point and increased the international visibility of UBT's African Studies.



**African Studies Centres Worldwide:**

# Building South-South Partnerships

Participants at the workshop in Dakar.  
Photo: Ute Fendler

Text **UTE FENDLER**

**In June 2025, the Cluster of Excellence Africa Multiple convened an international workshop at UCAD in Dakar bringing together scholars from African Studies centres in Africa, Asia, South America and Europe. The meeting provided a platform to share research initiatives, identify synergies and develop future collaborative projects, mobility programmes and joint research applications.**

After the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) Conference-Festival Africa-Asia, *A New Axis of Knowledge* 3, from 11 to 14 June, 2025, in Dakar, Senegal, Ute Fendler, Vice Dean of Internationalisation of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, and Doris Löhr, Coordinator of Internationalisation, organised a workshop from 16 to 17 June, 2025 at Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD).

Colleagues from the Centre of African and Oriental Studies (CEAO) at the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil; Bordeaux Montaigne University, France; Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) Seoul, South Korea; UCAD; and the conference organisers

participated in this workshop organised by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence to foster South-South collaboration between the Cluster Centres and African Studies Centres in Asia and South America.

Based on prior joint activities, like the collaborative conference at HUFS in 2018, and the conference and summer school at the University Eduardo Mondlane in Mozambique in 2023, this workshop platformed exchange on more recent research programmes in African Studies from the respective regions. The HUFS Institute of African Studies launched a research consortium in collaboration with four centres in South Korea with the research programme focusing on the young generation: *The MZ Generation in Africa and Nexus Humanities: A Study on the Dynamics of Africality and Globality*. The CEOA has a strong focus on African Studies and is working on the continuum of Oriental and Asian Studies for the near future. The Institute of Asian Studies at the University of Leiden, The Netherlands, strives for a stronger connection with the African continent in the organisation of the international conferences and festivals that link African

and Asian Studies. Acknowledging these various approaches to linking African, Asian, American, and European institutions for more collaborative research, the participants of the workshop exchanged information on a multitude of programmes, activities, and plans for the future, looking for synergies in upcoming research activities and options for joint research applications. A series of upcoming workshops including an international conference at the Joseph Ki-Zerbo University (UJKZ) Cluster Centre in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in November 2025 on “Inde-Afriques”, the international symposium *The future of the South-South: Internationalisation and Inclusion* in Itaparica, Brazil in February 2026, or the summer school Fábrica de Ideias co-organised by the Cluster Centre at Moi University in Eldoret, Kenya, and CEOA in September 2026 on South-South collaboration offer opportunities to strengthen cooperation and develop projects that create research projects and mobility opportunities for students and researchers in the near future. Furthermore, the participants agreed on a future cooperation for the next IIAS Conference-Festival Africa-Asia.





# Africa in Bayreuth: Rethinking a University's Global Legacy



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

**An exhibition marking fifty years of African Studies revealed how a regional university built an internationally connected field while confronting its own contradictions.**

Titled *Africa in Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies in the Mirror of Politics and Media*, the exhibition, curated by Ibrahima Sene from the Chair of History of Africa, and funded by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, examines how African Studies became one of the university's defining research fields and how it was perceived in politics and the (local) media over the past five decades. After opening at the Iwalewaha room at the Research Centre for Society, Technology, and Ecology in Africa (FZA) in November 2025, the curation was later exhibited at the university's library.

## A Research Profile with a Distinctive Focus

Founded in 1975, the University of Bayreuth had established African Studies as a core area from the outset. Rather than treating Africa merely as an object of academic inquiry, the university had sought to position it as an equal partner in research dialogue. This principle of partnership and exchange continued to shape Bayreuth's academic identity and helped make it one of Europe's leading centres for African research. Most recently, this standing had been reaffirmed by the renewal of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence under Germany's federal Excellence Strategy. The cluster highlights Bayreuth's commitment to in-

novative, interdisciplinary and globally connected research on Africa and its diasporas.

## Revisiting the Early Years

The exhibition traces the evolution of African Studies from the 1970s to the present day. A central feature was a collection of contemporary press articles documenting the early years of African research in Bayreuth and its collaborations with African partners. These sources revealed how the then new academic field was received in regional and national media, and what political and societal expectations accompanied its emergence.

Archival materials from the university and the city archive, along with institutional and scholarly documents, illustrated how a relatively small initiative grew into a globally networked research field. They also demonstrated how media coverage from newspapers in Upper Franconia and beyond contributed to shaping public perceptions of Africa and African Studies.

During the exhibition's vernissage that took place on 25 November 2025 Sene noted that the project emerged from an idea developed together with Prof Joel Glasman and was driven by his own surprise at discovering such a strong tradition of African research in Bayreuth. "Like many others, I was astonished to find such a well-established field of African Studies here," he explained. "The anniversary year provided an ideal opportunity to make this often-forgotten institutional history visible." He added that the exhibition did not merely present "Africa in Bayreuth", but also reflected processes of change and the ways in

which Africa had been represented at the intersection of politics, academia and the media.

## Myths, Debates and Institutional Challenges

The accompanying press coverage revisited longstanding assumptions about how African Studies had taken root in Bayreuth. Some oral narratives had attributed its foundation to direct political influence, including stories linking it to the former Bavarian Minister-President Franz Josef Strauß. However, historical research suggested that the development of African Studies had been less the product of singular political intervention than of structural decisions taken during the university's founding phase between 1970 and 1975.

The university's Strukturbeirat initially envisioned the institution with a strong emphasis on the natural sciences. During its foundational phase, the advisory body also advanced proposals aimed at broadening the academic profile, recommending investment in development-related expertise and the creation of innovative interdisciplinary structures. Faced with a choice between establishing South Asian Studies or African Studies, the university ultimately followed the Strukturbeirat's recommendations, leading to the creation of African Studies. Over time, Bayreuth established itself as a distinctive centre for African research, even while operating in competition with other Bavarian universities.

Yet the exhibition and related reporting also addressed tensions and contradictions. While Bayreuth promoted dialogue and critical self-reflection –

Current self meets exhibit: Former UBT president Helmut Ruppert who played an important role in the establishment of African Studies at the university



racism and colonial legacies – structural challenges persisted. Issues such as housing discrimination and bureaucratic hurdles affecting African, Black, and other scholars and students from underrepresented ethnic groups working in this field demonstrated that African Studies did not develop in a vacuum, but within broader societal contexts.

## A Place of Encounter Beyond Upper Franconia

At the exhibition opening Rüdiger Seesemann, spokesperson of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, described Bayreuth's African Studies as radical and experimental in their beginnings – an approach that has continued to resonate. The original concept aimed to move beyond traditional, eurocentric models of Area Studies and instead foster collaborative, transregional perspectives. For the exhibition's curator Sene, this orientation remains central to this day: "Bayreuth African Studies stand for a place of encounter that reaches far beyond Upper Franconia." 

The exhibition opening attracted an interested crowd



Curator Ibrahima Sene speaking at the opening of this exhibition on the history of African Studies in Bayreuth



# Maum Percussion

A Percussive Exploration of the Heart  
with Jae Hyo Chang

Text and photo SABINE GREINER

**Maum Percussion brought the renowned Korean percussionist Jae Hyo Chang back to Bayreuth offering audiences an intimate exploration of rhythm, reflection, and intercultural musical dialogue.**

On 14 July 2025, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence presented an evocative evening of rhythm and reflection with *Maum Percussion – A Percussive Exploration of the Heart*, featuring the acclaimed Korean percussionist Jae Hyo Chang. Organised by Ute Fendler and held at Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb, the event offered audiences a rare opportunity to experience a performance that combines tradition, emotion, and shared rhythm in an intimate setting.

The performance was inspired by the Korean concept of *maum* (마음), a nuanced term that may refer to heart, mind, soul, inner self, or feeling. In Korean philosophy and everyday language, *maum* points to an integrated understanding of emotion and consciousness rather than a strict separation between intellect and feeling. Through percussion pieces built on clear and often minimal rhythmic structures, Chang invites listeners to turn inward and, at the same time, connect with others in the room. Rhythm becomes more than sound – it becomes a form of emotional communication and collective presence. Rooted in Korea's rich percussion traditions, particularly those associated with communal and ritual performance, *Maum Percussion* emphasises resonance, breath, repetition, and subtle variation. The focus is not on virtuosic display alone, but on creating a shared sonic space in which audiences can experience attentiveness, intensity, and quiet reflection.

Throughout the evening, Chang also shared personal reflections between the

pieces, offering insight into the musical structures and the philosophical background of *maum*. His words were masterfully translated from Korean into German by Maira Fendler, whose sensitive and precise interpretation ensured that the audience could fully engage with both the artistic and conceptual dimensions of the performance.

Chang is a renowned Korean percussionist and vocalist whose work is deeply grounded in traditional music while remaining open to contemporary experimentation. He began his professional career as a member of the influential percussion ensemble *Puri* before embarking on a solo career in 2000. Since then, he has developed a distinctive artistic voice that combines technical precision with expressive depth. Performing primarily on traditional instruments such as the *janggu*, Chang explores tone, dynamics, and spatial sound in ways that highlight the emotional and spiritual dimensions of rhythm.

His artistic connection with the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence dates back several years. In October 2019, Chang participated in the Cluster's inaugural concert *World Music in Fusion – An Evening at the Margravia Opera House*, contributing to a remarkable intercultural performance at the UNESCO World Heritage site in Bayreuth. This earlier collaboration laid the foundation for his continued engagement with the Cluster's artistic programme. Chang's return to Bayreuth in July 2025 was closely linked to his participation in the Afrika-Karibik Festival on 19 July. With these events, the Cluster underscores its commitment to fostering sustained artistic exchange demonstrating how music can open spaces for intercultural dialogue, reflection, and shared experience beyond geographical and disciplinary boundaries.

Korean percussionist Jae Hyo Chang performed at Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb.

# MangrOOve at the Afrikaribik Festival in Bayreuth's City Centre

Text DORIS LÖHR  
Photos SABINE GREINER

**On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Afro-Caribbean Festival Wakadjo, the Africa Multiple Cluster presented a concert performance by MangrOOve at the Stadtparkett in the City of Bayreuth. The event constituted a public-facing cultural activity that translated the Cluster's core research approaches into an artistic format and engaged a broad, non-academic audience.**

MangrOOve brings together four internationally recognized solo musicians who have been affiliated with the Cluster since its establishment in 2019. Band leader Matchume Zango (Mozambique) – master of the wooden xylophone *timbila*, percussionist, com-

poser, and producer and a regular partner in the Cluster's cooperation with schools, Childo Tomás (Mozambique) – bassist, percussionist, and singer, Tao Ravao (Madagascar) – guitarist and specialist of the traditional *valiha* harp, and Chang Jae Hyo (South Korea) – percussionist and singer.

The band name, a conceptual fusion of *groove* and *mangrove*, symbolizes interconnectedness, resilience, and cultural diversity, reflecting the Cluster's emphasis on relationality and multiplicity. Musically, the ensemble combines deeply rooted traditions with global soundscapes, thereby embodying key research perspectives of the Cluster in performative form.

The collaboration in 2025 marked another milestone in a longer history of artistic collaboration within the Cluster. Seven years earlier, four of the present members, together with musician Eun Kyung Kim from South Korea, had composed and performed an interdisciplinary concert at the Margravia Opera House, which served as the opening event of the

Cluster's first research phase. That performance translated the methodological principles of relationality and reflexivity into sound and spanned musical traditions from Mozambique and Madagascar to South Korea. The composition emerged from processes of joint interpretation and intercultural musical development, closely aligned with the Cluster's research agenda.

In 2025, the band's reunion in Bayreuth resulted in a new performance that created a sonic meeting place of musical worlds. Rhythms associated with the Indian Ocean region were combined with groove-oriented traditions linked to the Atlantic region, resulting in a dynamic world-music fusion characterised by improvisation, depth, and high artistic intensity.

The concert at prime time marked one of the highlights of the festival programme and was met with strong audience engagement. The lively interaction and spontaneous dancing of attendees demonstrated the communicative and participatory potential of the performance. As such, the event successfully contributed to the Cluster's objectives of knowledge transfer, public engagement, and the integration of artistic practice into academic research contexts.

< Childo Tomás, Tao Ravao, Jae Hyo Chang and Matchume Zango wowed the audience at the 2025 Afro-Caribbean Festival in Bayreuth.



Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb was packed for the October screening of AfriKaleidoskop meets ARTE.

afriKaleidoskop  
meets  
arte

# Highlights

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

**In 2025, AfriKaleidoskop meets ARTE in Bayreuth once again brought together documentary film, academic insight and public dialogue. Through powerful screenings on apartheid and the war in Sudan, the series fostered critical engagement with Africa's past and present while presenting informed, cross-disciplinary debate.**

In 2025, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence once again continued its successful cinema lecture series AfriKaleidoskop meets ARTE at Kulturhaus Neuneinhalb in Bayreuth. The series combines exclusive ARTE documentary screenings with scholarly discussion and public dialogue, creating a space for critical engagement with pressing African and global issues. In May, the Cluster presented an exclusive preview screening of the first episode of the three-part ARTE documentary series *Free at Last. Unresolved Stories of Apartheid* (Südafrikas Weg aus der Apartheid). The film series is

a co-production by BAFTA award-winning South African filmmaker and actor Xoliswa Sithole and Dutch investigative journalists Misha Wessel and Thomas Blom, both with 15 years of experience working in global conflict areas. The first episode *The Search for Answers* (Suche nach Antworten) was screened in German, followed by a panel discussion with Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) scholar Patricia Pinky Ndlovu-Gatsheni and the filmmaker Blom, and an engaging Q&A session with the audience. The evening offered profound insights into the unresolved legacies of apartheid and sparked vibrant discussions on memory, justice, and historical responsibility.

In October, the series turned to Sudan, where since April 2023 a devastating civil war has displaced millions and pushed large parts of the population into extreme hardship. The ARTE documentary *Sudan – A Hospital in the Shadow of War* (Sudan – Ein Krankenhaus im Schatten des Krieges) portrays the work of the surgeon Joseph Yacoub, who has

been running a hospital in the remote Nuba Mountains for nearly three decades. As the region's only surgeon, Yacoub treats hundreds of patients daily under extremely difficult conditions, while training the next generation of medical professionals. The film offers a powerful depiction of war, displacement, and humanitarian crisis, but also of resilience, solidarity, and hope. Following the screening, filmmakers Laura Salm-Reifferscheidt and Carl Gierstorfer joined the audience for a discussion moderated by Doris Löhr, reflecting on the challenges of documenting conflict zones and the ethical responsibilities of storytelling.

Both events were recorded and are available via ARTE's event media hub and on the Cluster's YouTube channel. With its 2025 program, AfriKaleidoskop meets ARTE once again demonstrated the importance of dialogue between documentary filmmaking and academic research, fostering informed public debate on Africa's historical and contemporary realities.

## Africa: Ecologies A Calendar Shaped by Artistic Perspectives

Text **SABINE GREINER**

**In 2025, the Cluster's international call for artistic contributions attracted around 120 submissions from photographers and artists around the world. The twelve selected works present powerful artistic reflections on the many meanings of African ecologies.**

For the fifth consecutive year, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence invited photographers, artists and creative practitioners to contribute to its annual calendar. Under the theme "Africa: Ecologies", the 2026 edition explores ecologies not only as environmental systems, but also as the complex relationships between people, landscapes, technologies, cultures and imaginaries that shape everyday life across the continent.

The response exceeded all expectations. Around 120 submissions were received from photographers and

artists around the world, showcasing a remarkable diversity of artistic approaches to the theme. The breadth of submissions made the selection process particularly challenging, as the entries captured the richness of African ecologies through documentary photography, artistic interventions, portraiture and landscape imagery.

Following a careful selection process, twelve works were chosen for the calendar. Together, they take viewers on a journey across the African continent and beyond, inviting them to consider ecological questions from multiple angles: the relationship between humans and nature, environmental degradation and resilience, indigenous knowledge systems, cultural heritage, urban transformation, food production, migration, spirituality and social justice. They demonstrate that ecologies are not limited to questions of biodiversity or climate, but encompass the interconnected social, cul-

tural and material worlds in which people live.

The selected images depict a wide geographical spectrum, including Mali, Mozambique, Mauritius, Nigeria, Togo and South Africa, while also highlighting transnational experiences and diasporic perspectives. Each month pairs a carefully selected image with a short statement by the artist, allowing the works to speak both visually and conceptually. The result is a publication that brings artistic practice into dialogue with the Cluster's interdisciplinary research on ecologies.

Beyond marking the passing of the year, the calendar reflects the Cluster's commitment to engaging with artistic perspectives as an important form of knowledge production. It demonstrates how visual storytelling can illuminate complex social and environmental realities, encourage new ways of seeing, and complement academic research with creative insight.



The 2026 Cluster calendar with 12 images on the topic "Africa: Ecologies". The title image Zero Green was submitted by David Olayide.



Recently awarded Grimme laureates Laura Salm and Carl Gierstorfer in discussion with the audience



Patricia Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Thomas Blom after their inspiring conversation



Text NATASHA A. KELLY

**As newly appointed Professor of Global African Arts and Academic and Artistic Director of Iwalewahaus, Natasha A. Kelly outlines a forward-looking vision in which African and Afro-diasporic art reshapes how we think about knowledge, institutions, and the future.**

What if we no longer explained art from the vantage point of the past, but from possible futures? What if aesthetic practices were not primarily situated retrospectively, but understood as forms of knowledge that speculate, anticipate, and envision? African and Afro-diasporic art and expressive forms have long operated within such temporal frameworks. Here, history does not appear as a closed domain, but as something continually reconfigured through recourse to the future. The future is not a distant destination. It functions as a structuring principle, shaping how violence is remembered, how technology is mobilised, and how institutions are conceived. This premise defines the trajectory of my professorship in Global African Arts and underpins the academic and artistic direction of Iwalewahaus at the University of Bayreuth.

**Thinking from the Future:**

# Global African Arts at Iwalewahaus

## Global African Arts: A Space of Thought

My work is grounded in the conviction that institutions must be rethought from the vantage point of the future – not merely as sites of preservation, but as active producers of knowledge and temporal meaning. Within this framework, I conceive of Global African Arts not as a regional designation or thematic specialisation, but as a space of thought. At its core lies the premise that African and Afrodiasporic aesthetic practices are not merely objects of scholarly analysis, but generate theory in their own right. Concepts such as time, authorship, the public sphere, institutions, and aesthetics, which are often treated as stable within the European art historical canon, begin to shift from this perspective. Art, history, and canon no longer appear as fixed entities, but as negotiable formations reconfigured through African and Afro-diasporic intellectual traditions.

This reconceptualisation is not only theoretical; it has institutional consequences. Situated within the Faculty of Language and Literature, my professorship underscores that language, narration, performance, media, and poetics are not secondary to aesthetic practice, but constitute autonomous forms of knowledge production. African and Afro-diasporic aesthetics frequently articulate theory outside classical discursive formats, emerging instead through performative, medial, and speculative processes. This shift renders visible the limits of traditional art historical models shaped by the European canon, long grounded in stable object categories and canonical hierarchies that are now increasingly under pressure.

## The Collection as a Space of the Future

The Iwalewahaus collection constitutes a central space of thought within this framework. Formed across diverse contexts, temporalities, and practices, it resists stable art historical classification. Any attempt to subsume it under a Eurocentric canon would ultimately falter – not due to curatorial oversight, but because its very structure exceeds the taxonomic logic upon which such canons depend. I approach this structural nona-lignability as an epistemic resource: a condition that invites the collection to be read from the vantage point of the future, where meanings and temporalities enter into new constellations.

Because inherited classificatory models fail to account for this complexity, Global African Arts establishes a different institutional and conceptual horizon. Within this horizon, Triple-A (Afrofuturism, Africanfuturism, African Futures) functions as an analytical prism – not to impose order, but to render distinct modes of futurity visible. Triple-A does not consolidate; it refracts. Refraction, as I propose it here, names a methodological principle in art theory: a way of placing distinct theoretical and artistic positions in relation without synthesising them. Rather than producing unity, refraction allows difference to cohere relationally, generating a field in which continent and Diaspora belong to one another without collapsing into sameness. Triple-A serves as the lens through which this refraction becomes effective within the collection and institutional practice of Iwalewahaus.

Afrofuturism, the first A, unfolds at the intersection of Diasporic experience, media translation, and speculative imagination. In works by Thenjiwe Niki Nkosi developed in the Iwalewahaus context, history is not narrated linearly but deliberately unsettled. Colonial and postcolonial orders are reread from the vantage point of the future, exposing their constructedness and instability. This approach was further articulated in the collaborative exhibition *Mash Up the*

*Archive*, presented at Iwalewahaus in 2015 following residencies in 2014, where archival constellations were critically reassembled and repositioned, demonstrating how futurity can emerge through acts of interruption and recombination.

While Afrofuturism foregrounds Diasporic mediation and speculative disruption, the second A, Africanfuturism, following Nnedi Okorafor, shifts the point of departure. It conceives of the future from within African realities – continentally grounded and materially situated, rather than primarily mediated through Diasporic or techno-utopian narratives. Within the Iwalewahaus collection, this orientation becomes tangible in works by El Anatsui, where materials and historical transformations do not signify a closed past, but function as carriers of future-oriented knowledge.

From this constellation emerges what I describe as African Futures, a mode exemplified in the work and writing of Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum. While the term circulates in broader discussions of future-oriented practices in African art, I employ it here to designate an approach in which the future is neither utopian projection nor linear progress, but a layered and relational field of possibility. Body, landscape, memory, and history are reconfigured in ways that resist closure. Futurity appears fragmentary, situational, and relational rather than teleological. Triple-A thus names not a set of parallel categories, but a dynamic field of thought unfolding across artistic practice, exhibition-making, and institutional reflection at Iwalewahaus. The approaches it brings into relation are not newly coined; what is new is their refraction through one another – an analytical constellation that renders their differences and resonances newly legible.

## Media Lab: VHS, Vinyl, and the Knowledge of Formats

Within Afrofuturist thought, the figure of the “metadata thief” conceptualised by Damian Duffy, foregrounds

Natasha A. Kelly

Photo: Sahand Ghorbanpoor



the question of who controls the systems through which meaning, authorship, and memory circulate. At Iwalewahaus, this question becomes material in the Media Lab. Here, attention shifts from individual works to the infrastructures that enable, record, and transform their circulation.

The Media Lab is therefore not a peripheral facility but, alongside the library, a central site of research, artistic experimentation, and public encounter. It examines the conditions under which images, sounds, and narratives move across contexts and acquire new meanings. The collection of VHS tapes, audio cassettes, and vinyl records does not function as a nostalgic repository, but operates as a laboratory of aesthetic temporality. These formats preserve specific practices of listening, recording, copying, and sharing.

In African and Afro-diasporic contexts, projections of the future have long been intertwined with such media ecologies. On VHS, alternative publics emerge; on cassette tapes, everyday voices circulate across distances; on vinyl, sonic futures unfold between ritual, dance floor, and political commentary. Noise, distortion, and repetition are not technical flaws but aesthetic resources – traces of circulation that carry their own forms of knowledge. In this way, the Media Lab extends the university into the urban sphere. It establishes a space in which academic research, artistic practice, and the city intersect, opening Iwalewahaus toward diverse publics and positioning it as a site where knowledge is not only preserved, but collectively produced.

Against this background, I conceive of Iwalewahaus not primarily as an ex-

hibition venue, but as an epistemic space of resonance within the University of Bayreuth. Its collection is not a closed archive; it forms an active constellation in which aesthetic practice, theoretical reflection, and projections of the future converge. Archive and future are not conceived separately here, but are mutually produced through research, artistic work, and public engagement. In this sense, Iwalewahaus operates at the intersection of university and city. It opens academic inquiry toward broader publics while bringing artistic and urban perspectives back into the university. Thinking from the future thus exceeds theoretical formulation. At Iwalewahaus, it becomes institutional practice, structuring how knowledge is produced, circulated, and reconfigured between university and city.



Art Passport – Artworks from the Iwalewahaus Collection on Loan in Inter\*national Exhibitions

Survival Kit Monochrome of Négritude or an Introduction to the Modernists

20.06.2025–31.08.2025, ifa Gallery Berlin  
01.11.2025–21.03.2026, ifa Gallery Stuttgart

Curator Ken Aïcha Sy dedicated her long-term research project “Survival Kit” at ifa Gallery Stuttgart to the pioneers of Senegalese modernism. One starting point for her critical and deeply personal research is her own family archive, which led her to collections as far away as Venice, London and Bayreuth. Sy unearthed many forgotten works by artists who have had a significant influence on Senegalese art between 1960 and 1990.

“Survival Kit” functions as both exhibition and curatorial tool, activating marginalised narratives and positioning Senegalese modernism as a defining moment in global art history. The exhibition was shown under the patronage of UNESCO.

Curator: Ken Aïcha Sy  
Assistant Curator: Nikola Hartl  
Text: Xenia Ressos

Ken Aïcha Sy, Survival Kit: Monochrome of Négritude or an Introduction to the Modernists, exhibition view ifa Gallery Stuttgart, 2025 Sahand Ghorbanpoor (Photo: Jürgen Bubeck)

Installation Photography, Nigerian Modernism, Tate Modern, 8 October 2025 – 10 May 2026 Photo: Tate Photography (Jai Monaghan).



Nigerian Modernism

08.10.2025–10.05.2026

Tate Modern,  
London, UK

The exhibition explores the rise of modern art in Nigeria before and after national independence. It focuses on artists who championed political and artistic freedom in the twentieth century. Nigerian modernism reflects a diverse range of responses to the country’s evolving cultural and political identity.

Iwalewahaus supports the exhibition with eleven works from its collection, primarily focusing on the Osogbo School.

Curators: Osei Bonsu,  
Bilal Akkouché  
Text: Sigrid Horsch-Albert

When We See US. A Century of Black Figuration in Painting

10.10.2025–30.08.2026

Liljevalchs Konsthall,  
Stockholm, Sweden

The exhibition is composed into six thematic sections: Everyday Life, Joy and Exuberance, Tranquillity, Sensuality, Spirituality, and Triumph and

Emancipation. Based on these themes, a multifaceted and nuanced picture emerges – one that transcends the themes traditionally associated with art from Africa or the African Diaspora.

Loans from the Iwalewahaus collection underscore this diversity and the self-

understanding of artists from Africa and the diaspora.

Text:  
Sigrid Horsch-Albert



Installation views, When We See Us, Liljevalchs 10 October 2025 – 11 August 2026. Photo: Jean-Baptiste Béranger. When We See Us – A Century of Black Figuration in Painting is organised and conceived by Zeitz MOCAA.



# Project a Black Planet: The Art and Culture of Panafrika

06.11.2025–06.04.2026,  
extended until 19.04.2026

Museum of Contemporary Art  
(MACBA), Barcelona, Spain

The exhibition *Project a Black Planet: The Art and Culture of Panafrika* is the first major international exhibition dedicated to the cultural expressions of Pan-Africanism from the 1920s to the present day.

It features nearly 500 works by 100 artists, touring until spring 2027. *Project a Black Planet: The Art and*

*Culture of Panafrika* starts with the year of the first Pan-African Congress in 1919 and illuminates the creative dialogue between Brazil, the Caribbean, and major cities in Africa, Europe, and North America. The exhibition addresses visions of unity while simultaneously exploring the enduring consequences of inequality.

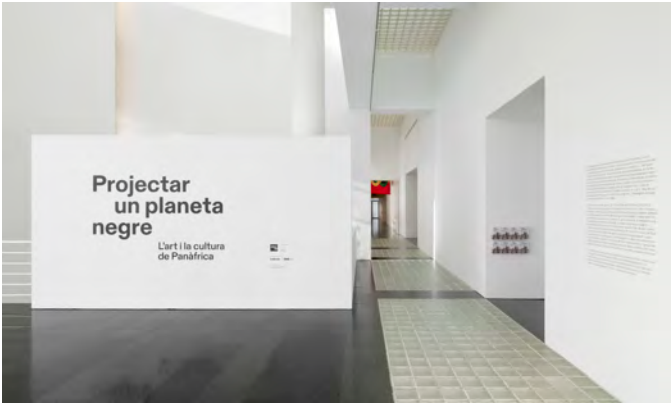
In addition to works by Ibrahim El-Salahi and Colette Oluwabamise Omogbai, Iwalewahauss has also lent archival materials related to the exhibition.

Text: Sigrid Horsch–Albert

Curators: Elvira Dyangani Ose,  
Antawan Byrd, Adom Getachew,  
Matthew S. Witkovsky

Cooperation: Art Institute of  
Chicago, Barbican Centre London,  
KANAL – Centre Pompidou  
Brussels

Courtesy of MACBA.  
Photos: Roberto Ruiz



## Legacies of Biafra: Art, Memory, and the Afterlives of Conflict

Left to right:  
Toni Ndikanwu (NASUK),  
Louisa Uchum Egbunike  
(Durham University),  
Ade Ogundimu (NASUK),  
Sigrid Horsch–Albert  
(Iwalewahauss),  
Hassan Aliyu (NASUK),  
Katharina Greven  
(Iwalewahauss),  
Chike Azuonye (NASUK)

Text KATHARINA GREVEN

**Through art, archives, and personal narratives, *Legacies of Biafra* revisited a devastating war and its lasting impact, inviting audiences to reflect on memory, identity, and the unfinished legacies of colonialism.**

*Legacies of Biafra* was a research-led, multi-media exhibition that examined the Nigeria-Biafra war (1967–1970) through an interdisciplinary lens informed by art history, memory studies, and postcolonial scholarship. Curated by Louisa Uchum Egbunike and presented at Iwalewahauss from May to October 2025, the exhibition brought together works by members of the Nigeria Art Society UK (NASUK), selected pieces from the Iwalewahauss collection, archival documents, oral testimonies, and short films. This constellation of materials created a layered interpretive space in which history, emotion, and aesthetics converged.

The curatorial framework drew on academic debates surrounding testimony and the concept of “emotional truth,” a term popularised by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and widely used in memory studies to describe forms of knowledge produced through lived experience. By foregrounding intimate narratives, the exhibition challenged dominant state historiographies and illuminated the human consequences of the conflict – displacement, grief, resilience, and the reconstruction of identity. These accounts revealed the extent to which the war reconfigured

Nigeria’s political and social landscape, echoing scholarly arguments that civil conflicts generate long-lasting cultural and psychological afterlives.

At the same time, *Legacies of Biafra* situated the war within broader postcolonial histories. The exhibition demonstrated how British colonial divide-and-rule strategies had entrenched ethnic divisions and contributed to the structural conditions that eventually ignited the conflict. This framing aligned with academic analyses that view the Biafran war as a critical moment exposing the fragility of newly independent African states and the enduring influence of colonial borders, governance practices, and resource politics. By linking past and present, the exhibition showed how the war’s legacies continued to shape Nigerian politics, including cycles of military rule, struggles over oil resources, and ongoing violence against civilians.

A central theme was endurance – understood not merely as physical survival but as a process shaped by cultural memory, spirituality, and collective healing. Many artworks pointed to ideas of cleansing, restoration, and reconciliation, reinforcing scholarly perspectives from anthropology and trauma studies that emphasise the ritual and symbolic dimensions of post-conflict recovery.

One of the most significant contributions of the exhibition was its impact on audiences. Visitors were confronted

with difficult histories and aesthetic forms that demanded active interpretation. The exhibition’s juxta-position of artistic expression, testimony, and archival evidence generated moments of discomfort, reflection, and ethical questioning. The exhibition thus functioned as a space that challenged viewers to reconsider the relationship between art and history, and to engage critically with the unresolved legacies of colonialism and civil conflict.

Ultimately, *Legacies of Biafra* demonstrated the capacity of art to act as both archive and theory. It offered a rigorous, academically grounded intervention into ongoing debates about memory, postcolonial identity, and cultural production. At the same time, it invited audiences into a shared process of reckoning, encouraging them to confront uncomfortable truths while imagining possibilities for justice, healing, and historical responsibility.

Chike Azuonye (NASUK) in front of his artwork.  
Photos: Hassan Aliyu





# New Additions to the IWALE WAHAUS Collection – 2025

## Norbert and Rosita Simmleit Collection

In October 2025, Rosita and Norbert Simmleit donated a collection of photographs, invitations, and posters for various exhibitions to Iwalewaha. These items cover the period from the 1990s to 2024 and complement both the existing poster collection and the Iwalewaha archives.

Additionally, the Simmleit family donated a 1997 painting by the Angolan artist Augusto Kutxi-Bungo, also known as Gunes-M.

Photos: Iwalewaha  
Text: Sigrid Horsch-Albert



## Zemanek Collection

On 3 April, Iwalewaha received a significant addition to its collection: David Zemanek of the Zemanek-Münster auction house in Würzburg presented Iwalewaha with a donation of 35 valuable artworks from the Mbari Mbayo workshops in Osogbo, Nigeria.

The works originally came from the Wolfgang Grützmann Collection and were acquired directly from an exhibition at the Goethe Institute Lagos, Nigeria, in the 1970s, as well as directly from the participating artists. The legendary Mbari Mbayo workshops were organised by Ulli Beier in the 1960s and produced such renowned artists as Twins Seven-Seven, Jimoh Buraimoh, Muraina Oyelami, Bruce Onobrakpeya, Adebisi Fabunmi, Rufus Ogundele, and Nike Davies-Okundaye. Iwalewaha already owns works by these important artists, and now the collection has been expanded with many more masterpieces. Zemanek's enthusiasm underscores how much he is honouring not only the artists with this donation, but also the collection and work of Iwalewaha: "The works have now arrived in the right place."

Photos: Iwalewaha  
Text: Sigrid Horsch-Albert  
Cooperation: Universitätsstiftung / Universitätsverein e.V.



## Kleine-Gunk Collection

Since 2014, Bernd Kleine-Gunk has contributed objects from his unique collection of contemporary African art to Iwalewaha through annual gifts. The selection for 2025 is also characterised by "classics" and renowned representatives of modern African art.

This is especially true of the Congolese painter Chéri Samba, one of the world's most popular contemporary artists, who is represented in this year's selection with an important early work. Samba is considered to be one of the pioneers who brought African art to the global stage, with a direct influence on the current generation of artists.

Another globally popular "classic" of contemporary African art, Twins Seven Seven from Nigeria, is represented in this year's selection with four works. Twins Seven Seven's international reputation is underscored by the fact that he was named a UNESCO "Artist of Peace" in 2005.

Works by important Zimbabwean

sculptors such as Nicholas Mukomberanwa, Bernard Matemera, and Joram Mariga who are represented in world-class private and institutional collections complete the 2025 endowment. Staycott Tahwa and Jack Jonas are representatives of the younger generation of Zimbabwean sculptors who

continue the legacy of Shona sculpture.

Text: Sigrid Horsch-Albert  
Cooperation: Universitätsstiftung / Universitätsverein e.V.

Chérie Samba: Les Tours de Babel  
Dans Le Monde, 1991.



## Guests

In July 2025, Iwalewaha was pleased to welcome South African artist Christine Dixie back into its art studio during her stay at the University of

Bayreuth. Working across printmaking, film, and installation, Dixie engaged with students and the public through an artist lecture and several Meet the Artist events at the Jean Paul Art Space. She previously exhibited To

Be King at Iwalewaha in 2022 and donated works to the collection, making her return a meaningful continuation of this artistic exchange.

Text: Nicole Klug





# The 2025 Activities of the ACCs in Burkina Faso, Kenya and Nigeria

**In 2025, the African Cluster Centres (ACCs) in Ouagadougou, Eldoret and Lagos continued to deepen academic collaboration and expand 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.**

## ACC Lagos: Advancing Research, Mobility, and Scholarly Exchange

Text **AKINMAYOWA AKIN-OTIKO**

**In 2025, UNILAG-AMRC advanced the broader mission of reconfiguring African Studies through innovative research projects, fellowships, conferences, and early-career support, while deepening scholarly exchange and collaboration across the Cluster.**

2025 was another productive and event-filled year for the University of Lagos Africa African Cluster Centre (UNILAG-ACC). The Centre sustained a vibrant academic culture through lectures, funded research projects, fellowships, conferences, and support for early-career scholars, while also

strengthening its ties within the wider Cluster network.

The UNILAG-ACC’s Principal Investigator Lecture Series has continued to serve as an important platform for critical feedback and scholarly exchange, where Principal Investigators and visiting fellows regularly present findings from ongoing and completed research. In 2025 alone, the Centre hosted nine PI lectures, reaffirming its commitment to sustained academic conversation and high-quality research output.

Research activity at the Centre remained dynamic. UNILAG-ACC completed two Centre-funded short-term projects, both focused on Detty December, a period of intensified tourism and entertainment in Lagos dur-



Photos: Lagos ACC



UNILAG-ACC hosted the Cluster’s Academic Coordinators from October 2 to 4, 2025, for their Annual General Meeting.

Above: (f.l.t.r.) Abisoye Eleshin, Kayode Eesuola, and Hamed Olanrewaju pictured during a field trip to Brazil (March/April 2025) as part of the long-term project on The Socio-Political Thoughts of Orunmila.

ing the festive year-end season, and continued work on a long-term project. Led by Akinmayowa Akin-Otiko, Lagos, Yet Not Lagos explored how improved government and stakeholder coordination could help shape a more heritage-driven Detty December. The project culminated in a co-design workshop, “Lagos Edition: Not Yet Done: Plan for a Heritage-Based Detty December,” held on 11 June, 2025. A second project, coordinated by Feyi

Ademola-Adeoye, explored her interest in tracing African knowledge systems across local and diasporic contexts.

Mobility remained a longstanding value for UNILAG-ACC in 2025. Members of the Centre continued to benefit from fellowships and opportunities for exchange within the Cluster. Falaiye was awarded a fellowship at Moi University, Kenya, from March 25 to April 21, 2025, while Feyi Ademola-

Ademola-Adeoye received a fellowship at the University of Bayreuth from May 14 to 16, 2025, on the theme Temporalities, Youth (Im)mobilities and Agencies: Africa on the Move.

Conference on African Studies, held from August 20 to November 21, 2025. Through such participation, the Centre continues to contribute to major conversations shaping contemporary African Studies.



Researchers at the University of Bayreuth for the 2025 Annual Cluster Conference, held from May 14 to 16, 2025, on the theme Temporalities, Youth (Im)mobilities and Agencies: Africa on the Move.

Ademola-Adeoye considered how future Detty December planning could distribute benefits more widely across sectors such as hospitality, entertainment, and tourism. Together, these projects demonstrate the Centre’s commitment to linking academic research with urgent social, cultural, and urban questions.

Alongside these completed projects, the Centre continued its long-term research project entitled The Socio-political Thoughts in the Home and Diaspora Practices of Ifa. As part of the project’s ongoing development, Kayode Eesuola, Abisoye Eleshin, and PhD candidate Ahmed Olanrewaju undertook a field trip to Brazil for the Orunmila Project from March 31 to April 9, 2025. This international engagement underscored the transnational scope of the Centre’s research and its in-

terest in tracing African knowledge systems across local and diasporic contexts.

Adeoye received a fellowship at the University of Bayreuth from May 14 to 16, 2025, on the theme Temporalities, Youth (Im)mobilities and Agencies: Africa on the Move. Anthony Okeregbe served as Academic Lead for the Conference and proposed its thematic focus. Later in the year, Ayodele Yusuff, Muiwa Falaiye, Abisoye Eleshin, and Anthony Okeregbe represented the Centre at Moi University in Eldoret, Kenya, during the 2nd International

University of Bayreuth, Germany, visited the University of Lagos from October 15 to 18, 2025, to formalize agreements for the new phase of collaboration. Their visit included a meeting with the University Vice Chancellor on October 16, marking a significant moment in the strategic partnership. Earlier in the month, from October 2 to 4, 2025, the Centre also hosted the Cluster’s Academic Coordinators for their Annual General Meeting, further demonstrating UNILAG-ACC’s commitment to strengthening institutional collaboration within the Cluster system.

As with previous years, supporting early-career scholars remained a key priority throughout 2025 led by Early Career Coordinator, Feyi Ademola-Adeoye. The Centre hosted Adama Kabore, a Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow



Following the announcement of Cluster 2.0, officials from the University of Bayreuth paid a courtesy visit to the University of Lagos Vice Chancellor on October 16, 2025, marking a significant step in strengthening institutional collaboration.



from the Université Norbert Zongo de Koudougou in Burkina Faso, who presented his research on Migration and Socio-economic Integration of Nigerians in Burkina Faso. In addition, three early-career scholars, Ms. Bolatito Kolawole, Mr. Isaiah Olayode, and Mr. Teniola Tonade participated in the 2025 Cluster Annual Conference at the University of Bayreuth. There, they contributed actively to panels and shared research insights on youth identities, language practices, and belonging in contemporary African contexts.

One especially notable early-career collaboration involved UNILAG-ACC Junior Research Fellow, Bolatito Kolawole, who worked with BIGSAS junior fellows Carla Coburger and Maria Tsogo on a Photovoice Workshop in Oworonshoki, Lagos. Focused on the theme of money, the project brought together artists Kamnelechukwu Obasi, Damilola Bankole, and Samuel Udoh for a three-day workshop combining training in photovoice methods, photography, and community fieldwork. Through a decolonial gender lens, participants used images

and narratives to reflect on the social meanings of money, opening up space for dialogue, creativity, and social reflection.

Overall, 2025 was a year of sustained growth and meaningful achievement for UNILAG-ACC. Through research, mobility, collaboration, and mentorship, the Centre continued to strengthen its role as a hub for innovative African Studies scholarship and looks forward to continued opportunities for enriching academic exchange and meaningful impact.



UNILAG-ACC supports early-career researchers, including MA and PhD students, through its weekly Thursday tea meetings, which provide an informal space for discussion, reflection, and intellectual engagement.

Moi ACC 2025: Reflecting on Achievements, Shaping New Research Futures

Text PETER SIMATEI

2025 marked a year of reflection, exchange and renewal at the Moi African Cluster Centre. From an international conference to research seminars, regional networking and retreats for the Cluster’s second funding phase, the ACC played a key role in consolidating the achievements of the first research cycle while helping to shape new directions for African Studies.

This year saw the conclusion of the first research cycle of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence: Reconfiguring African Studies initiative was dominated by a sharing of and reflection on the output of the transcontinental research collaboration. The emblematic event of the year was the second Moi University International Conference on African Studies in Eldoret, Kenya. The conference, whose theme was *Africa: Multiple (Inter)Actions, Movements, Worlds*, was held from 20 to 21 November 2025. Rooted in the guiding vision of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, *Africa: Multiple (Inter) Actions, Movements, Worlds* foregrounded the idea that Africa is not a singular narrative but a constellation of worlds forged through the interactions of peoples, objects, and ideas, both within the continent and among its Diasporas. The conference invited scholarly conversations that revisited, interrogated, and reimagined intellectual, artistic, religious, cultural, social, and political movements that, inspired by ideas of Africa, have emerged in Africa and its Diasporic spaces, and which continue to influence the way Africa is conceptualised, represented, and lived.

The metaphorical road to the well-attended, medium-sized Africa: Multiple (Inter)Actions, Movements, Worlds conference – 40 presentations by scholars from at least 16 universities in five countries – was paved by seminars in the flagship Africa Colloquium seminar series. There were only six seminars in 2025. The first three of these were the

last presentations of reports of the findings from Moi ACC-funded research undertaken in 2024. As such, they were part of the mopping up that was ongoing on the research front as projects wound down. On 4 February, Simon Nganga and Mary Lonyangapuo spoke on Hybridised Bukusu Greetings for Socio-Political Control; on 18 February, Fredrick Okaka reported on Mobility and Relational Connectivities on Access to Urban Agriculture Among Residents of Informal Settlements in Eldoret City, Kenya; and on 4 March, Prisca Tanui Too, Michael Chesire, and Daniel K. Kipkorir gave an account of Indigenous Food Security Systems: Transformation and Resilience Among the Nandi, Keiyo and Marakwet of Kenya.

On 17 April the 2025 Moi University African Cluster Centre (ACC) Visiting Research Fellow, Olumuyiwa Falaiye,



delivered his departing lecture in the Africa Colloquium seminar series. The philosopher Falaiye was concurrently the Director of the ACC at the University of Lagos, Nigeria and the Institute of African and Diaspora Studies (IADS) that housed it at the time. During his residency from 21 March to 21 April 2025, Falaiye undertook field research on women sages in Siaya County, Kenya. The exit lecture was a presentation of the initial findings from this exciting work.

Ravaka Andriamihaja of the University of Bern, Switzerland, gave a timely thought-provoking seminar on Decolonising North-South Research Collaboration on 8 May. Just over a month later, on 17 June, Susan Gitimu of Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya, gave the last seminar in the series for 2025. The informative talk was entitled Beyond the Spotlight: The Role of Film Awards in Rewriting Kenya’s Cinematic Narrative.



On 5 and 6 May 2025, the Moi ACC convened the East African Humanities Deans Symposium. This important workshop brought together deans of humanities faculties in the East African region and other academic leaders in these disciplines to creatively explore the place of the humanities in society. The symposium also served to underscore the growing importance of Moi ACC as a research centre.

Towards the end of the year, the focus shifted to the second phase of Africa Multiple. Attention was paid to the initial events in the new cycle. Moi ACC hosted several retreats where researchers from the different Africa Multiple ACC locations met to brainstorm and develop fundable proposals out of their project ideas. The following Research Sections held their retreats in Kenya: Digitalities (10 to 15 November 2025, Nairobi); Ecologies (11 to 13 December 2025, Nairobi); Accumulation (14 to 16 December 2025, Nairobi); Re:Membering (18 to 20 December 2025, Mombasa); and Translating (21 to 23 December 2025, Mombasa).

2025 came to its end with promising reports on the progress of the three PhD students on Africa Multiple scholarships. Mohamed Ndaro and Sumaiya Yunus Mwamzandi, embedded in the research project Islamic Popular Culture and Public Performance Practices, and Tabitha Osoro, who 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 are expected to graduate in 2026.



Participants of the international multidisciplinary symposium *India–Africa: Endogeneity–modernity and solutions for development*



**Ouaga ACC 2025: Building Foundations for Africa Multiple 2.0**

Text **OUSSÉNI SORE**

**In 2025, Ouaga ACC focused on preparing for the second phase of Africa Multiple while continuing to strengthen its academic profile through international conferences, publications, strategic partnerships and active participation in the new Research Sections. These activities laid important foundations for future collaboration and the continued advancement of African Studies.**

In 2025, the activities of the African Cluster Centre (ACC) in Ouagadougou have focused primarily on setting up Cluster 2.0 through active participation in preparatory meetings of the Research Sections (RS) with a view to

becoming operational in January 2026. Apart from that, activities have been organised and attended, and books have been published.

**Academic Coordinators’ Forum**  
The annual Academic Coordinators meeting of the African Cluster Centres (ACCs) was held from 1 to 5 October, 2025 at University of Lagos, Nigeria. It was attended by the various Cluster Coordinators, including from Rhodes University South Africa ACC; Moi University Nairobi, Kenya ACC; University of Lagos, ACC; and University Joseph Ki-Zerbo (UJKZ), Burkina Faso ACC, represented by its Academic Coordinator Ousséni Sore. Sore was able to review ACC Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso work on the first phase of the project and the prospects for the second phase. Discussions with the Cluster Dean and ACC Directors laid new foundations for strengthen-

ing scientific cooperation over the next seven years.

**Conferences and Workshops**  
Two major conferences were organised in 2025 by the Ouaga ACC. Under the leadership of Fernand Bationo, an international symposium was held on *Contemporary Fatherhood, Parenthood, and Families in Africa*. In collaboration with Laval University in Quebec City, Canada, this scientific meeting took place from 5 to 7 March, 2025, in Ouagadougou. Activities included scientific presentations and roundtable discussions with specialists and resource persons from Burkinabe society on the subject of fatherhood and parenthood. Beyond their scientific contributions, their insights greatly contributed to the success of this scientific event.

From 27 to 29 November, 2025, an international multidisciplinary symposium was held focusing on the theme *India-Africa: Endogeneity-Modernity and Solutions for Development*. As part of the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of Joseph Ki-Zerbo University, this scientific event was organised jointly with the African Studies Association of India (ASA-India) and the Embassy of the Republic of India in Burkina Faso. Beyond the scientific exchanges through presentations by academics and researchers, this symposium enabled the academic community of UJKZ to consider new prospects for scientific collaboration.

Apart from organising conferences, Ouaga ACC members were active in attending international scientific meetings. Ouaga Principal Investigators (PIs) were part of the annual conference on *Temporalities, Youth (Im-) Mobilities and Agencies: Africa on the Move* organised from 14 to 16 May 2025 by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth, Germany. Yacouba Banhoro developed a presentation on *Morality and Overall Health in Burkina Faso: The Global Funds and its Strategies for Combating HIV/AIDS*. Sore contributed as Co-Convener and Co-Chair in the panel on *The Language of Youth Engagement and Generational Shifts in Governance*.

Natéwindé Sawadogo attended an international conference in New Delhi, India on *Recalibrating Foreign Policy Framework for Sharing Indigenous Knowledge Among the Global South: A Case of India and Africa* from 22 to 25 October. He delivered a presentation on *A Comparative Analysis of Approaches to Promoting Traditional Medicine in Africa: Past and Prospects*. This conference was jointly organised by Miranda House University of Delhi and the Centre for African Studies, School of International Studies of Jawaharlal Nehru University, India in collaboration with the African Studies Association of India. Eveline Sawadago-Compaore was part of the *Africa Talks Environment* at Munich where she delivered a presentation on *Agriculture and Innovation in Burkina Faso*.

A workshop was also held from 8 to 11 July, 2025, in Ziniaré, Burkina Faso to discuss the creation of an Institute of African and Global Studies (IAGS). The discussions led to the production of a project document that was presented to UJKZ Leadership. The ACC Ouaga team is still working on the administrative procedures on how this project can turn into a reality.

**Research Sections (RS) Activities**  
The members of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence actively participated in various activities and meetings, both in person and online, to prepare for research projects.

Banhoro participated in the RS In/Securities meeting held at the Cluster Retreats in Bayreuth. Sawadogo and Cyriaque Paré participated in the RS



Fernand Bationo (Ouaga ACC) and Jean Ramdé (University of Quebec) at the international symposium *Paternité-s, Parentalité, et Familles Contemporaines*

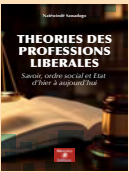
Digitalities workshop in Nairobi, Kenya from 10 to 15 November, 2025. Sore took part in the brainstorming workshop organised by RS Translating from 26 to 30 November, 2025, in Mombasa, Kenya. The presence of ACC Ouaga members at the conferences has enabled them to occupy strategic positions within the RS steering committee. The table below summarises the members of UJKZ ACC Cluster who are active in the RSs.

**Bayreuth Team Visit to Ouaga ACC**  
From 19 to 22 October, Ouaga ACC welcomed a Cooperation Visit Team from Bayreuth: Ute Fendler, Vice-Dean of Internationalisation and Public Engagement; Robert Debusmann, Academic Coordinator of Research, and Franz Kogelmann, Managing Director of the Cluster. The visit focused on creating the conditions necessary for implementing Africa Multiple 2.0: getting the revision and signing of the Project Agreements under way and exploring options for the further stra-

tegic development of the cooperation. During their stay, the team met with the Ouaga ACC administration board to discuss the establishment of an Ouaga ACC Board for 2.0; the requirements for the implementation of research projects, early career support, Fellows, mobility scheme; discussions on practical questions of the Cluster 2.0 (RS, gender balance, ethics, students’ joint supervision, etc.); and the establishment of the future Institute of African and Global Studies (IAGS) at UJKZ. Fendler and her team had exchanges with the President of UJKZ and his staff to address practical question for implementing Cluster 2.0, mid-and long-term strategic planning for cooperation, and discussion on the Africa Multiple 2.0 Project Agreement as well.

To sum up, Ouaga ACC is looking forward to Cluster 2.0 with more scientific events, exciting shared moments, and strong collaborations in Reconfiguring African Studies. 

**Book Publications**



***Théories des professions libérales: Savoir, ordre social et Etat d’hier à aujourd’hui* by Natéwindé Sawadogo.**

This relevant book of sociology critically traces the classic interpretive models that preceded it, of Anglo-Saxon origin, going back to relatively recent European developments, and ending with original African contributions currently under development.



***Médecine traditionnelle et souveraineté sanitaire au Burkina Faso: Réponses pour l’innovation* by Natéwindé Sawadogo.**

How can we explain the constant political commitment since the 1940s to health sovereignty based on traditional Burkinabe medicine, and on the other hand the lethargy of the sub-sector despite almost a century of commitment? How could the current regime’s recent commitment make a difference compared to everything that has been possible until now? The answer to these questions is the subject of this book.





# BIGSAS 2025 – A Milestone Year

Text **PHYO KAY KINE**

**From celebrating its 200th PhD to welcoming new scholars and faculty members, 2025 was a year of growth and achievement for BIGSAS.**

In 2025, the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) celebrated a historic achievement: the successful completion of its 200<sup>th</sup> PhD. Nearly two decades after its founding, this milestone reflects sustained academic excellence, dedicated supervision, and a vibrant culture of interdisciplinary and international collaboration. As a leading centre for doctoral training in African Studies at the University of Bayreuth, structurally linked to the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, BIGSAS fosters innovative research, global engagement, and the advancement of emerging scholars. Its dynamic network of Junior Fellows and alumni continues to shape debates across disciplines and regions.

### Strengthening the Academic Community

In 2025, BIGSAS welcomed two new faculty members: Sandra Calkins, Chair of Social and Cultural Anthro-

pology with a Focus on Africa, and Gilbert Ndi Shang, Chair of Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies. Notably, Shang is a BIGSAS alumnus — a powerful testament to the Graduate School’s long-term impact on academic career development. With these appointments, BIGSAS now comprises 38 senior members from more than 30 disciplines, further strengthening its interdisciplinary profile. Six new Junior Fellows joined the Graduate School from Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, and Nigeria. Two of them were awarded German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Graduate School Scholarship Programme (GSSP) funding, underlining BIGSAS’ continued commitment to supporting excellent early-career researchers.

### Doctoral Community in 2025

By the end of the year, BIGSAS counted 69 Junior Fellows representing 28 nationalities: 38 from 19 African countries, 26 from five European countries, two from Asia, and three from the Americas. Female representation remains strong, with 46 women and 23 men pursuing doctoral research. Thirteen Junior Fellows successfully defended their dissertations in 2025, reflecting the intellectual breadth of BIGSAS

**Diana Kisakye** – *Judicial Diplomacy in African REC Courts: Navigating the Strategic Space in the East African Court of Justice*

**Eleanor Schaumann** – *Priceless but Worthless: Values and Valuation Practices in Namibian Karakul Sheep Farming*

**Carsten Müller** – *Moving Towards Power? Mobilities and the Political Mobilisation of Motorcyclists in Uganda, Kenya, and Eastern DRC*

**Andreas Wüst** – *Re-Branding Moroccan Identity: Cultural Policies and the Stabilisation of Monarchic Power*

**Mary Mulenga Wincierz** – *A Constructivist-Grounded Theory Study of Experiences and Perceptions of Mentors and Mentees in Youth Mentoring Relationships in Zambia*

**Veronika Thalhammer** – *Die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen menschenrechtlicher Regulierung von Unternehmen aus völker- und verfassungsrechtlicher Sicht: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetzes*

**Robin Frisch** – *CFA Franc “from below”: Microhistory of a Colonial Currency in Togo and Cameroon*



**Yousra Sbahi** – *The Cultural and Social Hermeneutics of Death and Dying in Morocco*

**Ange Dorine Irakoze** – *Ubuntu as a Relational Framework: Addressing Social Injustices in Mineral Resource Governance to Advance Sustainable Development in Burundi*

**Gift Mauluka** – *An Integrated Childhood Perspective: Contextualising Legal and Non-Legal Approaches to Tackle Child Labour in Malawi*

**Perseverance Madhuku** – *“Bodily Matters”: Smallpox Vaccination and the Politics of Public Health in Zimbabwe, 1890 to 2022*

**Thierry Boudjekeu Kamgang** – *Writing the Slave Trade Trauma in Francophone Africa: A Study of Selected Novels*

**Mai Azzam Ibrahim Yousif** – *The Rhizome of Activism: Friendship, Dis-sent, and Resistance among Khartoum Youth Activists (2017–2021)*

One of these projects was completed as a cotutelle with Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in Morocco, underscoring BIGSAS’ commitment to international doctoral cooperation.

### Selected Achievements of Junior Fellows

BIGSAS Junior Fellows gained international recognition in 2025. Valerie Gruber was selected for the highly competitive Mark Claster Mamolen Dissertation Workshop at Harvard,



published the multimedia book *Todo Rio Resiste Mar (Every River Resists the Sea)*, and produced the documentary *MemoriAmeffricana*. Darja Wolfmeier published a peer-reviewed literature review in *Zeitschrift für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (ZeFKo Studies in Peace and Conflict)* and a book review in *H-Soz-u-Kult*, contributing to post- and decolonial debates in humanitarian research.

### Alumni Network and Global Impact

Since its establishment in 2007, 211 doctoral candidates have completed their PhDs at BIGSAS. The alumni network remains central to the institution’s identity and global reach. BIGSAS alumni publish with leading academic presses, contribute to research and policy worldwide, and return as mentors, associate members, and workshop contributors. Regular alumni conferences and the BIGSAS Journalist Award, presented since 2011, further strengthen these ties. The international visibility of BIGSAS alumni continues to grow. Tebarek Lika Megento was promoted to Full Professor of Development Geography at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, and appointed Deputy Director of the Institute of Social and Economic Research. Vanessa Wijngaarden and Fortune Agbele published new book chapters spanning interspecies communication in art and election observation in Liberia. Ngozi Edeagu contributed both a journal article on the diplomatic world of the All-African Students Union of the Americas and a book chapter on anti-colonial print culture. Abdellah Idhssaine completed his Habilitation

and now serves as Associate Professor and Coordinator of the English Language Department at Chouaib Doukkali University in El Jadida, Morocco. Further recognition includes a European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant awarded to Marta Scaglioni and a Circle U Postdoctoral Mobility Programme grant received by Stefanie Alisch.

### Activities, Training, and Institutional Development

Early 2025 marked the relocation of BIGSAS to the new Research Centre for Society Technology and Ecology in Africa (FZA) building, symbolising future-oriented development. The achievement of the 200<sup>th</sup> PhD was celebrated alongside a range of academic activities. Junior Fellow-initiated writing workshops, sessions on the politics of publishing, and the launch of the Early Career Mini-Workshop Series focusing on research funding in Germany and work-in-progress discussions strengthened professional development. Welcome seminars for new doctoral candidates, institutional visits by Humboldt Fellows, the BIGSAS Colloquium, and workshops on clear academic writing and effective thinking further enriched the academic year. With a strong alumni network, a diverse doctoral body, and expanding international partnerships, BIGSAS continues to promote excellence in African Studies. Together with the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, the Graduate School remains committed to fostering interdisciplinary research and supporting the next generation of globally engaged scholars.

BIGSAS Junior Fellows (f.l.t.r): Darja Wolfmeier, Faithful Oluokun, Julio Hasiniaina Andrianasolo, Randrianarimanana, Victoria Amaechi, Silvia Abru Enow, Valerie V.V. Gruber, Rodolphe Lontsi Djeugou





## BIGSAS Trajectories

# Coming Full Circle: An Academic Journey



Text **SERAWIT DEBELE**  
Photos **SABINE GREINER**

**When I arrived in Bayreuth as a doctoral student at the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), I carried with me more than a PhD project packed in my research proposal.**

I came from an academic background rooted in Addis Ababa University's newly emerging debates within the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, where I

completed a master's degree in Indigenous Cultural Studies. Those years had already made me attentive to how power, religion, politics, and everyday life intersect, but I did not yet know how significantly Bayreuth would transform that curiosity into a long-term intellectual preoccupation.

Joining BIGSAS in 2012 meant entering a vibrant, interdisciplinary community in which African Studies was never confined to one discipline or one method. The intellectual freedom of BIGSAS was matched by a demanding environment that required me to learn new theoretical languages and to defend my ideas among historians, anthropologists, literary scholars, and legal scholars. It was at BIGSAS that my interest in the relationship between religion and the state in Ethiopia took shape as a coherent project, becoming my doctoral dissertation and later a book on politics in the Irreecha ritual. Working on this topic pushed me to combine historical and ethnographic methods and to think carefully about how ritual, political demands, historical marginalisation, and power are entangled.

My time as a BIGSAS Junior Fellow was not limited to research and writing. I quickly discovered that BIGSAS was a community that expected engagement beyond one's own dissertation.

BIGSAS also gave me an intellectual and social home. The working groups "Religion in Africa" and "State and Society in Africa" were particularly important spaces, where I could test ideas, receive critical feedback, and develop long-term collaborations. The spirit of the "BIGSAS family" – a mix of rigorous critique and generous support – shaped not only my dissertation but also my sense of what an academic community should be. When I completed my PhD in Religious Studies in the summer of

2015, I experienced this not only as a personal achievement but as a shared accomplishment with supervisors, mentors, peers, and staff who had invested in my trajectory.

After my doctorate, I had the privilege of joining BIGSAS as a postdoctoral fellow. This was soon followed by my fellowship funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation. I spent sixteen months working on my new project on prayers as political texts until my path briefly took me away from Bayreuth in the summer of 2017. I worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen. I expanded my engagement with questions of religion, sexuality, gender, and urban diversity. These years were crucial in widening my comparative horizon and in refining the methodological tools I had developed during my BIGSAS time. Yet even while I was physically elsewhere, my intellectual connection to Bayreuth remained strong. I continued to collaborate with colleagues from BIGSAS and to follow the development of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence with great interest.

Returning to Bayreuth in 2021 as leader of the Junior Research Group (JRG) "Sexualities, Political Orders, and Revolutions in Africa" within the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence was 'a homecoming'. The group allowed me to pursue a set of questions that had long accompanied me. With a small but dynamic team, we began to explore these issues through case studies in Tunisia, Ethiopia, and Sudan, combining archival work, ethnography, and critical theory.

Against this background, being appointed as Professor for Gender, Sexuality, and Religion at the University

of Bayreuth marked a significant new chapter. The professorship is institutionally new, but for me it is intimately connected to my earliest years as a doctoral student wandering across campus, learning to read, think, and argue in new ways. My research now continues to explore the entanglements of sexuality, religion, and politics in African societies, building on questions first articulated in my BIGSAS days and expanded through postdoctoral and JRG work. At the same time, the professorship allows me to deepen teaching on gender, sexuality, and religion, supervise new generations of students, and contribute to Bayreuth's unique profile in African Studies in Germany.

Being both a BIGSAS alumna and a professor at the same university creates a particular kind of responsibility. I know first-hand what it means to arrive as an international student, to navigate a new academic culture, and to search for spaces of belonging and recognition. This experience informs how I supervise, how I design seminars, and how I think about institutional change. I try to recreate, for my students and team members, the combination of high expectations and deep care that I experienced at BIGSAS: an environment where people are pushed intellectually but never left alone.

When I say that returning to Bayreuth was an easy decision, I mean that the university, its researchers, and my friends here have shaped me in ways that are both professional and personal. The interdisciplinary landscape of African Studies on this campus, now strengthened by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, offers a space where questions about power, race, gender, sexuality, and religion can be asked with the complexity they deserve. To trace my journey from BIGSAS doctoral student to professor is therefore also to tell the story of a long, ongoing conversation with this university – a conversation that I now continue from a different position, but with the same commitment to critical, engaged, and responsible scholarship.

# Phyo Kay Kine: New Academic Coordinator

Text **PHYO KAY KINE**

**Guided by a commitment to intercultural exchange and academic excellence, Dr Phyo Kay Kine joins BIGSAS to support doctoral researchers and strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration.**

Phyo Kay Kine has recently joined the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) at the University of Bayreuth as Academic Coordinator. Her academic journey spans Myanmar, Germany, and China, shaping an interdisciplinary perspective grounded in research, leadership, and international collaboration.

Kine's fascination with the natural world led her first to a Bachelor's degree in Physics at the East Yangon University, Myanmar, and later to a Master of Science in Tropical and International Forestry at Georg August University of Göttingen, Germany, where she specialised in forest biometrics and tropical forest management. Her doctoral studies in Geography (Biogeography) at Philipps University Marburg, Germany, focused on high-elevation mountain ecosystems in Myanmar, exploring patterns of biodiversity and informing conservation priorities in tropical regions.

Following her PhD, Kine joined the Macroevolution Group at the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden, Chinese Academy of Sciences, China. As a Postdoctoral Researcher and later Assistant Professor, Kine led externally funded projects, managed a molecular biology laboratory, supervised postgraduate students, and collaborated with interdisciplinary and international teams. Her research integrates biogeography, statistical ecology, bioclimatic modelling, taxonomy, and machine learning to better understand biodiversity dynamics and support conservation strategies.

Mentorship and academic community-building have always been central to Kine's work. Having benefited from international scholarships and structured doctoral training, she knows the transformative value of supportive academic environments. Her experiences across different higher education systems strengthened her commitment to transparent processes, intercultural dialogue, and strong institutional partnerships.

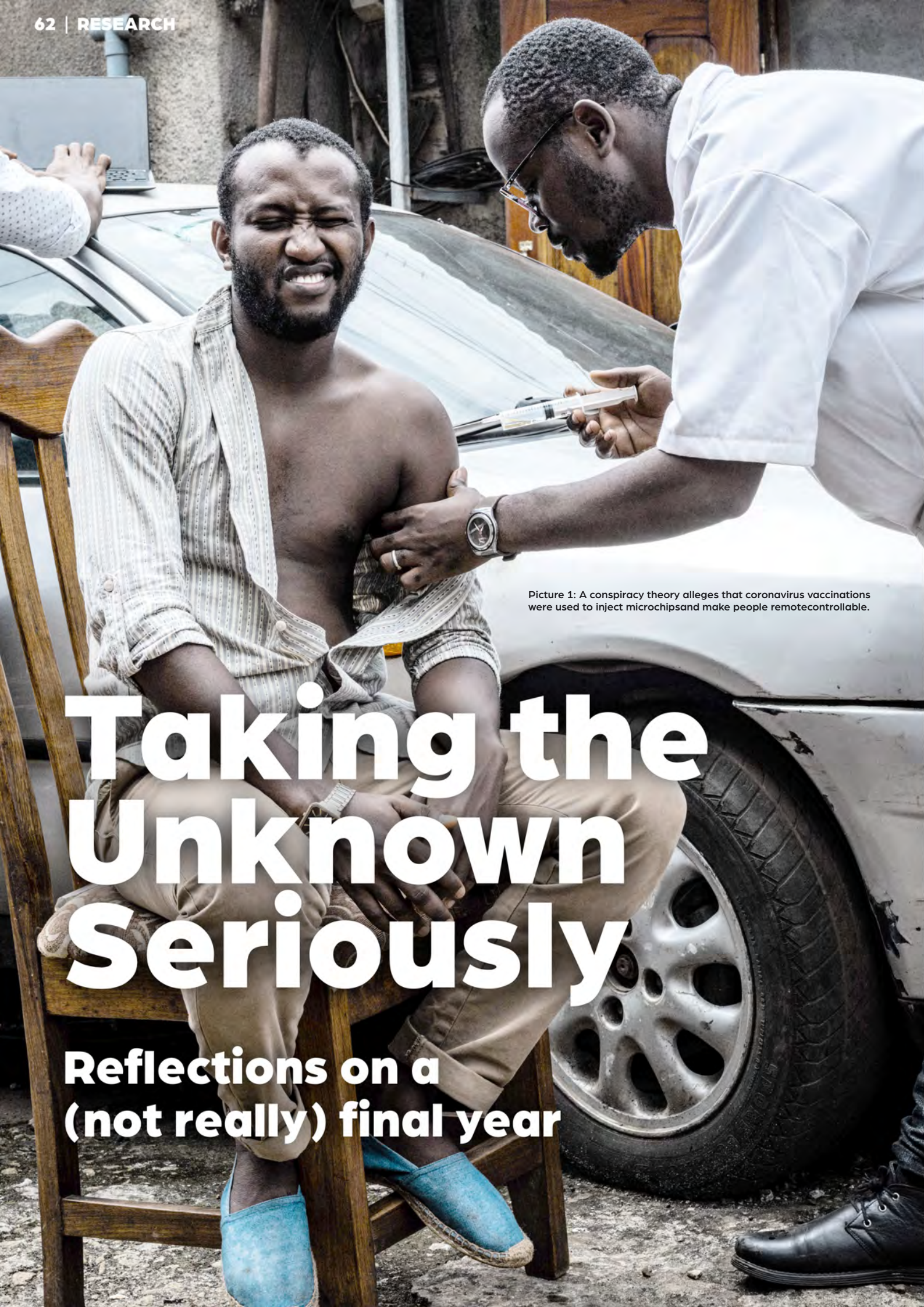
Kine's decision to join BIGSAS is both professional and personal. She is inspired by its interdisciplinary focus, its globally connected approach to African Studies, and its close link to the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, which promotes innovative research across the social, cultural, and historical dimensions of the continent. For Kine, BIGSAS represents a space where disciplines, cultures, and perspectives meet – a setting that mirrors her own journey and values.

In her new role, Kine looks forward to guiding doctoral researchers through their academic paths, enhancing structured training, fostering interdisciplinary exchange, and contributing to the global visibility of BIGSAS.

Kine's guiding motto captures her vision: "Bridging disciplines, cultures, and ideas to grow knowledge that serves communities."







Picture 1: A conspiracy theory alleges that coronavirus vaccinations were used to inject microchips and make people remotecontrollable.

# Taking the Unknown Seriously

Reflections on a (not really) final year

Text **JOSCHKA PHILIPPS,**  
**KINGSLEY JIMA**  
Photos **AURÉLIEN GILLIER**

**The Cluster's Junior Research Group Politics of the Unknown. Conspiracism and Conflict reflects on its work and activities of 2025.**

2025 was supposed to be the final year of our Junior Research Group (JRG) *Politics of the Unknown. Conspiracism and Conflict*, but it sometimes feels like we are still in the thick of it. As we are currently finalising three book projects – two dissertations and a collective volume – we look back on a year and an overall project that have proven equally fascinating and complex. Since 2021, we have worked on political dynamics that are too inaccessible to be known and too significant to be ignored or left uncertain. An arguably vague object of analysis, to be sure, but that challenge was precisely the point: how to grasp politics in terms of their elusiveness – their rumours, secrets, gossip, their conspiracy theories? How to describe the things that people are not sure about? How to make sense of political contexts in which, as Achille Mbembe (2016:26) argues, “Everything must be seen as secret or as belonging to a plot or conspiracy”?

Saïkou Oumar Sagnane approaches such unwieldy questions by focusing on the circulation of information. In his thesis, he analyses how during and after the coup d'état in the Republic of Guinea, information is disseminated, transformed, interpreted, and shared in different urban spaces and in relation to different concerns. Kingsley Jima's dissertation addresses the question of the so-called “unknown gunmen” in North West Nigeria and how that label is used in television media. Jima studies how both the affected communities and journalists make sense of violent conflict. Joschka Philipps, Aurélien Gillier, and Nestor Zanté are currently curating a broader interdisciplinary dialogue between the arts and the social sciences as editors of the collective volume *Politics of the Unknown. Images of Power and the Power of Images*. The book's 14 chapters intertwine scientific articles with photographic essays, paintings, film dia-

logues, drawings, and pictures of sculptures by various artists from Guinea, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Italy, and France. Published by iwalewabooks, it will provide the basis for a long-planned exhibition in Bayreuth.

Hansen, will be published in the academic journal *International Critical Thought*.

Sagnane has presented his works at various seminars, colloquia, work-



Picture 2: A syringe holding a SIM-card in a pile of Guinean francs

While 2025 has thus been marked by putting our thoughts on screens and paper, the JRG members have also been active on the side. Jima has presented at various national and international conferences and workshops, including at the second Moi University International Conference on African Studies in Kenya; at the University of Hamburg, Germany; in Augsburg, Germany at the Workshop for PhD candidates in Peace and Conflict Studies; and in Bayreuth at the Cluster's annual conference in May 2025 as a convenor and moderator of the panel discussion on *(Dis)Continuity and Transformation: African Knowledge Tradition and Contemporary Youth Enactment*. With Sagnane, Jima co-convened and participated in the research colloquium *Crossing Areas, Crossing Stories, Crossing Theories – Towards New Shores within Practices of Critique and Conviviality*. Moreover, 2025 saw several of Jima's works accepted in the form of academic articles. *Captive Bodies, Silent Voices: Patriarchy and Gendered Abductions in Nigeria* and *Unknown Gunmen, Known Suspects: Ethnic Attribution and the Politics of Violence in Nigeria* will be published as book chapters, and the article *Banditry, Terrorism, and State Failure: The Politics of Religion, Identity, and Tradition in Northern Nigeria*, co-written with William

shops, and conferences held at the University of Bayreuth: the Model African Union (MAU) Conference; the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence annual conference; and at the above-mentioned research colloquium on critique and conviviality. Internationally, Sagnane organised panels and gave presentations at the annual conference of the Canadian Association of African Studies (CAAS) in Toronto, Canada; the African Studies Association of Africa (ASAA) conference in Praia, Cabo Verde; and the International Sociological Association (ISA) conference in Rabat, Morocco. Following the invitation of anthropologist Sten Hagberg, Sagnane participated in a fieldwork seminar on the decolonisation of research methodologies at Uppsala University in Sweden. In Bayreuth, he co-organised a workshop with Asma Ben Hadj Hassen and Ismahan Soukeyna Diop on *Storytelling as a Research Material in the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Finally, within the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) community, Sagnane and Hassen served as Junior Fellows representatives for the 2025–2026 winter term, and as the BIGSASworks! editorial team since October 2025. His chapter titled *Is It Not True That the Tongue and Teeth Rub Together in the Mouth Without Ever Tearing?* has



been published in the Routledge Handbook of Social Cohesion in Africa, and his article *Mamaya: Contemplative Event and Transcendental Speculation* has been accepted in the collective volume *Politics of the Unknown*.

Philipps presented his work from the JRG at workshops and symposiums in Abidjan, Ivory Coast; Basel, Switzerland; and Berlin, Germany. At the European Conference on African Studies (ECAS) in Prague, Czech Republic, he co-organised with Adam Sandor and Lamine Savané the panel *Digital Platforms and Armed Insecurity in African Crisis Ecologies*; in Rabat at the ISA Conference, he co-organised and chaired the panels *Uncertainties and Post-Truth Politics in the Central Sahel* with Paala Toubga and *Ambiguous Subjects in a Global Generation. Understanding Youth from Bio-*

*graphical Approaches* with Gérard Amougou. Philipps also served as a discussant at the African Studies Association (ASA) conference in Atlanta, USA, for the “Author-Meets-Critic” roundtable on the book *Conspiracy Narratives from Postcolonial Africa: Freemasonry, Homosexuality, and Illicit Enrichment*, authored by Rogers Orock and Peter Geschiere. His final field research, as part of the JRG, took place in Conakry, Guinea, in April 2025.

Reflecting on his dissertation and the project over the past four years, Jima says that taking “the unknown” seriously – not as an absence to be resolved, but as a productive and political space in which meaning is negotiated – has opened up new ways for him to see and represent conflict beyond conventional academic registers.

Moreover, it has created a sustained engagement with the ethical and epistemic limits of representing violence, particularly in contexts where naming, misnaming, or refusing to name can have severe consequences. Some of the images presented here, taken by the photographer Gillier, reflect the project’s artistic engagements with questions of representation. The SIM-card-holding syringe surrounded by Guinean francs (Picture 2), for instance, alludes to the globally significant conspiracy theory, also present in Guinea, which alleges Bill Gates used coronavirus vaccinations to inject microchips and make people remote-controllable (see Picture 1). In the first year of the project, we experimented and played with these mise-en-scènes before working with actors to play them. In Picture 3, Philipps (symbol-

ising the West) bribes Sagnane (symbolising an African intellectual or leader) to make him read the Western script, which in turn evokes the fury of the people (symbolised here by a stone-wielding Ams Keuche). When we showed the picture to others, however, they interpreted it as Philipps having taken money from Sagnane rather than giving it to him, an interpretation that made at least as much sense, given the colossal benefits flowing into the pockets of foreign extractive mining companies in Guinea, for instance. Indeed, we realised that the interesting aspects of these images was usually what eluded a clear attribution of meaning. The sculptures of Sékou Oumar Thiam (see picture 4) hint at that level of indiscernibility and pose a paradox. Unlike what we had planned, the “politics of the un-

known” in many ways refused to be captured, either in images or in texts.

The geographical distances between researchers, artists, assistants and various external authors proved equally challenging, especially when Philipps moved to Burkina Faso for two semesters of teaching at the ACC Ouagadougou in 2023–24. It took a toll on a project that had aspired to cultivating and entertaining particularly close exchanges. As we struggle to finalize our publications, express our gratitude to the Cluster and present the fruits of our work in the best possible light, this may not be the right place for expressing regret about the shortcomings of our project, but perhaps for highlighting that in a project that has produced more openings than closures, some ideas and unresolved issues inevitably linger on.

Like the documentary film about a scientific team led by a Russian biologist who came to Guinea in the 1920s. Ilya Ivanov – we called him Ilianov – sought to conduct the hybridization of apes and humans. A true story. Our sober documentary about the traces of that colonial experiment would subtly turn into a horror film, sucked into the universe of fears and rumors attached to international medical interventions during the Ebola and Covid-19 pandemics. The film was never shot. But it illustrates what we wished to evoke by working at various thresholds: the threshold between fact and fiction, between the known and the unknown, the sciences and the arts, and between justified fear and misguided paranoia: it was to express the need for these distinctions as well as our suspicions and reservations about them.



Picture 3: Scene of a bribery (or a robbery)



Picture 4:  
The Universe (image detail)  
by Sékou Oumar Thiam



Picture 5: Radio Foré





Setting up for the live-stream  
Photo: Artina Michelle

Screening of LBS tapes (1980s) and film material from the 1970s at Stella Maris Polytechnic University  
Photo: Artina Michelle



# Junior Research Group and the History Public\* “African Knowledges ation since the 1970s”

As the project draws to a close, two team members reflect on key moments and activities of the Junior Research Group “African Knowledges and the History Public\*ation” – an interdisciplinary initiative examining how history is shaped and shared across Liberian society.

Text **EDIDIONG C. IBANGA**

## Re-Circulating the Digitized Television Tapes of the Liberia Broadcasting System

After initial talks with Cassandra Mark-Thiesen starting in 2018, in 2021 the Junior Research Group (JRG) “African Knowledges and the History Public\*ation” set out to collaborate with the Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS) to digitize the surviving U-Matic tapes of their 1980s broadcasting content. One of the end goals was to facilitate a re-integration of this rich resource of normal day or pre-war Liberia back into Liberian society. On 13 February, the JRG had its first meeting with the LBS Director General Eugene Fahngon. Fahngon, whose prior communications with the JRG had been through emails and WhatsApp messages with JRG leader Mark-Thiesen, warmly received the team in his office at the LBS facility in Paynesville, Monrovia, in Liberia. After brief introductions and conversations about the digitization work to

date, Fahngon was treated to a preview of the digital archive in-the-making.

Fahngon, who communicated his intention to transform the state media organ through innovative approaches including bridging existing generational gaps among broadcasters and media practitioners, was thrilled about the work done and the resources now available in digital format. External hard drives containing the digitized tapes were handed to Fahngon and his staff members, who shared his strategies to ensure that present-day media professionals could refer to experts from earlier days in a mutually beneficial learning exchange. He shared his excitement in seeing Liberia’s past media expertise and history communicated, documented, preserved, and re-enacted through this digital archive.

The hallmark of this meeting, however, was the scheduling of a private viewing session with some media icons from the 1970s and 1980s – the LBS employees who built careers as presenters, producers, and support

staff, most of whom feature on the tapes. Notable names included Mildred Dean, Fannie Cole Weefur, Korkulor Flomo (recently deceased), and Hawa Andrews Collins.

On 17 February, upon arrival at LBS headquarters in Paynesville, the JRG was surprised to learn that the “private” meeting would simultaneously be aired on live television. It was live streamed on the LBS’s digital platforms, and viewed nationally and internationally. The JRG had the chance to meet and converse with these earlier broadcasters and producers, while also engaging with the responses of online audiences to this rare viewing material. A two hour-long video curated from the archives was shown and was met with nostalgic reactions from the viewers. Media practitioners in the room used the content to recall personal careers and friendships as well as their contributions to nation-building. The exchange ended with a tour around the LBS’s current facilities, including ongoing construction of additional ultramodern facilities with the support of China.

This was a mutually rewarding experience, especially for the JRG, whose efforts towards the reintegration of these cultural goods could be considered a success. The digitized archives form a collection of Liberia’s heritage produced by Liberians, and can be read broadly as a compendium of African self-representation. Altogether, the archive holds around a week’s worth of television broadcast content across various genres produced between 1980 to 1991.



Text **LUISA SCHNEIDER**

## Liberia Through the Lens of Time: Lost Tapes and Talks

From 9 to 19 February, the JRG research team embarked on a journey to Liberia for its final team meeting, a milestone that brought our four-year research project full circle. This trip symbolised the culmination of our efforts to reintroduce the digitized Liberian Broadcasting System (LBS) tapes into the public eye.

This journey was about far more than just sharing local TV programmes from the 1980s and 1990s: it was about fostering meaningful dialogue and reintegrating these tapes into Liberian society and its mediascape. To achieve this, we designed and co-organised a series of memory workshops, creating an open space for reflection and discussion. These sessions underscored the importance of preserving these materials, not merely as historical artifacts, but as vital bridges to the past, connecting generations and reclaiming a shared cultural heritage.

The centerpiece of our trip was the

screening event *Liberia Through the Lens of Time: Lost Tapes and Talks*, held on 14 February at Stella Maris Polytechnic University in Monrovia, Liberia. This event was the culmination of overseas preparations and a collaborative effort with Artina Michelle, a talented Liberian American director of photography based in Atlanta, USA. Renowned for her work on projects like the short film featuring the surfing communities in Robertsport, Liberia, Artina infused the screening and discussions with her unique perspective as both a media professional and a member of the young Liberian Diaspora. With the invaluable support of Tanneh Kawee, who spearheaded the printing and distribution of promotional materials, we drew a vibrant and diverse audience, ranging from students and media professionals to engaged community members.

At the event, we unveiled a captivating compilation of historical video footage from the digitized LBS tapes titled *Back to the Soil*, curated by Cassandra Mark-Thiesen. This powerful visual narrative takes viewers back to the late 1980s, capturing calls to return to both cultural and economic roots. Documenting the nationwide campaign led by then-Pres-

ident Samuel Kanyon Doe, viewers witness the efforts of previous state leaders to encourage greater agricultural production. The campaign called on Liberians to reconnect with “the way of the ancestors” (C. Patrick Burrowes, 2025) and embrace sustainable small-scale farming as a path to national self-reliance. The footage vividly portrays agricultural cooperatives, vibrant community gatherings, and the rhythmic, soul-stirring dances of the Liberian National Culture Troupe.

Alongside this, Artina facilitated a second, evocative film screening, *Mr. President, We Are Still Here*, a government-commissioned work from the 1970s by African American filmmaker Dan A. Moore, Sr. This panoramic film, brimming with historical and cultural depth, offers a poignant window into Liberia’s past. It artfully weaves together the voices of everyday Liberians with the visionary leadership of the time, including William R. Tolbert, who served as President of Liberia from 1971 until his assassination in 1980. Through its vivid storytelling and striking imagery, the film not only preserves a critical chapter of Liberia’s history but also highlights its longstanding connection with Black America.





# From Oblivion to Memory: Transatlantic Memorial Echoes

Texts THIERRY BOUDJEKEU and LAUDE NGADI · Photos ROBERT GÖTZE

As part of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence project *Black Atlantic Revisited*, the project team brought their research on transatlantic memory into public dialogue through a workshop and the exhibition *From Oblivion to Memory*. Together, these formats explored how artistic and scholarly practices can reimagine the legacies of the slave trade and create alternative, living archives of memory across Africa and the Americas.

## Workshop: From Oblivion to Memory – Transatlantic Memorial Echoes

As a prelude to the exhibition of the same name, a workshop was held on 12 May 2025 at Iwalewaha, University of Bayreuth, as part of the *Black Atlantic Revisited* project. Bringing together artists, performers, academics, and writers from Africa, Latin America, and Europe, the event fostered transatlantic debates on memories of the slave trade and the complex cultural connections forged in its wake. Rather than treating memory as something fixed or monumental, participants explored memory as fluid, fragmented, embodied, and continually reimaged across time and space.

The workshop adopted a resolutely interdisciplinary approach. Contributors included Eberhard Rothfuss, who provided theoretical frameworks for understanding relational spaces; Colombian choreographer Lobadys Pérez, who explored embodied memory through performance; Brazilian artist Hugo Canuto, known for his

work on Afro-Brazilian cosmologies in comic form; literary scholar Ute Fendler, who examined drawing as a gesture of memory; Togolese novelist Kangni Alem, who shared insights from his literary trilogy on the Bight of Benin and Brazil; and Thierry Boudjekeu, who anchored discussions in oral narratives from Ouidah, Benin.

The opening session, *Thinking Relational Spaces*, moderated by Gilbert Ndi Shang, set the tone by reconsidering the Black Atlantic not merely as a historical formation but as a lived and felt reality. Rothfuss proposed approaching it as a "felt space" charged with atmospheric memory, arguing that cities such as Salvador da Bahia, Brazil function as emotional and sensory nodes where the weight of history resonates in everyday life. Pérez responded through a performance-lecture blending movement and narrative, demonstrating how dance operates as resistance against the epistemic violence of modernity – creating space to breathe, move, and remake memory rather than simply reclaiming an idealised past.

The second session, *Memory in Lines and Movement*, moderated by Boudjekeu, examined how memory travels through visual media. Canuto discussed how Afro-Brazilian cosmologies are reshaped through comic book storytelling in his graphic novel *Tales of the Orishas*, treating the medium as a political and cultural intervention that re-maps power and gives voice to silenced traditions. Fendler extended this reflection by drawing on Vilém Flusser's theory of gestures to argue that the act of drawing itself constitutes a mode of thinking, remembering, and imagining otherwise.

The final session, *Rewriting Trauma, Rebuilding Connections*, moderated by Ngadi Maïssa, turned to literature and oral storytelling as tools for reworking the slave trade's legacy. Alem offered insights into his trilogy tracing the entangled histories of the Bight of Benin and Brazil – from *Esclaves* and *Les Enfants du Brésil* to the forthcoming *Olympio* – showing how fiction captures what history tends to flatten. Boudjekeu grounded the conversation in Ouidah, demonstrating how oral narratives act as counter-archives that

question and enrich literary representation.

## Vernissage and Exhibition opening

As part of its annual conference, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence hosted the vernissage of the exhibition *From Oblivion to Memory – Transatlantic Memorial Echoes* at Iwalewaha, University of Bayreuth, on 15 May 2025. Curated by Thierry Boudjekeu and Ute Fendler and running until 31 July 2025, the exhibition marked the culmination of the research project *Black Atlantic Revisited – African and South American UNESCO World Heritage Sites and 'Shadowed Spaces' of Performative Memory*.

Drawing on photography, painting, video, and text, the exhibition explored the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade and the capacity of memory to endure despite sustained historical efforts to erase it, demonstrating how artistic expression plays a central role in preserving and transforming this memory across the Atlantic.

At the opening event, Sigrid Horsch-Albert, Director of Iwalewaha, situated the exhibition within the institution's longstanding commitment to African contemporary art and cultural dialogue. Fendler outlined the project's

scholarly context, underscoring its contribution to ongoing debates on transatlantic memorial practices. Boudjekeu drew on extensive fieldwork conducted in Ouidah, Benin, sharing oral histories and testimonies that reveal how local communities maintain a living relationship with the traumatic past of the slave trade. Rooted in symbolic rituals and spiritual transformations, these accounts form the conceptual foundation of the exhibition's narrative. Kangni Alem, who contributed to the project at curatorial, conceptual, and aesthetic levels, reflected on how literary perspectives shaped the exhibition's approach to memorial representation and transatlantic dialogue.

As an immersive, multi-stage audiovisual journey unfolding within a darkened, enclosed space, the exhibition wove together sounds and visual fragments from West Africa to evoke the memorial echoes of the slave trade. At its centre stood the Tree of Oblivion, a symbol of transatlantic rupture and resonance. Through images, artefacts, and oral testimonies, the exhibition traced the brutal mechanisms of the capture and deportation of sub-Saharan Africans in a therapeutic gesture that sought to give voice to silenced histories still vivid in West Africa's collective consciousness.

The memory fragments surfacing in

contemporary Africa find their echoes across the Atlantic: Colombian choreographer Lobadys Pérez explores how the body carries and transmits ancestral memory, whilst Brazilian artist Hugo Canuto reimagines Afro-Bahian spiritual narratives as comic strips, forging a dialogue between West African Vodun deities and their Brazilian Orixá counterparts. Gaëtan Nossougló's photography documents traces of history within Benin's contemporary landscape, and Flavien Zountché's poetic texts accompany the visual works throughout.

The opening event reflected the deeply collaborative and interdisciplinary character of the project. Special thanks were extended to Sylvestre Edjekpoto, Director of the NGO Afrique Décide, for his support during fieldwork in Benin, as well as to Katharina Greven for design and coordination, and Sefer Polat for the technical aspects of the exhibition. An online version has been made possible through the digital support of Sabine Greiner and her team.

Further information and a virtual exhibition are available at



The workshop brought together (f.l.t.r.) Ute Fendler, Lobadys Pérez, Kangni Alem, Hugo Canuto, and Thierry Boudjekeu.



The exhibition featured Hugo Canuto's depiction of Yemanjá (2024), the Afro-Brazilian Queen of the Sea – a symbol of motherhood, resistance and survival.



This exhibit explores the material and spiritual tools associated with the capture and enslavement of people.



The multimedia exhibition space at Iwalewaha



## PAVTIL – A New Research Project in Bayreuth African Studies

Text and Photo ERDMUTE ALBER

**The international research project PAVTIL explores how young people in Benin, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire navigate pathways into vocational training.**

What pathways do young people in Benin, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire take to obtain vocational training? What obstacles and opportunities do they encounter, and how – often in environments marked by uncertainty – do they manage to create prospects for themselves in the world of work? These questions are at the heart of the international research project *Pathways for Vocational Training and Informal Learning in West Africa* (PAVTIL). The project is carried out by a British/German/Canadian research team in close collaboration with partners in the three West African countries.

Vocational training has played a central role in West Africa since the colonial period and has long been regarded as a pillar of nation-building. Since the 1990s, reforms have sought to strengthen technical and vocational education by integrating it more firmly into formal school systems or by standardising apprenticeships in the informal sector and linking them to formal education. Despite these efforts, informal apprenticeship train-

ing with master craftsmen continues to dominate, particularly among young people from less affluent families and those living outside major urban centers. PAVTIL seeks to understand why this remains the case.

Focusing on small towns in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana, the study follows young women and men from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to gain detailed insight into how they acquire vocational and technical skills. Rather than viewing training pathways as linear or institutionally fixed, the project conceptualises them as part of a complex and multilayered educational landscape shaped by social relations, expectations, and hopes for the future.

Young people's perspectives are often marginalised in policy programmes aimed at promoting vocational education. To address this gap, PAVTIL adopts a youth-centered, feminist, and relational approach that places young people at the center of analysis while recognising the importance of family, community, and broader social contexts. This approach allows the study to move beyond a narrow focus on formal technical schools and to examine the continuing relevance of apprenticeships in the informal sector.

The project is collaborative and em-

ploys qualitative, ethnographic, and participatory research methods. Between 2025 and 2028, nine researchers at different career stages are working together to produce three in-depth country case studies and a shared comparative data set. In each country, a one-year exploratory field study is conducted, complemented by more targeted research activities. In addition, twelve young people per country document their everyday experiences with vocational training and reflect on their visions of a good future. Fieldwork began in summer 2025.

The project as a whole, with three country cases, is led by Dorte Thorsen, Institute of Development Studies (UK). Erdmute Alber, University of Bayreuth, and Clarisse Tama-Imorou, Université de Parakou (Benin) are responsible for the case study in the Republic of Benin, alongside other teams working in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Each country team is supported by doctoral or postdoctoral researchers. PAVTIL was selected for funding in the prestigious Open Research Area (ORA 8) competition, a joint initiative of the French National Research Agency (ANR), German Research Foundation (DFG), The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) United Kingdom, and The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada.



## FABRIC – A New Research Project in Social Anthropology

Text and Photo ERDMUTE ALBER

**The new FABRIC project investigates how children in Benin and Senegal learn and engage with craft practices, exploring how these shape social belonging and future imaginaries.**

The economic value of crafting in West Africa is currently changing in two contrasting directions. Demand for artisanal products is declining as cheaper industrial goods and second-hand alternatives become increasingly available; however, tourism and international art markets are opening new opportunities that may reinvigorate the craft sector. The cultural and epistemological value of crafting remains highly esteemed, particularly in rural communities and within national policy frameworks that promote the creative and cultural industries. Craft practices have proven highly adaptive, with artisans increasingly incorporating new materials, including recycled scrap metal and textiles. Growing global interest in sustainability and circular economies has further stimulated policy attention to artisanal craft production.

Crafting in West Africa is deeply gendered and often organised through caste-like systems that link specific crafts to particular status groups

and/or ethnic communities. As a result, craft practices are closely intertwined with the ways in which social belonging and social relations between castes, ethnicities, faiths, and genders are expressed and reproduced. In this dynamic context, children's craft learning becomes especially important for understanding how social belonging is instantiated through material culture and how changes in craft organisation open up space for new ways of imagining social belonging.

The transformation of craft practices therefore raises critical questions about children's social belonging in the present and future. This is particularly significant in West Africa, where around 40% of the population is under the age of 15. How children learn crafts, relate to materials, and position themselves within craft-based social relations shapes not only their future imaginaries but also has broader implications for economic development and local and regional political stability.

The research project FABRIC addresses these issues by investigating how children's social belonging is manifested in and through craft practices in Benin and Senegal. Combining

archaeological and anthropological perspectives, the project extends research on personhood by focusing on the material dimensions of childhood. FABRIC contributes to new ways of valuing craft cultures while expanding children's possibilities for imagining alternative futures.

FABRIC is relevant to several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including gender equality, decent work and economic growth, and sustainable cities and communities, and especially target safeguarding cultural heritage. The project deploys innovative qualitative and material-based methods to explore how children navigate social relations during periods of rapid economic and cultural change. It is led by Karen Wells from Birkbeck, University of London, UK and Erdmute Alber from the University of Bayreuth, with Co-Principal Investigators Maguette Diame from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA and Clarisse Tama-Imorou from the University of Parakou, Benin, and doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. FABRIC is funded by the German Research Foundation and the UK Research Council. Fieldwork began in 2025.







Participants for the Green Hydrogen Workshop

Article by the Copenhagen Business School & Development Studies (CBDS)

# 'Roundtabling' Research Gaps

## in Africa's Green Hydrogen Transition

Text and photos **FESTUS BOAMAH**

**What are the blind spots in Africa's green hydrogen transition? Insights from the Bavarian Funding Programme for the Initiation of International Research Cooperation (BayIntAn) Green Hydrogen Futures Workshop bring critical research gaps into focus and call for more grounded, context-sensitive approaches.**

Strenuous efforts to ramp up global 'decarbonisation' or adapt to 'life beyond fossil fuels' continue to yield paradoxical outcomes. A case in point is the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-30) in Brazil, which made unequivocal commitments to the global decarbonisation agenda, notably pledges to quadruple sustainable fuel production and



The workshop's opening talk was held by Festus Boamah.

to protect Indigenous community land rights, yet failed to deliver a clear, explicit roadmap for defossilisation. Green hydrogen is the latest addition to the long list of contradictions in carbon-neutrality initiatives. Hydrogen technologies are categorised by colour according to their carbon footprint and the energy sources used to produce them. For example, hydrogen from natural gas is grey; from fossil fuels with carbon capture and storage technologies is blue; whereas the electrolytic production of hydrogen from solar, wind, and other renewable energy sources constitutes green hydrogen. Global South countries are positioning themselves to utilise their renewable energy abundance and so-called 'underutilised land' in line with their carbon-neutrality and national socio-economic transformation goals. The appeal of the green hydrogen transition lies in its capacity to decarbonise hard-to-abate industries (e.g., steel, cement, and chemicals) in the Global North, which are championing low-carbon transition initiatives.

It is an interesting coincidence that African and other Global South countries seeking to build strategic resilience through a green hydrogen transition are fossil fuel-dependent and soon-to-be petro-states (e.g., Namibia). These emerging hydrogen

geographies are, thus, determined to maintain mutually symbiotic relationships between fossil fuel and low-carbon energy regimes. Again, the trajectory of the green hydrogen transition mirrors that of biofuel investment and other green initiatives in Africa, which aimed to leverage so-called marginalised areas for decarbonisation and economic resilience but delivered disappointing outcomes. These dilemmas warrant a round-table on research gaps in the green hydrogen transition in Africa.

### The BayIntAn Green Hydrogen Workshop and Deliberations

The BayIntAn Green Hydrogen Futures Workshop was organised by Festus Boamah in late 2025 to initiate green hydrogen research collaborations between Bavarian researchers and their counterparts in Oman, Kenya, and Namibia. The two-day workshop was funded primarily by the Bavarian Research Alliance, with additional support from the African Studies Institute (IAS) and the Social Geography Chair at the University of Bayreuth (UBT). It attracted participants from UBT; Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya; the Research Institute for Sustainability (RIFS), Potsdam, Germany; the Namibian Energy Institute, the German University of Technology (GUTech) in Oman; the

Deggendorf Institute of Technology (THD), Germany; and the University of Cologne, Germany.

While acknowledging green hydrogen's potential to decarbonise carbon-intensive industries, workshop participants advocated research into strategies better attuned to the uncertainties surrounding untested or nascent green hydrogen technologies in arid regions. These regions are often characterised by customary or ancestral lands, persistent water scarcity, a fragmented regulatory framework, and domestic markets that are either underdeveloped or non-existent. The submissions highlighted problems such as the adequacy of the law, duplication of functions and institutions, lack of harmonisation of responsibilities, inadequate curriculum development and capacity building for domestic expertise in the emerging hydrogen economy, and complex sustainability governance mechanisms. Participants also emphasised evolving regulatory frameworks that currently do not provide sufficient incentives to boost investor confidence, alongside the need for cutting-edge technologies, such as desalination plants, to efficiently utilise seawater and brackish water in arid regions affected by water scarcity. These points highlighted the components required for successful green hydrogen ecosystems in emerging hydrogen hubs. Green hydrogen ecosystems comprise the interconnected elements, notably green financing mechanisms, infrastructure configurations, regulatory regimes, geopolitical factors, expert knowledge, and technologies that mediate green hydrogen value chains (production, conversion, storage, transportation, marketing, and applications). Oman's green hydrogen ecosystem appeared to offer a valuable guide for African countries aspiring to become green hydrogen hubs.

Oman's hydrogen ecosystem comprises shared infrastructure corridors (e.g., power, water/desalination, pipelines), logistics, economic and political stability, and renewable energy utilisation (solar and wind),

underpinned by a pragmatic regulatory regime that makes the burgeoning industry attractive to investors. Royal Decree (RD 10/23) systematises the allocation and delineation of fifty thousand square km of land into blocks, significantly reduces land auction fees, and awards green hydrogen projects through transparent, less bureaucratic auction procedures, with corporate tax reductions. The Royal Decree also established Hydrom, an independent body to coordinate the green hydrogen transition. The Royal Decree and Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's political commitment support long-term planning and project stability, conditions that boost investor confidence in nascent green hydrogen technology. Creating such a conducive green hydrogen ecosystem reduces socio-ecological risks and allays fears of project bankability and market-guarantee concerns that often deter prospective investors and offtakers, as well as local contestations (e.g., exclusion and encroachment of ancestral lands), as seen in the current setbacks in Namibia's green hydrogen project.

Other impressive features include the role of the country's sovereign wealth funds (Oman Investment Authority), partnerships for transcontinental infrastructure and commercial routes (with the Netherlands and Germany), strategic water desalination, and a commitment to research and development. For example, GUTech, in collaboration with the Oman Hydrogen Centre, has established a Master of Science programme in Green Hydrogen Economy and Technology. GUTech

maintains institutional partnerships and exchange programmes with Aachen University and the Technical University of Applied Sciences Ingolstadt, both in Germany, providing exchange opportunities for students/energy sector workers and technical support from international teachers to strengthen technical capacity, and conducting feasibility studies on energy infrastructure, all in support of Oman's green hydrogen development.

That said, Oman's green hydrogen strategy aims to diversify oil and gas revenues and achieve regional and geopolitical dominance, which differs significantly from the aims of many African countries (e.g., Namibia), seeking to primarily build economic resilience amid global economic shocks. Oman's hydrogen strategy is guided by a long-term planning and robust energy-sector infrastructure, conditions that do not exist in many African countries. Oman's export market orientation appears problematic, given that its targeted foreign markets (Europe and Asia) are not fully developed, are subject to significant geopolitical uncertainties, and regulatory retreats. Regarding market uncertainties, Charles Nzila suggested that Africa's green hydrogen hubs should, in the meantime, focus on emerging green ammonia production and export particularly to countries such as Kenya that depend heavily on nitrogen fertiliser imports. Therefore, 'future research gap roundtables' on the green hydrogen transition in Africa should, be guided by these considerations. 



Oman's Green Hydrogen Ecosystem





More info on the working group's work and activities:



# The Postdoc Working Group Rethinking Accelerated Learning in the Global South

Text **MARIA THERESA VOLLMER, BILLIAN KHALAYI OTUNDO, QUE ANH DANG, EMNET TADESSE WOLDEGIORGIS, EMMANUEL EFFIONG JOHNSON**

**The Working Group examines the phenomenon of accelerated learning (AL) and its implications on educational practices, systems, and structures in the Global South, focusing on Africa and Asia. AL emphasises short-term solutions and offers a quick fix to the so-called education crisis, but fails to address critical issues such as quality, equity, and social justice.**

This postdoctoral working group (WG) aims to contribute to the concept of accelerated learning (AL) to investigate epistemological questions within the theme of temporalities, and to engage in outreach and science communication. Our key research questions are: (a) How does the implementation of the current AL agendas impact educational settings at both systemic and individual levels within diverse cultural, linguistic, social, and economic contexts in the Global South? (b) How can a comparative research design incorporating the temporal dimension and process provide insights into the effectiveness and transformation of

AL practices across diverse educational systems in the Global South, considering factors such as historical trajectories, temporal dynamics, identity formation, and evolving learning processes?

Epistemological diversity and a sensitivity to power imbalances in knowledge production and transmission enriches our research conversations and contributes to critical area studies and the further development of comparative research that is informed by post-colonial studies. We take the diversity of lifeworlds and the simultaneity of different temporalities in relational constellations as the starting point of our reflections. We explore how dimensions of temporalities converge in the phenomena and policies of AL, and how these affect (social) relations. We contribute to knowledge on the dimension of time and process in comparative (education) research. We aim at depicting how the AL agenda affects the multiplicity of diverse lifeworlds, practices, concepts, and knowledges. We primarily focus our research on the African context while providing a comparative perspective by examining selected Asian countries within the broader framework of the Global South. We also incorporate perspectives from Europe to capture the mobil-

ity of ideas and discourses on education in their broader sense.

## Constellation of the WG

The WG brings together researchers and practitioners from different parts of the world to discuss the concept of AL and its implications in a globalised world, with the focus on African and Asian contexts. The core research group consists of Maria Theresa Vollmer of the University of Bayreuth (UBT); Billian Khalayi Otundo from the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, UBT; Que Anh Dang from Coventry University, UK; Emmanuel Effiong Johnson, also from Coventry University; and Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis from the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. The wider research group brings in researchers and practitioners from different parts of the world including Europe (Germany, Denmark, UK, Portugal, Finland); Africa (Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Cameroon, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Morocco, Benin, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mauritius); Asia (India, China, Indonesia, Vietnam); and the Americas (the USA and Canada). Our disciplinary backgrounds include (higher) education, African Studies, development studies, sociology, linguistics, critical area studies, and technology, among others. Our various re-

The research group on the workshop's second day  
Photo: Maria Theresa Vollmer

search interests, experiences, and local networks nurture a stimulating collaborative workspace that expands beyond the realm of academia. We are concerned with the multiplicity, intersections, and power dynamics in spaces of AL.

## Virtual Meeting and Reading Sessions

After our kick-off session on 19 November 2024, we conducted three

part of international organisations on the transformation of learning in local contexts.

## Workshop and Writing Retreat

The WG organised a two-day hybrid workshop and a two-day writing retreat from 18 to 21 February 2025, with over 25 participants in physical attendance and ten online. Vollmer welcomed the participants and informed them of the planned activities, such as

Olawale Fahm. Another panel was on *Accelerated Learning and Identity Formation*, with presentations by Emmanuel Effiong Johnson and Que Anh Dang. The *Internationalisation of Education: Primary, Secondary and Higher Education* panel had talks by Benavot, Alves dos Santos, Chao, Thandi Lewin, Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo, and Woldegiorgis. The final panel *Case Studies: Uganda, Morocco, Cameroon, and Kenya*, had contributions from Yamina El Kirat El Allame, Endurance Dissake, and Otundo.

## The Making of a Documentary and a Podcast

The workshop was accompanied by the making and screening of the documentary film, *Need for Speed: African and Asian Students on Accelerated Learning at the University of Bayreuth*, led by Johnson. The screening provided a platform for discussions on inclusivity and the future of higher education in a rapidly evolving global landscape. Some of these challenges are also discussed in detail in the podcast.



Que Anh Dang, Maria Theresa Vollmer, Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis and Billian Khalayi Otundo during the recording of the podcast episode.  
Photo: Sabine Greiner

reading sessions and three public lectures. The first reading session happened on the same date and was chaired by Vollmer. It was paired with an open, informal introductory session exploring the concepts of temporalities and AL. The second reading session on 14 January 2025 was on the theme of artificial intelligence in education and chaired by Otundo. The third reading session was on 4 February 2025 with higher education as its theme and chaired by Woldegiorgis.

Subsequently, we had our first public lecture on 28 November 2024 on AL programmes for out-of-school young people in Africa, which was held by Miriam Tusiimire, Head of Programmes at War Child Canada in Uganda and Fatu Yumkella from Dalan Development Consultants, Sierra Leone. In the second public lecture on 11 December 2024, Roger Chao spoke about AL and fast policy learning in Southeast Asian higher education. Lastly, on 22 January 2025, Iris Alves dos Santos of Tampere University, Finland and Aaron Benavot from the University at Albany-SUNY, USA spoke about global learning crises and the im-



The postdoc working group convenors and core members of the research group: f.l.t.r.: Emmanuel Effiong Johnson, Billian Khalayi Otundo, Que Anh Dang, Maria Theresa Vollmer, Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis  
Photo: Maria Theresa Vollmer

individual working spaces, group work, walk & talk sessions, a podcast episode, and a film documentary.

The workshop papers culminated in six themes with corresponding panels. *Concepts and Cultures of Learning* had contributions by Christoph Wulf, Dhruv Raina, Vollmer, and Hongyan Chen. The panel, *Accelerated Learning and Skill Development*, had talks by James Otieno Jowi, Tusimiire, Yumkella, and Vollmer. The third panel, *Digital Transformation and AI*, held discussions by Otundo, Brenda Chiteri, and AbdulGafar

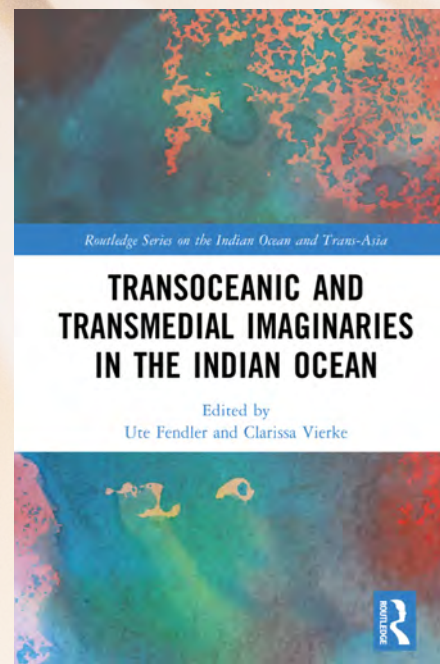
## The WG Future

The above-mentioned activities show the richness and depth of our academic discussions. The WG has a forthcoming book, a special issue, and other various outreach activities. Toward this endeavour, the WG already presented some of its activities at the Cluster's Academic Fellow Lunch on 17 December 2024. Together with Dang on 7 March 2025, we published a blogpost that explores the pros and cons of AL at University World News. We continue to develop our collaborative publications from various parts of the world.



## Cluster publications: Reading Recommendations

The vibrant research community of the Institute of African Studies (IAS), the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, and the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) continues to generate a diverse range of publications each year. Presented below is a selection of books and monographs published in 2025, showcasing recent scholarly contributions by our members and alumni. A comprehensive list of publications can be accessed via the QR code at the end of this section.



**Ute Fendler, Clarissa Vierke (Eds.):** *Transoceanic and Transmedial Imaginaries in the Indian Ocean*, London: Routledge, 2025

*Transoceanic and Transmedial Imaginaries in the Indian Ocean* explores multiple aesthetic relations constantly in flux, which construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct the Indian Ocean. It addresses the questions of how the arts – music, literature, visual art, and performance – relate to and dynamically create imaginaries of the Indian Ocean as a transcontinental space.

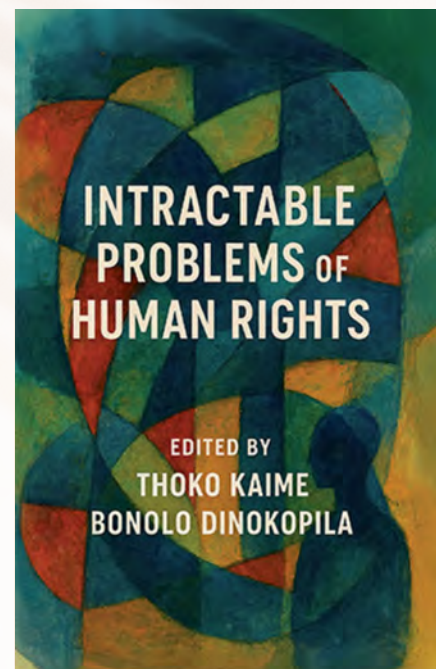
Contributors focus on the relations and interference of various art forms, including literature, music, visual arts, installations, and performance as well as local crafts, and cross the boundaries of language(s), which have often separated views of the Indian Ocean along the monolingual logic of discip-

lines. This book takes a transmedial perspective and studies the Indian Ocean as a fluid space, in which languages, images, music, and dance movements have been traveling and influencing each other for centuries. It analyzes how music, verbal, audiovisual, or performative arts use imagery, sound, narrative, and performances to make alternative relations across space and time and to make transoceanic visions and histories perceptible. Focusing on the aesthetic approach, this book combines various formats to capture the complex and often complementary interconnectedness of different stories told using various media, creating different atmospheres and touching other senses.

This book is a novel contribution to the study of the Indian Ocean and will be of interest to an interdisciplinary readership, including literature, cultural studies, visual arts, performance, anthropology, and history, but also social geography, linguistics, and music studies.

**Kaime, Thoko, Bonolo Dinokopila (Eds.):** *Intractable problems of human rights*, Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press (PULP), 2025.

Despite tremendous strides in the legal and institutional protection of human rights in Africa, which has seen the African Union champion the ever-growing framework of treaties and institutions dedicated to human rights protection, many African citizens still suffer the yoke of human rights abuses. In some cases, their situations seem worse than they were before the

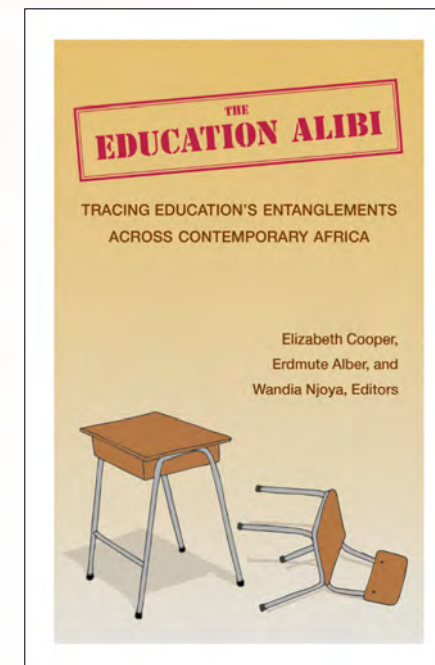


advent of widespread constitutional protection. Despite the establishment of these extensive legal frameworks, why do human rights violations still persist on a large scale? The chapters in this book address this core question by focusing on three intractable problems of human rights, which are defined by the seeming impossibility of resolving them.

**Erdmute Alber, Elizabeth Cooper, Wandia Njoya (Eds.):** *The Education Alibi: Tracing Education's Entanglements Across Contemporary Africa*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2025

Education is generally promoted as the key to the future of Africa in global development discourses about the continent. Education's official

story in Africa continues to be one of innocence and public good, yet, since colonial times, education has constituted an area of intense contestation. *The Education Alibi* asks if it is possible that while claiming to be doing one thing, education has also been doing another in African communities. The concept of the "alibi" shines an interrogative light on institutions' and actors' use of education to divert scrutiny from other effects. Through ethno-



graphic research and critical analysis across the continent, this volume focuses on people's lived experiences to demonstrate how contemporary education systems in fact deepen economic, racialized, gendered, urban-

rural, linguistic, religious, and other intranational and international inequalities.

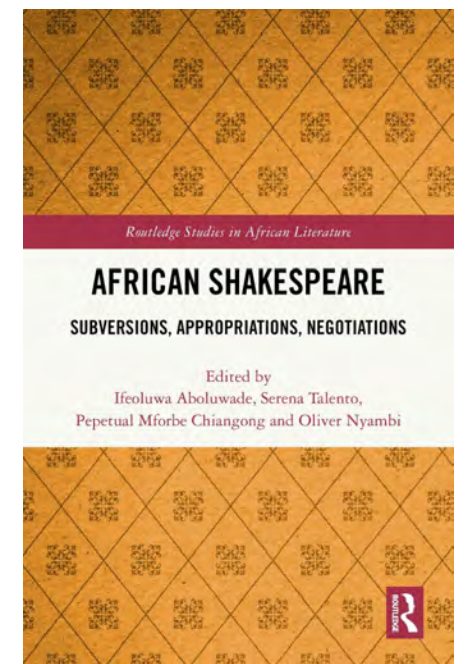
**Ifeoluwa Aboluwade, Serena Talento, Pepetual Mforbe Chiangong, Oliver Nyambi (Eds.):** *African Shakespeare Subversions, Appropriations, Negotiations*, London: Routledge, 2025

*African Shakespeare: Subversions, Appropriations, Negotiations* uncovers the multidimensional inventions, synergies, and experimentations that have emerged from performative, political, literary, and conceptual encounters with Shakespeare and his oeuvre in African contexts.

Divided into three broad and overlapping parts, the chapters of the book critically explore issues of decoloniality and postcoloniality; nation-building and state corruption; history and memory; gender and feminism; translation and adaptation from diverse theoretical standpoints. The book displaces the emphasis on Shakespeare's works to productively illuminate the multi-layered significance of African epistemes, politico-aesthetics, languages and socio-cultural realities to the practice and process of literary and theatrical intervention and creation. Building on and extending extant scholarship in the field of African Shakespeare, the contributions in the volume not only enhance

knowledge of African Shakespearean creations but also enrich African Studies and Shakespeare Studies by opening up new possibilities for transdisciplinary dialogues and cross-fertilization.

The book is useful for students and scholars of African Theatre and Performance, Cultural Studies, (Global) Shakespeare Studies, Translation and Adaptation Studies and Post-colonial Studies.



Please visit the Cluster's publication page:





# The Cluster's International Fellows in 2025

In 2025, the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies once again welcomed a vibrant and diverse cohort of international fellows from across the globe, with a particularly strong representation of scholars based in Africa. Bringing a wide range of disciplinary perspectives and research interests, the fellows traditionally enrich the Academy's intel-

lectual community through their innovative projects and collaborative engagement. In close cooperation with their respective hosts, they actively contribute to advancing the research agenda of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, fostering new dialogues and strengthening transregional academic partnerships.



**Feyi Ademola-Adeoye**  
02.05.2025–31.07.2025  
Normative Disruptions in the Linguistic Transition of some Nigerian Proverbs

**Epifania Amoo-Adare**  
(artist in residence)  
03.05.2025–31.07.2025  
Who is Lucy!?!  
W



**Ismahan Diop**  
12.05.2025–11.07.2025  
Building a decolonial curriculum in Clinical Psychology: promoting culturally relevant psychotherapeutic tools



**Gregory Doukas**  
01.06.2025–31.07.2025  
How Not to Decolonize



**Ann-Marie Ellmann** (artist in residence)  
03.05.2025–30.07.2025  
Who is Lucy!?!  
W



**Renu Modi**  
03.05.2025–23.07.2025  
Mobilities Between India and Africa: Solidarities Ruptures and Memory Spaces



**Jacqueline-Bethel Mougoue**  
13.01.2025–12.06.2025  
Pan-African Lives Racial Politics and Belonging in Africa



**Fanuel Obala Musumba**  
01.02.2025–27.07.2025  
Reconstructing the Ontology of People with Albinism in Kiswahili Children's Fiction



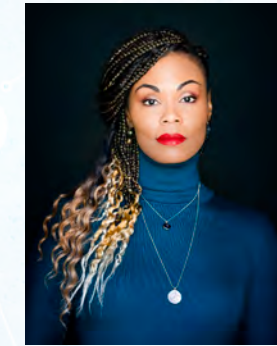
**Daniel Ochieng Orwenjo**  
03.10.2024–31.03.2025  
Waiting to Die: The Discursive Construction of Competing Moralities in Illness Narratives in End-of-Life Care Contexts in Kenya



**Marie Migline Paroumanu**  
(artist in residence)  
24.04.2025–23.07.2025  
Ritual For A Timeless Forgiveness



**Katrin Seidel**  
11.04.2025–30.04.2025  
Decentering international and internationalized peace mediation in Africa



**Jennifer Neal**  
(artist in residence)  
06.01.2025–05.05.2025  
Bear Country



**Anthony Okeregbe**  
(internal fellow)  
15.04.2025–31.05.2025



**Christabel Sam**  
22.10.2024–10.01.2025  
Fashioning Masculinities and Politics in an Era of Pandemics: Reading the Intersections



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



**Isaie Dougnon**  
09.06.2025–05.07.2025  
The crisis of academic freedom before and after democracy: Student and professor resistance syndicalism and radicalism in Malian higher education



**Abdulgafar Olawale Fahm**  
01.10.2024–31.03.2025  
Impact of Digital Technology on Islamic Learning in Contemporary Nigerian Muslim Societies



**Thandeka Mfinyongo**  
(artist in residence)  
01.12.2024–31.03.2025  
Ingoduko (Homecoming)



**Pepetual Mforbe**  
01.02.2025–31.07.2025  
Silence and Temporality in African and African Diaspora Theatre and Performance

Find out more about the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies and the 2025 fellows here:





Text KATHARINA GREVEN

**Thandeka Mfinyongo's artistic residency at Iwalewahaus brought together sound, craft, and community, exploring Indigenous knowledge and cultural continuity through her project *Ingoduko (Homecoming)*.**

From December 2024 to March 2025, South African musician, performer, and ethnomusicologist Thandeka Mfinyongo spent four months as Artist Fellow at Iwalewahaus in Bayreuth. With her academic host, Katharina Greven, and supported by the close collaboration of Silvan Spohr, Sabine Linn, and Jubilian Ngaruwa, her residency unfolded as an immersive encounter with Indigenous knowledge, artistic research, and com-

# Ingoduko (Homecoming):

## Thandeka Mfinyongo Artist in Residence in Bayreuth

Thandeka Mfinyongo at the concert  
on 12 March 2025 at Iwalewahaus

Photo: Robert Götz

Photo Sabine Linn



In her workshop, the artist built instruments with the participants, which they later used in performance

munal creativity. What emerged was not only a project but a living environment of shared learning and cultural reflection.

At the heart of her stay stood *Ingoduko (Homecoming)*, a project devoted to the Xhosa bow instruments uhadi and umrhubhe. In her academic work, Mfinyongo conceptualises these bows as ideogrammatic archives – objects that store memory, history, and emotion through their materiality. She argues that instruments are carriers of ancestral presence and cultural continuity, and that the act of playing or building them unlocks layers of meaning that cannot be accessed through text alone. This understanding shaped her entire residency, which combined performance, research, writing, and sensory engagement in equal measure.

Mfinyongo's academic practice remained an integral part of her artistic work. While in Bayreuth, she continued writing about the cultural significance of bow music, the politics of Indigenous sound, and the embodied experience of crafting instruments. She approaches instrument-making not simply as a technical process, but as a form of alternative knowledge production, one that arises through touch, repetition, breath, and shared attention. The haptic qualities of bending wood,

testing resonance, and working with natural materials became, for her and the participants, moments of learning that emerged directly from the senses.

This became especially visible in the extended workshop that unfolded across January and February. Participants joined her in gathering materials from the surrounding forests in Bayreuth, merging the found materials with sticks and calabashes from South Africa, then spending weeks building and rehearsing together. Through this communal work, a small learning community formed, one that moved, listened, and experimented as a collective. Many described the experience as transformative, as if the simple rhythm of craft and rehearsal created its own kind of magic. The workshop became a space where intergenerational and intercultural knowledge could be passed on not through instruction alone, but through gestures, shared labour, and the intimate exchange of sound.

In March, the residency culminated in the pop-up exhibition *Echoes of Tradition* in Iwalewahaus. It brought together the handcrafted instruments, photographic reflections, and a documentary film produced during the residency. The exhibition offered a window into the sensory, communal, and intellectual processes that defined *In-*

*goduko*, showing how artistic homecoming emerges through collective effort rather than nostalgic return.

The final month also featured a series of concerts at the südpunkt in Nuremberg, at Iwalewahaus, and at Steingraeber House in collaboration with South African pianist and performer Coila-Leah Enderstein. These performances revealed the expressive depth of the bows and demonstrated how Indigenous instruments can resonate powerfully within contemporary artistic settings, creating conversations that reached beyond linguistic and cultural boundaries.

The residency generated a broad range of documentation. A richly curated photographic archive by Linn captured the rhythms and textures of the project, while two audio recordings expanded its sonic footprint (recorded and edited by Spohr). The film shown in the exhibition, directed by Ngaruwa, offered an intimate view of the daily practices that shaped the residency, and a second documentary by filmmaker Lisa Burn in collaboration with Campus TV, later showcased at the Media Night (Mediennacht) UBT in November 2025, extended the project into a wider public arena. *Ingoduko* also became the focus of Episode 30 of the *Cluster Conversations* podcast, where Mfinyongo and Greven explored the artistic, cultural, and scholarly layers of the residency.

Through *Ingoduko*, Mfinyongo created a space where sound, craft, writing, memory, and community converged. Her residency demonstrated how Indigenous musical traditions can be carried forward through hands and senses as much as through theory and text, offering Bayreuth and especially Iwalewahaus a powerful experience of how knowledge lives, moves, and is shared through the act of creating together. 🌍

Find out more  
about Thandeka  
Mfinyongo and  
her fellowship  
here:





# Sabelo Mcinziba's (With) These Hands

Artist Sabelo Mcinziba surrounded  
by his exhibits at Iwalewahaus

Text **SABINE GREINER**  
Photo **ROBERT GÖTZE**

**Sabelo Mcinziba's exhibition (*With*) *These Hands* at Iwalewahaus in Bayreuth explored how labour, memory, and identity are inscribed in the body.**

In February 2025, Iwalewahaus hosted (*With*) *These Hands* by South African artist and former Cluster Fellow Sabelo Mcinziba. The exhibition marked his return following a 2024 residency at the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and extended aspects of his research into a public-facing format.

At its centre was a deceptively simple question: "What have you done with these hands?" Mcinziba's photographic works – close-up images of hands – were accompanied by condensed interview texts, which foregrounded hands as both visual motif and analytical lens. Rather than treating them as static objects, the exhibition approached hands as sites of praxis,

marked by labour, care, and violence, but also by creativity and continuity.

The project drew on a range of participants, including construction workers, musicians, teachers, and gardeners. Their hands were read not only through professional roles but also through familial and social relations. This dual framing complicated singular notions of identity, emphasising multiplicity over classification. (*With*) *These Hands* avoided typological ordering, instead situating individual experiences within broader social contexts.

Mcinziba's practice is shaped by an interdisciplinary engagement with questions of power, history, and the human. As he has noted, his work seeks to "rehumanise the dehumanised" by tracing how historical structures persist in the present. The focus on hands functioned here as a form of embodied historiography, where knowledge is conveyed through gesture, materiality, and everyday action.

The exhibition's format – pairing pho-

tographic images with short textual fragments – created a structured but open framework for interpretation. At times, meaning depended on the interplay between image and text rather than on either element alone, requiring viewers to move between visual and narrative registers.

Mcinziba works across visual art and research, engaging with themes of memory, identity, and inequality in postcolonial contexts. His projects often draw on both artistic and academic methodologies, situating his work within wider debates on representation and the category of the human. As a culmination of his Cluster fellowship, (*With*) *These Hands* connected these concerns to a specific exhibition context. Its focus remained deliberately narrow, centring on hands as a point of entry into broader questions of experience, labour, and social relations.

More info on  
Sabelo Mcinziba and his  
residency here:



Text and photos **SABINE GREINER**

***Ritual for Forgiveness* marked the culmination of Artist-in-Residence Migline Paroumanou's stay at the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence – an evocative exploration of migration, memory, and healing through research and performance.**

On 21 July 2025, *Ritual for Forgiveness*, the culminating event of Migline Paroumanou's artist residency took place. Bringing together scholarly research and artistic practice, the performance offered a reflective exploration of migration, its entanglements with histories of slavery, and the possibilities of reconciliation.

Paroumanou, from La Réunion, France, was a Fellow at the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies at the University of Bayreuth (UBT) from April to July 2025. Paroumanou creates artistic work which centres on migration in West Africa and its Diasporas. Her research engages closely with oral histories, memory practices, and the ways in which individuals and communities narrate their experiences of mobility. During her residency, Paroumanou developed these research interests into a

creative process, experimenting with forms that move beyond conventional academic formats.

A key component of this process was a ceramic workshop in which participants engaged materially with questions of memory, fragmentation, and repair. The objects created during the workshop became part of Paroumanou's final performance, and the participants themselves were actively involved, contributing to the collective and participatory character of the event.

*Ritual for Forgiveness* emerged from this process as both an intellectual and artistic intervention. The performance invited audiences to reflect on how histories of migration are shaped by rupture, displacement, and unresolved tensions, but also by resilience and the search for continuity. Framing the work as a "ritual" foregrounded the importance of collective reflection and symbolic action in addressing past and present forms of injustice.

Central to the work was storytelling. Drawing on her research, Paroumanou highlighted how personal narratives function not only as records of experience but as active processes through which in-

dividuals negotiate identity and belonging. Such narratives often carry layered memories that connect different places, generations, and social realities, creating space for these complexities to be acknowledged and shared.

Rather than presenting forgiveness as a fixed outcome, the work approached it as an ongoing and often difficult process. It raised questions about confronting painful histories, how memories are transmitted and transformed, and how individuals and communities might begin to engage with reconciliation.

As the highlight of the residency, *Ritual for Forgiveness* exemplified the Cluster's commitment to experimental forms of knowledge production. It demonstrated how research can be transformed into an experiential format that engages audiences both intellectually and emotionally, inviting reflection on memory, identity, and belonging beyond the boundaries of academia. 🌍

More info on Migline  
Paroumanou and  
her fellowship:



## Migline Paroumanou: Ritual for Forgiveness



Paroumanou surrounded by participants of her workshop and performance



Migline Paroumanou conducting her *Ritual for Forgiveness*



# Who is Lucy!?! Anatomy of an Installation

Text and images **EPIFANIA AKOSUA AMOO-ADARE, ANN-MARIE ELLMANN VAN RHYN**

**During a summer 2025 residency at the Cluster of Excellence, Fellows Epifania Amoo-Adare and Ann-Marie Ellmann van Rhyn explore origin, identity, and belonging through a decolonial feminist lens. *Who is Lucy!?!* challenges fixed notions of Africanness while opening space for multiplicity and ongoing inquiry.**

It has been all of seven months since we – Ann-Marie Ellmann van Rhyn and Epifania Amoo-Adare – had the opportunity to co-create the art exhibition *Who is Lucy!?! African Wo|Mxn Native|Other*, under the excellent hosting of Christine Vogt-William, Director of the Gender and Diversity Office at the University of Bayreuth (UBT). The exhibition was held from 23 to 29 July 2025 at the Research Centre for Society, Technology, and Ecology in Africa (FZA), courtesy of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence Artist Fellowship Programme, and with additional support from Iwalewaha.

The art exhibition was a sensory experience, co-created as a community of practice through an involved process that included the use of interviews, focus group discussions, and collective collage making, as well as individual and tandem art-making using textile,

audio-visual, and digital mediums. The exhibition culminated a three-month tandem-artist fellowship, within which we had the unique opportunity to work together in-person on a decolonial feminist art project.

Our gratitude to the Cluster knows no bounds as it afforded us precious (breathing) space to not only imagine, vision, investigate, create, and make an evidence-based art installation, but now also the possibility to reflect upon that art collaboration. To this end, we offer here a brief anatomy of our exhibition – even as we also recognise this to be an impossible task, due to the inherent inability to truly capture the essence of fluid and dynamic lived experience within the fixed and linear confines of the written text.

The title for our exhibition was as important as the artwork itself. To start with, we had in it our key question: “Who is Lucy!?!” referencing our human ancestor Lucy, a 3.2-million-year-old fossilised *Australopithecus afarensis* skeleton who was ‘discovered’ near Hadar, in the Afar Triangle region of Ethiopia, in 1974. The name Lucy was given to our human ancestor by the discovery team, but in more recent time, she has been renamed Dink’inesh (ድንቅነሽ) – an Amharic name, meaning “you are marvellous” or “you are unique,” in a bid to reclaim our ancestor’s own agentic heritage from inside out vs outside in.

Through this key question, we wanted to better understand (in both an intellectual and visceral way) what it means to excavate one’s own origin African mother, desecrating her grave, and further still subject her to analytical scrutiny, all in order to find one’s own self.

Aside from the significant title, we also selected our subtitle “African Wo|Mxn Native|Other” purposefully. Our subtitle was a nod to Trinh T. Minh-ha’s (1989) seminal text *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. In this work, Minh-ha utilises literary criticism, feminist theory, anthropology, and oral storytelling to question western male-centred ways of knowing and representing identity. She does so by problematising binaries, while exploring displacement, fragmented selves, and multiple identities lived in postcolonial contexts in lyrical and non-linear ways.

Just as Minh-ha questions western male-centred ways of knowing and representing, we too wished to question the often male-centred representations of who is assumed to be African; hence our subtitle. Moreover, utilising an intersectional feminist perspective, we also wanted to challenge notions of who is also considered to be a woman; hence the use of the spelling womxn to include diverse gender identities (e.g., trans and non-binary identities) into this heterogeneous gender category.

Taking into account the numerous subtexts in our title and subtitle alone, during the fellowship, we embarked on a potentially suicidal mission to try to interrogate the extreme tensions within what it potentially means to be an African, or otherwise. More specifically, we sought to explore the idea of Africa and its many diverse identities through various conceptualisations of it as origins; relationality and multiplicity; chaos and complexity, but also order in disorder; fluidity and mobility, but also rootedness and homesteading; commitment to the “struggle is real” and Black Lives Matter always, plus political contingency for reparations, atonement, and reconciliation; strategic essentialism, i.e., the continued need for fabricated standpoints to account for colonial and apartheid histories, plus their contemporary effects (however, remembering the importance of dismantling such fundamentalisms once they have served their specific purpose); contradiction, the original trickster, in its liminality of becoming both this and that; and uncertainty, thus, extensive possibility for futuring.

Ultimately, we sought to explore Africa in all of its dynamic, unfolding, and embodied existences, far beyond binaries, especially in light of the continent’s plural geography, biology, ideology, ontology, epistemology, cosmology, philosophy, etc. In other words, we were interrogating the multiple facets of how Africa is continuously both

process and state. Therefore, Africa is, just as it also is not.

In Bayreuth, our artmaking for the final exhibition was instigated through our relationship with each other, with the spaces we inhabited during the fellowship, with our ideas on the topic (who is African), with our peculiar and particular autobiographies, plus with the conversations we had with individuals and in groups, within the Africa Multiple Cluster, Iwalewaha, the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) and the wider Bayreuth community.

Altogether, we interviewed 20 people (six on the African continent and 14 abroad) in sessions that lasted between one to three hours. We also conducted three discussion and collage making group sessions with 15 grade nine to ten students (and their teacher) in Gymnasium Christian Ernestium school, seven people from Iwalewaha, and four individuals from the Africa Multiple Cluster international fellows’ programme.

We found that the discussions that unfolded in these groups, along with the very personal stories shared during the interviews, were deeply inflected in both of our hearts and minds, especially as we attempted to adequately express them in our textile, audio-visual and digital artmaking for the final installation, without misrepres-

entation and/or the silencing of anyone.

We also wanted our art project to be about, “art as creative everyday practice” and not “art as exhibit”. But also, “art as ritual practice”, i.e., as magical sacred acts that are also incredibly mundane in the experience of them. Ultimately, we viewed the art to be the process of everything that took place in relation to our project during the three months, as opposed to only what was in-state in the art exhibition.

The fellowship left us with the clear understanding that the African continent provides unfolding rather than conclusions. Therefore, there are way more questions than answers and way more knowledge to explore – lines of inquiry with no end. Much of this, we now struggle – to attend to having lost the precious (breathing) space and time to dig deep into the significant data we collected.

We would love to analyse the data more thoroughly, enabling us to do another (more academic) writing of what we found. At the same time, we also want to expand the study by interviewing more people (especially on/of/from the continent) and conducting more focus group discussions and collage-making sessions, so as to create other installations based on new findings in different locations.

But this remains a pipe dream for now, as reality’s daylight robs us daily of time – due to the reproductive and productive labour that abounds in the life of the average African womxn. Still, we are optimistic and determined, thus, sneak a moment here and there to continue this work. And this reflection is a reminder of how much there is still to do.

## References

Minh-ha, T. T. (1989). *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality & Feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Epifania Akosua Amoo-Adare and Ann-Marie Ellmann van Rhyn were in Bayreuth for an artist residency in the summer of 2025.







# Events in 2025

## January

**14.01.2025 – Reading Session: Rethinking Accelerated Learning in the Global South: Implications, Challenges, and Perspectives for Educational Development in Africa and Asia** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Billian Otundo

**20.01.–04.02.2025 – Instrument-Making & Music Workshop Series** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Thandeka Mfinyongo

**22.01.2025 – Lecture: The ‘Global Learning Crisis’ and the Role of International Organisations** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Postdoc working group  
Aaron Benavot, Íris Santos, Que Anh Dang

**23.–24.01.2025 – Colloquium: Regards croisés sur les pratiques évaluatives. Formes, fonctions et stratégies en interaction** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Eva Spies, Martina Drescher, Marty Laforest, Adama Drabo, Silke Jansen, Sylvia Jaki, Malgorzata Niziolek, Valentin Feussi, Marie Veniard, Véronique Traverso,

Valentina Serreli, Carline Liliane Ngawa Mbaho, Laura Guadagnano

**23.01.2025 – Lecture: New Year Lecture 2025 – Intersectionality as a Living Practice: Beyond Labels and Boundaries**  
Mirrienne Mahn, Bakheit Mohammed Nur, Stefan Ouma, Rüdiger Seesemann

**26.–29.01.2025 – Cinema Africa Filmfestival 2025** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Ute Fendler, Mohamed Kordofani, Sana Na N'Hada, Mo Harawe

**30.01.2025 – BIGSAS Lecture: Understanding the Meaning of ‘Extractive Bargains’ and its Implications for Global Extractivism and Post-Extractivism** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Nathan Andrew



23.01.



27.01.



04.02.

## February

**04.02.2025 – Workshop: The Postdoc Working Group “Rethinking Accelerated Learning in the Global South: Implications, Challenges, and Perspectives for Educational Development in Africa and Asia”** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis, Thandi Lewin, Mlamuli Hlatshwayo, Maria Theresa Vollmer, Billian Khalayi Otundo, Que Anh Dang

**18.–21.02.2025 – Workshop, Film Screening, Writing Retreat: The Cluster’s Postdoc Working Group Rethinking Accelerated Learning in the Global South presents: Implications, Challenges, and**

**Perspectives for Educational Development in Africa and Asia** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Maria Theresa Vollmer, Emmanuel Effiong Johnson, Que Anh Dang, Billian Khalayi Otundo, Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis

**25.02.–06.03.2025 – Exhibition: With these hands** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Sabelo Mcinziba

## March

**08.03.2025 – Concert: Meet the artist and concert in** Nuremberg, Germany  
Thandeka Mfinyongo

**13.03.2025 – Concert, Exhibition: Ingoduko (Homecoming) in Bayreuth, Germany**  
Thandeka Mfinyongo

**22.03.2025 – Concert: Experimental Folk from South Africa – Matinée** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Thandeka Mfinyongo



08.03.



25.02.

## April

**23.–27.04.2025 – Conference: BAYMAU25 “Africa and the Shifting Geopolitical Landscape: Tackling Insecurities and Seizing Opportunities in a Multipolarizing World.”** in Bayreuth, Germany

**28.04.2025 – Workshop: The Politics of Publishing** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Stefan Ouma



23.04.



| May                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>05.–07.05.2025 – Conference: 5-Year Celebration: The Law and Belonging as Relational Practice</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Thoko Kaime                                                                                                                     | <b>14.05.2025 – Exhibition and Opening: “worlds un/making”</b> in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Andrew Esiebo, Anthony Monday Asokere, Eva Maria Ocherbauer, produced by Foto Factory. Lagos                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>07.05.2025 – Screening: To The Red Soil</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Mariá Portugal, Huguette Tolinga, Christine Hanke                                                                                                                                     | <b>14.05.2025 – Reading: “The Radio and Other Stories”</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Gilbert Shang Ndi, Thierry Boudjekeu                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>08.05.2025 – Presentation: THE POWER OF THE KOLA – Restituting knowledge?</b> in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Astrid S. Klein                                                                                                                                        | <b>14.–16.05.2025 – Annual Cluster Conference 2025 “Temporalities, Youth (Im)mobilities and Agencies: Africa on the Move”</b> in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Grace Adeniyi-Ogunyankin, Grace Musila, Antony Okeregbe, Akosuwa Adomako Ampofo, Lisa Hülsmann, Yacouba Banhoru, Ute Fendler, Joschka Philipps, Gilbert Shang Ndi, Erdmute Alber, Christian Ungruhe |
| <b>08.05.2025 – Film Screening: Afrikaleidoskop meets ARTE: “Südafrikas Weg aus der Apartheid”</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Thomas Blom, Patricia Pinky Ndlovu-Gatsheni                                                                                       | <b>15.05.–31.07.2025 – Exhibition: “From Oblivion to Memory – Transatlantic Memorial Echoes”</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Ute Fendler, Thierry Boudjekeu, Gilbert Shang Ndi                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>09.05.2025 – Lecture Series: Colonisation as the Forging of Beloved Community</b> in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Tshepo Madlingozi                                                                                                                                  | <b>19.05.2025 – Reading: ‘Im Namen der Tiere’</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Olivier van Beemen, Jana Hönke, Esther Marijnen, Stefan Ouma                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>12.05.2025 – Workshop: From Oblivion to Memory: Transatlantic Memorial Echoes</b><br>at Iwalewahaush, Bayreuth, Germany<br>Gilbert Shang Ndi, Thierry Boudjekeu, Laude Ngadi Maissa, Eberhard Rothfuss, Lobadys Pérez, Hugo Canuto, Ute Fendler, Kangni Alem | <b>30.05.–01.06.2025 – Colloquium: 37th Swahili Colloquium “Uhuru na Ubunifu”</b><br>at Iwalewahaush, Bayreuth, Germany<br>Clarissa Vierke, Serena Talento, Annachiara Raia, Kai Kresse, Andrew Harvey, Angelica Baschiera                                                                                                                                |
| <b>14.05.2025 – Opening event: FZA (Forschungszentrum Afrika)</b> in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Stefan Leible, Akusua Adomako Ampofo, Rüdiger Seesemann, Christian Bernreiter, Cyrus Samimi, Nicole Kaiser et al.                                                     | <b>31.05.–01.06.2025 – Play: SHAKES:WIR Eine überfällige Intervention</b> in Berlin, Germany<br>Cat Jugravu                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |



12.05.



14.05.

| June                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>05.06.2025 – Guest Lecture: Redemption Song</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>James H. Sweet                                                             | <b>20.06.2025 – Workshop: Storytelling</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Ismahan Diop                                                                                                |
| <b>05.06.2025 – Discussion: “Afrika in der Mitte Bayreuths”</b> at Neuseum in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Ibrahima Sene, Ute Fendler                            | <b>23.06.2025 – Discussion: Une anthropologie des transformations sociales et politiques au Mali</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Yaouaga Félix Koné, Sten Hagberg                  |
| <b>06.06.2025 – Play: SHAKES:WIR Eine überfällige Intervention</b> in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Cat Jugravu, Elnathan John                                    | <b>26.06.2025 – Lecture: Applying a decolonial feminist lens to clinical psychology in Africa</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Ismahan Soukeyna Diop, Christiana U. Udeogu-Gözzalan |
| <b>18.06.2025 – Lecture: THE TEN TEN HYPOTHESIS OF LIVING IN THE THIRD WORLD</b> in Lagos, Nigeria<br>Olukayode Segun Eesuola                            |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| July                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>01.07.2025 – Guest Lecture: Why Should We Be Interested in Women’s Contribution to Islamic Scholarly Culture?</b> in Hamburg, Germany<br>Britta Frede | <b>19.07.2025 – Concert: MangrOOve – Global groove meets deeply rooted rhythms</b> in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Matchume Zango, Childo Tomás, Tao Ravao, Chang Jae Hyo                 |
| <b>09.07.2025 – Lecture: Artist Lecture by Christine Dixie</b> in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Christine Dixie                                                   | <b>21.07.2025 – Live Performance: “Ritual for a timeless forgiveness”</b> in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Migline Paroumanou                                                              |
| <b>14.07.2025 – Concert: Maum Percussion – A Percussive Exploration of the Heart</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Chang Jae Hyo                            | <b>23.–31.07.2025 – Exhibition: “Who is Lucy!?”</b><br>in Bayreuth, Germany<br>Epifania Amoo-Adare and Ann-Marie Ellmann                                                          |

| August                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>20.08.2025 – Lecture: “MIGRATIONS, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION OF NIGERIANS IN BURKINA FASO”</b><br>in Lagos, Nigeria<br>Adama Kabore |
| September                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>17.09.2025 – Lecture: Linguistic Creativity and Innovation in Nigerian Gospel Music</b><br>in Lagos, Nigeria<br>Feyisayo Ademola-Adeoye           |



21.07.



October

**29.10.2025 – Film Screening:**  
**AfriKaleidoskop meets ARTE – “Sudan – Ein Krankenhaus im Schatten des Krieges”**  
in Bayreuth, Germany  
Laura Salm, Carl Gierstorfer, Doris Löhr



29.10.

November

**5.11.2025 – Guest Lecture: Ubuntu and the Nine Wars of Dispossession** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Panashe Chigumadzi

**06.11.2025 – Discussion: “Global African Feminisms”** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Nemata Blyden, Panashe Chigumadzi, Eveline M. F. W. Sawadogo-Compaoré, Jarpa Dawumi, Catherine Kiprop, Rahab Njeri, Faith Smith, Fatou Sow, Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso, Katharina Oguntoye

**10.–13.11.2025 – Workshop: Crossing Areas, Crossing Stories, Crossing Theories – Towards New Shores within Practices of Critique and Conviviality** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Ute Fendler, Mariam Popal, Gilbert Ndi Shang, Alena Rettova, Serawit Debele, Saïkou Oumar Sagnane, Kingsley Celestine Jima, Shaden Kamel, Luisa Schneider, Edidiong Charles Ibanga, Marie Nadège Tsogo Momo, Thoko Kaime

**10.11.2025 – Film Screening: Cinema Africa: “Ar condicionado” and “Our Lady of the Chinese Shop”**  
in Bayreuth, Germany  
Ery Claver

**19.11.2025 – Conference/ Lecture: “Africa Talks Environment: Umweltkrisen im afrikanischen Kontext 2025”**  
in Munich, Germany

19.11.



Markus Schwaiger, Rüdiger Seesemann, Auma Obama, Lisa Hülsmann, Eric A. Anchimbe, Lesley J. F. Green, Shadrach Kerwillain, Nelson Odume, Cyrus Samimi, Sandra Calkins, Moses Chundu, Nathalie Jas, Eveline M. F. W. Sawadogo-Compaoré, Jimmy Tindamanyire, Bram Büscher, Steven Higgins, Camille Jahel, Charles Kilawe, Maano Ramutsindela

**20.–21.11.2025 – Conference: 2nd Moi Conference on African Studies** in ACC Moi

**20.11.2025 – Roundtable: Emerging Urban Moralities - The Ethics and Epistemics of Africa’s Urban Age** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Benjamin Kirby, Asaf Augsto, Biruk Tereffe, Serawit Debele

**25.11.–16.01.2026 – Exhibition: Die Bayreuther Afrikastudien im Spiegel von Politik und Medien** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Ibrahima Sene

**26.–28.11.2025 – Discussion: Intractable problems of human rights (Final project event)** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Thoko Kaime

**27.–29.11.2025 – Conference: India-Africa: Endogeneity-Modernity and Solutions for Development** in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

25.11.



December

**05.12.2025 – Work: BIGSAS Workshop “Clear Thinking – Clear Writing”** in Bayreuth, Germany  
Elnathan John

**05.–07.12.2025 – Conference: The Politics of Raw Materials in Africa and Beyond** in Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart, Conference Centre Hohenheim and Stuttgart  
Heike Wagner, Malick Faye, Christoph Helbig, Eberhard Rothfuß



08.12.

**08.12.2025 – Film Screening: Cinema Africa: “Fanon”**  
in Bayreuth, Germany  
Jean-Claude Barny

**11.–12.12.2025 – Film Screening/School Visit: AfriKaleidoskop “Die Arier”**  
in Bayreuth, Germany  
Mo Asumang



11.12.

IAS Guests 2025

|                          |              |                              |                   |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Barbara Bompani          | Italy        | Università di Parma          | 12.02.–15.02.2025 |
| Karen Jenny Lauterbach   | Denmark      | University of Copenhagen     | 12.02.–15.02.2025 |
| Adriaan van Klinken      | England      | University of Leeds          | 12.02.–15.02.2025 |
| Muhammad Yahya Babah     | Mauritania   | Université Islamique d’Aioun | 01.05.–30.06.2025 |
| Eva Maria Ocherbauer     | Germany      | Artist                       | 07.05.–15.05.2025 |
| Josias Semujanga         | Canada       | Université de Montréal       | 15.05.–15.07.2025 |
| Vendelin Tarmo Simon     | Tanzania     | University of Dar es Salaam  | 01.06.–30.06.2025 |
| Valentine Njende Ubanako | Cameroon     | University of Yaounde 1      | 20.06.–20.08.2025 |
| Christine Dixie          | South Africa | Rhodes University / Artist   | 01.07.–31.07.2025 |
| Issaka Fulera            | Ghana        | University of Ghana          | 01.07.–30.08.2025 |
| Matchume Zango           | Germany      | Artist                       | 13.07.–31.07.2025 |
| Sarah Marjie             | Ghana        | University of Ghana          | 20.09.–10.10.2025 |
| Stella Apecu Laloyo      | Uganda       | Gulu University              | 27.09.–10.10.2025 |
| Ginette Ngo Mintoogue    | France       |                              | 13.10.–12.12.2025 |
| Magloire Somé            | Burkina Faso | Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo   | 02.11.–29.12.2025 |
| Bonolo Ramadi Dinokopila | South Africa |                              | 21.11.–21.12.2025 |
| Helvi Ileka              | Namibia      | Namibia Energy Institute     | 26.11.–30.11.2025 |





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