Aleo Susan Arndt (ed.)

RECONFIGURING AFRICAN STUDIES

A Collaborative Glossary

[transcript]

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Reconfiguring African Studies

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This book is the outcome of research conducted within the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) under Germany's Excellence Strategy – EXC 2052/1 - 390713894.

Funded by the Open Access Publishing Fund of the University of Bayreuth.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available online at https://dnb.dnb.de

transcript Verlag | Hermannstraße 26 | D-33602 Bielefeld | live@transcript-verlag.de

Cover design: Lena Schäfferling
Printing: Elanders Waiblingen GmbH, Waiblingen
https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839453773
Print-ISBN: 978-3-8376-8020-1 | PDF-ISBN: 978-3-8394-5377-3

Printed on permanent acid-free text paper.

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Ibrahima Sene

Introduction

The extension of the Africa Multiple Cluster at the University of Bayreuth has given rise to great satisfaction.[1] This achievement testifies to the considerable work carried out by a team as competent as it is diverse. The whole university has been waiting impatiently for this extension for several months. It confirms the importance and necessity of strengthening African Studies at the university and in Germany as a whole. Today, African Studies is a veritable academic signature at the University of Bayreuth, that is perceptible through the various institutions and structures present on campus. Yet while this institutional recognition is real, the everyday experience of many scholars and students in the city, particularly those from Africa, is still marked by a feeling of strangeness, marginalization and even racism. Rising right-wing extremism in a Bavarian city unfamiliar with the history and diversity of the African continent is also feeding this growing unease.

These contrasting dynamics lead to a broader question: why and how did African Studies become such an important field of study in a small Bavarian town like Bayreuth? How is Africa perceived in the Upper Franconian region? The establishment of African Studies in Bayreuth is often associated with the political figure of Franz Josef Strauß, former Minister-President of Bavaria (1978–1988). Anecdotes still circulate about his links with Togo and about a

1 "Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence: Continued Funding Secured," *Informationsdienst Wissenschaft (idw)*, https://idw-online.de/en/news852640Accessed 2 July 2025; "*Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence Renewed*," University of Bayreuth, https://www.africamultiple.uni-bayreuth.de/en/news/2025/2025-05-22_Renewal/index.html, Accessed 2 July 2025.

hunting trip gone wrong which, it has been rumoured, sparked his interest in Africa. Whether fact or fiction, this story points to a deeper question: what political ideas and ambitions shaped the university's early engagement with Africa? And what does this reveal about the ways Africa was perceived, imagined, and strategically invoked within Bavarian academic and diplomatic projects?

On the occasion of Professor Rüdiger Seesemann's birthday, and based on archive research[2], I offer a brief review of the history of African Studies in Bayreuth–looking not only at how Africa has been studied at the University of Bayreuth, but also at how it has been presented. Celebrating Rüdiger Seesemann's birthday is more than honouring an individual. It is about recognizing his contribution to a collective history, his ability to think of African Studies as a network, to reform and reconfigure the field without erasing its heritage. He is both a reformer and an heir to the history he continues to shape.

Bayreuth, between Myth and Reality: The Story of my Arrival

It is not uncommon for Bayreuth to be confused with Beirut, the Lebanese capital. It has almost become a recurring joke among researchers working in the field of African Studies in Bayreuth. Any researcher or student who has ventured here could talk about their own first experiences with this city, which is both discreet and singular, and often known from afar. This harmless confusion reveals something deeper: the familiar strangeness of this Bavarian city, little known, too well known from afar, and whose name rarely evokes what it really is. For (African) researchers and students in African Studies, Bayreuth is

2 For this paper, I would like to thank the City Archive of Bayreuth and the University Archive for their support—especially Dr. Lisa Witowski, whose guidance was instrumental to this research. For example, the following archive records are available at the University Archive: Universität Bayreuth. Unterlagen der Zentralen Universitätsverwaltung (ZUV), 88–96, Universitätsarchiv Bayreuth; Forschungsberichte Institut für Afrikastudien, 1991/92, 1994, 1995. DokB 17; Pressespiegel 1970–1980. DoKP 178–180. Universitätsarchiv Bayreuth; Interview with Josef Lange, pp. 11–13, Einrichtung Afrikanologie. DokG 7. This paper also builds on the workshop "Afrika im Bayreuther Alltag. Geschichte und Erinnerungskultur" [Africa in Everyday Bayreuth: History and Culture of Remembrance], held last year at the Iwalewahaus and co-organized with Dr. Marcus Mühlnikel (Institute for Franconian Regional History, IFLG), to whom I extend my thanks.

a familiar, almost mythical name. Bayreuth is often a place you hear about before you even know where it is on a map—a name that recurs in university corridors, between accounts of memorable experiences, stories of hardship and memories of academic adventures.

When I decided to come to Bayreuth to do a second master's degree, in parallel with my doctoral thesis, I had an idealized image of the city in my head. I knew it by reputation, through the enthusiastic testimony of colleagues and teachers who had stayed here. While I was waiting to defend my thesis, I applied to various further training programmes, including a master's degree in *Kultur und Gesellschaft Afrikas* (engl. African Culture and Society) with a combination of *Geschichte Afrikas* and *Entwicklungssoziologie und Entwicklungspolitik* (engl. History of Africa and Development Sociology and Development Policy), also with a focus on Africa. As a Germanist, my objective was clear: to broaden my academic horizons in an increasingly competitive environment, where stable contracts were becoming rare; to keep myself busy while I waited for my thesis's defence.

When I received my letter of admission, I felt a mixture of excitement and impatient curiosity. Bayreuth seemed to me to be a city apart, a place of passage for many African researchers. Many of my Senegalese teachers spoke of it with respect, underlining the difficulty but also the richness of their experience in this university setting. I was not the first, nor the last.

When I arrived in Bayreuth, my first impression was disconcerting. I expected a dynamic, vibrant, almost metropolitan city, worthy of the prestige conferred on it by its academic influence. What I found was a small, quiet, almost sleepy provincial town. A disappointment, at first sight. But as it is often the case with cities–and with human beings–it takes time to get over first impressions. In the process of getting to know Bayreuth better, its people, its intellectual networks and its memory, I realized that the richness of this city lay not in its appearance, but in the links it forged.

It was in Bayreuth that I discovered I wasn't the first Senegalese to venture here. In 1979, Léopold Sédar Senghor, the President of Senegal (1960–1980), went there at the invitation of Franz Josef Strauß, Minister-President of Bavaria (1978–1988). This trip to Bayreuth was by no means insignificant: as the official guest of the Bayreuth Festival dedicated to Richard Wagner, Senghor took advantage of his stay to support the young university, founded in 1975. This highly symbolic visit also illustrates Senghor's desire to promote dialogue between Africa and Europe, and to strengthen the legitimacy of African Studies in European academic institutions. During this visit, he gave his backing to the establishment of a chair dedicated to African Francophone literature, a project led by Professor János Riesz, who had begun teaching in Bayreuth in the summer semester of 1979. As the most widely known African author in the German-speaking world and recipient of the *Peace Prize of the German Book Trade* (1968), Senghor's public support helped the project overcome its initial obstacles (Breitinger and Föttinger 1994, 64).

As a linguist, literature specialist, and holder of the Chair of *Romance and Comparative Literature – with a special focus on African literature* at the University of Bayreuth, János Riesz has, from the outset of the institution, worked to build scientific and socio-cultural bridges: particularly between Germany and West African countries like Senegal, Togo, Côte D'Ivoire, Benin; between Romance studies and German studies; and between Dakar and Bayreuth. It is thanks to him that a fruitful dialogue has been established and has been continued by figures such as Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink in Saarbrücken, Susanne Gehrmann in Berlin, Ute Fendler in Bayreuth, and Papa Samba Diop in Paris, among others.

Thanks to his decisive commitment to the development of what was then called "Afro-Romanistik"[3] (Afro-Romanistic) in Germany, Riesz–supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and also DAAD–played a key role in bringing numerous intellectuals from diverse backgrounds to Bayreuth (e.g. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Georges Ngal, Wole Soyinka, Clémentine Faik-Nzuj and Pius Ngandu etc.).[4] These visiting researchers were invited for limited stays to deepen their work on the representation and perception of Africa and Africans. Many of them came from the African continent and contributed to the Collaborative Research Centre "Identity in Africa" (Sonderforschungsbereich Identität in Afrika). This effort aligned with broader foreign cultural policies of the Federal Republic of Germany during the Cold War. In this context, both the FRG and the GDR supported academic exchange as a soft-power tool. And particularly, the training and further education of African students was integral to these policies, with the aim of preparing future African elites who would contribute to the construction of socialist or liberal regimes on the continent and help meet the global demand for highly qualified labor.

3 Due to its neocolonial connotation, the chair was then officially renamed *Chair of Romance Literary Studies and Comparative Literature, with special emphasis on African literature* see (Riesz 1994, 64).

4 See: *UBT ZUV 983 Kulturabkommen mit Senegal / Dakar 1981–1986, UBT ZUV 981 Zusammenarbeit Elfenbeinküste, Abidjan 1981–1985.*

Pioneers, not just One: Interdisciplinarity at the Origin of African Studies in Bayreuth

Contrary to what popular belief sometimes suggests, African Studies at Bayreuth University is not based on the single figure of a founder. It is not a solitary endeavor, but a collective project, carried out since the late 1970s by a constellation of influential researchers from a variety of disciplines. Each, in his or her own way, brought a distinct disciplinary and regional focus that collectively shaped the university's unique interdisciplinary approach. Bayreuth became what it is today not solely through local initiative, but also through close collaboration with African intellectuals and direct support from African states. One early and emblematic example is Papa Samba Diop, who was personally recommended by President Léopold Sédar Senghor and the rector of the University of Dakar (Madani 1980) to join Janos Riesz's newly established chair (Breitinger, Föttinger 1994, 64).

Alongside Riesz stood Eckhard Breitinger (Arndt and Berndt 2007), a specialist in anglophone African literatures and an early advocate of cultural production as a lens into postcolonial African societies. He played a crucial editorial role as the long-time coordinator of the Bayreuth African Studies Series (BASS)[5], publishing hundreds of monographs from emerging scholars, many of them from African countries. His academic focus included field-linked cooperation with institutions in Nigeria, Kenya etc. and he was instrumental in embedding African voices and scholarship within Bayreuth's research culture.

Gerd Spittler[6], a renowned ethnologist, expanded the program's anthropological and sociological scope. Drawing from long-term fieldwork among pastoralist communities such as the Tuareg in Niger and the Hausa in Nigeria, he brought deep expertise in economic anthropology, material culture, and subsistence economies. Spittler helped solidify Bayreuth's reputation as a centre for empirically grounded African social science, often in collaboration with Breitinger on West African projects.

A complementary pillar of this academic constellation was Jamil M. Abun-Nasr (1932–2021), a historian and Islamic scholar of Lebanese origin who led

5 Eckhard Breitinger, *Bass*, https://www.ufb.uni-bayreuth.de/pool/dokumente/mitglieder/emeriti/eckhard-breitinger/3_bass-Eckhard-Breitinger.pdf, Accessed 7 July 2025.

6 "*Prof. Dr. Gerd Spittler.*" *Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence*, University of Bayreuth, 18 Jan. 2023, https://www.africamultiple.uni-bayreuth.de/en/news/2023/2023-01-18-Prof_-Dr_-Gerd-Spittler/index.html, Accessed 2 July 2025.

the establishment of Islamic Studies at Bayreuth. With deep regional knowledge of Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, and an academic career that spanned Oxford, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, Abun-Nasr's work foregrounded the complex historical entanglements between Islam, political authority, and social movements across North and West Africa.[7]

Equally foundational was Gudrun Miehe, whose philological and linguistic expertise helped define the early structure of African Studies in Bayreuth. Appointed to the Chair of *Afrikanistik I* in 1992, she institutionalized the study of African languages—especially Gur and Swahili—as a key component of Bayreuth's interdisciplinary vision. Through initiatives such as the International Swahili Colloquium (founded in 1996) and her leadership in major research networks, Miehe not only shaped the linguistic profile of the university but also mentored generations of scholars, anchoring Bayreuth's linguistic tradition in long-term partnerships with African researchers and institutions.[8]

These scholars shaped Bayreuth's international partnerships. Their region-specific cooperation projects laid the groundwork for long-term academic exchanges with African institutions. However, this collaboration was never primarily designed to integrate Africa on equal terms. Rather, Africa served German political and strategic interests—an instrumental logic that underpinned the founding of the University of Bayreuth and its focus on African Studies. Although African scholars were invited as guest professors and seen as *informants* or *cultural mediators*—offering a channel to include African voices—their role was often framed within a broader political agenda. They contributed to preparing German and European students as future *experts on Africa*, aligning with Germany's Cold War foreign policy goals: training elites to engage with the continent in ways that served either capitalist or socialist blocs. In this context, *Afrikanologie* at Bayreuth was less about partnership and more about strategic knowledge production. Africa remained primarily an object of research—its complexity filtered through German interests rather than shaped by African agency.

7 "*Jamil M. Abun-Nasr Honoured as Founding Father of Bayreuth African Studies*," Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, University of Bayreuth, 17 May 2021, https://www.africamultiple.uni-bayreuth.de/en/news/2021/2021-05-17_Jamil-M_-Abun-Nasr/index.html, Accessed 2 July 2025.

8 "*Emeriti of Honour.*" University of Bayreuth, https://www.uni-bayreuth.de/emeriti-of-honour, Accessed 6 July 2025.

Much like the development of its Africa-focused research, the university's creation was also not the vision of a single individual, but the outcome of collective ambition, strategic planning, and political negotiation. At a time of profound social transformation–characterized by educational expansion, structural support in rural regions and international upheavals such as decolonisation and the Cold War–an ambitious project was born: a university in Bayreuth in Upper Franconia, which until then had been perceived primarily as a city of culture. The creation of the University of Bayreuth was the fruit of the political will of several key figures. These included Hans Walter Wild, the city's former mayor; Professor Wolfgang Wild, former chairman of the Strukturbeirat (Structural Advisory Board) for Bayreuth in 1970; as well as the Bavarian minister-president at the time, Franz Josef Strauß, among others.

Wolfgang Wild, a theoretical physicist by training, was instrumental in transforming the vision into reality. As Chair of the Structural Advisory Board for Bayreuth in 1970; Vice President of the University between 1973 and 1976, and later President of the Technical University of Munich (1980), Wild helped design and institutionalize the foundational interdisciplinary architecture that still characterizes Bayreuth today. His later roles—including serving as Bavarian Minister of Science—attest to his long-term impact on science and education policy in Germany.

Hans Walter Wild—Bayreuth's second mayor after the Second World War—wrote at length about the beginnings of the university in his book *Denk ich an damals…: Bayreuths Weg zur Universität* (1995) (engl. Remembering back then…: Bayreuth's path to university). "Bayreuth university town! A crazy idea?"[9] poses Wild at the beginning of his book (Wild 1995, 29). In it, he describes an ambivalent context: on the one hand, a desire shared by many Bayreuthers to provide their region with an institution of higher education; on the other hand, widespread resistance to the idea of establishing a university in a town still marked by its provincial dimension. But the project to expand Bavaria's university landscape dates to the 1960s. During that period, efforts were underway to determine where new universities should be established in post-war Germany. In an interview, Josef Lange[10] (Kühnel 00:08:52) emphasized the recommendations of the GermanScience and Education Councils

9 All translations from the original texts into English are my own. Original quote: "Bayreuth Universitätsstadt! Eine verrückte Idee?" (Wild 1995).

10 Info: Josef Lange was then personal assistant (Persönlicher Referent) to the President of the University of Bayreuth and also responsible for public relations.

to create one million student places across the country. As mayor of Bayreuth at the time, Wild seized this opportunity to campaign for a university in his city. He describes how he put forward the idea of the university in political discussions, drawing the attention of Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt to the Bayreuth "university idea" in 1969, how he won over fellow campaigners, and finally overcame resistance (Wild 1995, 29). Wild combined emotional arguments—such as the fear of youth emigration—with pragmatic considerations of regional development:

> It must not be the case that we build one school after another in Upper Franconia, that we build technical schools and that our sons and daughters, when they are educated, emigrate to Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Nuremberg or Munich because they can only find a job there that corresponds to their education.[11] (Wild 1995, 33)

The establishment of a university is legitimized as an instrument of regional development. The link between education policy and regional development is strategically emphasized. Wild mobilized every stage, every medium, every political relationship. He actively campaigned for the establishment of a university in Bayreuth, navigating administrative procedures and positioning the city among several candidates—including Bamberg, which, given its long-standing tradition in the humanities and social sciences, was also seeking to expand its academic profile. In addition to this conflict, there was also economic and political rivalry over the distribution of public resources, funding and infrastructure between the Franconian cities. Each city wanted to attract students, researchers, investment and cultural events, all of which were sources of economic development.

To avoid fuelling tensions with nearby academic hubs, various scenarios were considered for the future university in Bayreuth: transforming it into a partial university, creating a satellite extension of the University of Bamberg, or linking it administratively to Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. Another possibility was to focus the institution entirely on the natural sciences and medicine:

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11 Original quote: "Es darf auch nicht sein, daß wir in Oberfranken eine Schule um die andere errichten, daß wir Fachschulen bauen und daß unsere Söhne und Töchter, wenn sie ausgebildet sind, nach Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Nürnberg oder München auswandern, weil sie nur dort einen ihrer Ausbildung entsprechenden Arbeitsplatz finden" (Wild 1995, 33).

> We should focus on the natural sciences for the University of Bayreuth; only they are sustainably viable. In the short term, not only researchers are needed but also teachers for secondary schools who lay the foundation for scientific education[12] (Wild 74).

Yet even within this science-focused vision, there was resistance to the idea of founding a university without a strong humanities component. Wolfgang Wild, then chair of the university's structural advisory board and later Bavarian Minister of Science, famously declared: "A university without the humanities is not a university" (Lange 2014, 11–13, file 2). Despite a strong political emphasis on the natural sciences, he and others stressed the need for a well-rounded institution. The medical faculty project was soon abandoned due to prohibitive costs, particularly the long-term financial demands of setting up university hospitals. At the same time, Hans Walter Wild strengthens Bayreuth's position by presenting the existing medical infrastructure (clinics, planned hospital) as an advantage. A similar fate awaited the proposal to establish a faculty of pharmacy: it was redirected to Regensburg, where suitable infrastructure was already in place (cf. Akten der Universität Bayreuth, Strukturbeirat Sitzungsangelegenheiten, Niederschriften 1973, Bd. II, Univ.archiv Bayreuth UBT ZUV 585, 10.10.1973). Next, biology was considered as a potential academic anchor for Bayreuth, but the idea failed to gain momentum (cf. Niederschrift über die 19. Sitzung des Strukturbeirates für die Universität Bayreuth am 17.10.1973 in München, Univ.archiv Bayreuth UBT ZUV 585). Even a proposal for a dentistry program was abandoned, largely due to budgetary constraints (Akten der Universitat Bayreuth, Strukturbeirat Sitzungangelegenheitenniederschriften 1974, Bd III, Univ.archiv Bayreuth UBT ZUV 586). One after another, these plans were rejected by Munich — not necessarily on academic grounds, but because of broader political calculations and the desire

12 Original in German: "Wir sollten für die Universität Bayreuth auf die Naturwissenschaften setzen, nur sie seien langfristig gesichert. Gebraucht würden kurzfristig nicht nur Forscher, sondern auch Professoren für die Gymnasien, die die Grundlagen für das naturwissenschaftliche Studium schaffen. Luest legt mir den Verzicht auf das Medizinstudium nahe. Forderungen in dieser Richtung würden Gründung und Aufbau einer Universität nur erschweren, weil die Mittel für die hohen Kosten der medizinischen Bildungseinrichtungen, insbesondere der Universitätskliniken, auf lange Zeit hinaus verplant seien. Beeindruckt von der Persönlichkeit dieses bedeutsamen Wissenschaftlers und ermuntert durch seine Empfehlungen eile ich nach Bayreuth zurück, in der Entscheidung bestätigt."

to avoid duplication of programs already concentrated in other Bavarian cities. So, Bayreuth was granted a teacher training programme, though limited to primary and secondary school levels—excluding Realschule and Gymnasium education tracks. This decision was also shaped by competition with other Bavarian universities, particularly Würzburg, Erlangen-Nuremberg, and Regensburg, which were already well-established in teacher education. But Bayreuth wanted more.

The solution, as articulated by Wolfgang Wild, was to "define a niche that others have not yet entered, but which has long-term potential" (Lange 2014, 12). Two options were considered: South Asian or African Studies. Africa was the obvious choice for several key reasons. Firstly, to avoid the mentioned tensions between Bavarian cities, on the issues of teacher education and humanities. While Regensburg (1962) created a classic comprehensive university—with a conservative structure and a strong medical profile—and Augsburg (1970) focussed on urban, modern social sciences and economics, Passau (1978) remained smaller and focused on the Danube region and cultural research. Bamberg, on the other hand, built on its humanities tradition. Bayreuth was deliberately conceived with a clear, internationally understood specialization and a high demand for innovation. This differentiation was not accidental, but an expression of political and strategic planning: each new university was not only to provide access to education, but also to reflect a specific regional and specialized profile.

Second, Franz Josef Strauß's personal relations with the continent made this option more familiar and politically more strategic. In this sense, Hans Walter Wild pays tribute to the decisive support of Strauß. During the 1970s and 1980s, he championed international cultural diplomacy, including support for academic partnerships and higher education initiatives with African nations. While oral accounts often mention a hunting trip gone wrong and his link to Togo, one thing remains relevant: these stories—whether fact or legend—point to the symbolic role Africa played in shaping Bavarian international ambitions. They reflect how Africa was imagined not only as a site of partnership, but also as a stage for Bavarian soft power, where political figures like Strauß could pursue both diplomatic and personal interests. What matters here is less the historical accuracy of such stories than the way they reveal how Africa has historically been framed —as both opportunity and projection— and how such framings have influenced institutional decisions, including the founding of African Studies at Bayreuth

Third, there was a real vacuum in southern Germany when it came to African Studies. In the north, universities such as Hamburg (heir to a maritime colonial past), Bonn (former seat of the Foreign Office), and Berlin (with its prestigious Oriental Languages Seminary and Humboldt University) had already developed considerable expertise in this field during the colonial period. The South, on the other hand, was largely devoid of such expertise.

Fourth, in a world marked by decolonization, the Cold War and the rise of new international players, Africa appeared to be a strategic zone for Germany's economic and diplomatic relations. It was therefore necessary to train experts capable of understanding its complex dynamics ("Afrikanologie an der Universität Bayreuth. Situation und Vorstellungen zum weiteren Ausbau" November 1978., UBT ZUV 92c).

It was in this spirit that a university was created that was resolutely international in scope, but also practical. The idea was not to limit to theoretical approaches, but to develop useful knowledge that could be mobilized within the framework of partnerships, cooperation projects or applied research. Given the diversity of African realities, a purely disciplinary approach seemed insufficient. From the outset, interdisciplinarity was encouraged: the idea was to cross disciplines—anthropology, economics, history, political science, linguistics, literature etc.—to gain a better understanding of the continent's contemporary issues (Afrikanologie an der Universität Bayreuth 1978; Letter from Dr. Lange to Herrn Stetzler 1977).

With this in mind, a number of researchers were invited to Bayreuth. The aim was twofold: first, to enrich the content of the newly created chairs; and second, to build a bridge between the university and the city through contemporary themes likely to resonate locally. The aim was also to highlight the importance of such a university institution in the development of the region. These researchers were able to build lasting bridges with African universities, fostering reciprocal academic cooperation long before the Africa Multiple Cluster was formalized. Since the 1980s, their work has given Bayreuth a unique profile in Germany, built around an interdisciplinary Centre for African Studies (Iwalewa-Haus[13], then IAS[14]), international doc-

13 Iwalewahaus: A Cultural Institute of the University of Bayreuth, founded in 1981, dedicated to contemporary African art, visual cultures, and postcolonial research. See: https://www.iwalewahaus.uni-bayreuth.de/de/index.html Accessed 6 July 2025.

14 Institute of African Studies (IAS): Established in 1990 at the University of Bayreuth, the IAS coordinates interdisciplinary African Studies across faculties and plays a central

toral programmes (BIGSAS[15]) and a commitment to the joint production (and circulation) of knowledge.

This determination to anchor the project was also linked to the perception—and sometimes stereotypes— held about Africa in a Bavarian region unfamiliar with its history and diversity.

Local Reception and Perceptions of Africa in Bayreuth

Bayreuth's unique place in the landscape of African Studies in Germany often contrasts with the local perception of Africa. Outside the campus, in the city's social and media circles, Africa is sometimes confined to stereotypical images of poverty, exoticism and conflict. The reality of Africa, as discussed in the seminar rooms and conferences of the Africa Multiple Cluster, rarely finds a direct echo in Bayreuth society. The result is a kind of discrepancy, even tension, between the intellectual openness of the university environment and the relative social and geographical isolation of the rest of the city. This separation sometimes fuels mutual misunderstandings. On the one hand, African students can experience culture shock: insistent stares, awkwardness in everyday interactions, a lack of cultural references. On the other hand, the people of Bayreuth, who have little exposure to diversity, struggle to understand what a university programme devoted to Africa really means.

These tensions are not just theoretical. They take shape in concrete experiences. Dating back to 1980s, several African students have reported misunderstandings when looking for accommodation, subtle discrimination in administrative procedures and a feeling of invisibility in the city's cultural life. As African students and scholars began arriving in Bayreuth, many encountered subtle exclusion—from difficulties securing housing to restricted access to nightclubs and cultural life.[16] The local population seemed to "fear" a repe-

role in research, teaching, and international collaboration. See: https://www.ias.uni-bayreuth.de/en/ Accessed 7 July 2025.

15 Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS): Founded in 2007 as part of the Excellence Initiative, BIGSAS offers structured doctoral training in African Studies and promotes interdisciplinary research with a strong emphasis on cooperation with African partner institutions. See: https://www.bigsas.uni-bayreuth.de/en/index.html Accessed 6 July 2025.

16 This comes to light in this article: "Durch ihre afrikanologische Ausrichtung erfreut sich die Universität Bayreuth wachsender Beliebtheit als internationaler Tagungsort.

tition of the behavior associated with certain American soldiers—in particular accusations of harassing women or causing a nuisance at night. This situation reveals a form of *globalisation of the Black man*, perceived in a homogenous and stereotyped way, without distinction of origin or history. It also bears witness to a persistent colonial legacy, in which the figure of the Black man is still perceived as foreign, potentially destabilising, and therefore to be controlled, contained or even tamed.

In response to calls for better accommodation, Mayor Hans Walter Wild declared: "The university is a vital part of our city's development. Whoever supports the university is also supporting Bayreuth."[17] Yet this appeal for civic solidarity stood in contrast to the lived experiences of many African guests—highlighting the gap between institutional ambition and social reality.

These incidents may date back to the 1980s, but for many international students and researchers—particularly those from the African continent—they

F~~arbige~~ Studenten gehen an der Hochschule ein und aus. Doch für Bayreuther Hausbesitzer und Wohnungsvermieter ist dies alles noch längst kein Grund, sich von ihren Vorurteilen zu verabschieden. Menschen, die eine andere Hautfarbe als sie selber haben, sind ihnen offenbar immer noch ein Gräuel. Jeder afrikanische Student, der hierzulande auf Wohngssuche geht, kann davon ein – unsere vermeintlich aufgeklärten Zeiten beschämendes—Klagelied singen, in das spätestens seit dem Wochenende auch Dr. Eckhard Breitinger mit einstimmen kann. Denn ihm, dem Organisator der Tagung über Commonwealth-Literatur, wurde seine Wolfsbacher Wohnung gekündigt. Wie er berichtet, kündigte ihm sein Vermieter, weil er, Breitinger, für die Dauer der Tagung den australischen Schriftsteller Colin Johnson zu Besuch hatte, der als A~~boriginal~~ nun einmal nicht die vom Vermieter offenbar gewünschte weiße Hautfarbe besitzt. Aufgrund des Auftretens des Vermieters hat Breitinger, obwohl rechtlich nicht dazu gezwungen, die Kündigung angenommen. Denn, so sagt er, im Hause eines derartigen Vermieters möchte er nicht weiter wohnen." (Nordbayerischer Kurier 1983)

17 Full Quote in German: "Der Ausbau unserer jungen Universität geht gut voran. Im Wintersemester 1983/84 werden ihr wiederum 700 Studierende zugewiesen. Die Zahl der Studierenden erhöht sich dadurch auf fast 4000. Die Wohnungssituation der Studierenden wird dadurch erneut erschwert. Wenn verhindert werden soll, daß Studierende mangels geeigneter Unterkünfte Bayreuth den Rücken kehren, bedarf es daher weiterer Anstrengungen der Bayreuther Bürgerschaft. Ich appelliere an Sie alle, verfügbaren Wohnraum an Studierende zu vermieten. Bedenken Sie bitte bei der Festsetzung des Mietpreises allerdings auch, daß sich die jungen Studenten in der Berufsausbildung befinden und in der Regel nur über bescheidene Mittel verfügen. Die Universität ist ein wichtiger Faktor unserer Stadtentwicklung. Wer der Uni hilft, hilft somit auch unserer Stadt Bayreuth." (*Statement by OB Hans Walter Wild* 1983).

remain relevant today, though often in different forms. While forms of discrimination may have evolved, they persist in more subtle or systemic ways. This is evident in more recent local debates, such as the controversy over the racially charged name of the *M-Apotheke* and the strong local response to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020. Public letters to the editor in the *Nordbayerischer Kurier* reflected the divide: while some community members defended such names as "tradition," others criticized their racist implications (Tensing 2020; Kröniger 2020; Düngfelder 2020).

Bayreuth-based scholars, including researchers in African Studies, actively contributed to these discussions. In a guest commentary, Stefan Ouma and colleagues explicitly addressed the lack of self-awareness in Germany's reckoning with racism, calling for structural change within universities and public life (Ouma 2020). Earlier reflections by Aleo Susan Arndt had already highlighted how deeply embedded racism—often unreflected by *white* citizens—permeates everyday life, even in academic contexts (Arndt 2013).

Racism frequently manifests in subtle ways: through microaggressions, suspicious glances, or exoticising remarks. Yet, it also appears openly, for example during the search for housing or in everyday interactions in the city. Many African scholars and students report such distressing experiences, which can also hinder their academic work. In response, the Institute of African Studies (IAS) has formulated an anti-discrimination statement. Because conducting research on Africa is not enough—there must also be a critical reflection on the structural conditions under which such research takes place.

However, while the university has begun to critically address these issues, this shift also reflects a broader transformation in the perception and production of knowledge about Africa. Unlike former colonial powers such as France, Belgium, or the United Kingdom, Germany—especially in its southern regions—lacked both a structured colonial memory and a longstanding academic tradition of African Studies. As a result, the University of Bayreuth had to build up this expertise from scratch, by engaging in dialogues with African partners, welcoming researchers from the continent and gradually establishing a new centre of knowledge. Some of the testimonies evoke unexpected forms of solidarity: curious neighbors who engage in sincere conversations, local associations open to diversity, and lasting friendships born of intercultural initiatives.

Despite these complex dynamics, the African presence in Bayreuth continues to grow and diversify. The launch of the Africa Multiple Cluster of excellence in 2019 marked a new stage. With the ambition of *reconfiguring African Studies* (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2023), this programme questions not only the objects and methods of research, but also the places where knowledge is produced. Africa is no longer just a field of investigation: it is becoming a centre of reflection, an epistemic actor. The partner universities, African Cluster Centers (ACCs), in Nigeria (University of Lagos), Kenya (Moi University), Burkina Faso (Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo), and South Africa (Rhodes University) are part of this reconfiguration, which is attempting to break away from the unilateral logic of research. Importantly, this network builds on long-standing collaborations. Over the years, Bayreuth has become a meeting ground for major African thinkers such as Wole Soyinka, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Fatou Sow, Akosua Adomako Ampofo, and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Diagne 2021; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1987; Falola 2024), who have, among others, worked alongside German and international scholars to reimagine African Studies. This orientation—based on intellectual partnership rather than paternalism—has earned Bayreuth lasting respect across the African continent (e.g. institutions, scholars, artists etc.).

However, this openness is not without its limits. Despite the rhetoric of co-construction and the decolonization of knowledge, asymmetries persist. Access to programmes remains unequal, particularly for non-German-speaking African students and those without grants. Decision-making committees remain largely Eurocentric, and situated knowledge produced in Africa sometimes struggles to be fully recognized as such in mainstream scientific circuits.

The challenge therefore remains twofold: to anchor African Studies more firmly in the local university fabric, while at the same time encouraging the city to open up more widely to the plurality of African worlds. This struggle was initiated by the first generation of researchers in the field of African Studies, such as Riesz, Lüsebrink, Spittler and Breitinger, and continued by the second generation, represented by Rüdiger Seesemann, to whom this contribution is dedicated.

Rüdiger Seesemann—A Driving Force Behind the Revival of African Studies

Professor Rüdiger Seesemann's intellectual career embodies a significant transformation in African Studies in Germany, where the deconstruction of colonial frameworks of knowledge and the promotion of a transnational co-production of knowledge have become academic imperatives. A specialist of Islam Studies in sub-Saharan Africa—particularly Sufism in the Senegalese and Sudanese contexts—Seesemann has built his approach at the crossroads of anthropology, religious sciences and African Studies.

After years of field research marked by methodological and human proximity to the Muslim communities of West Africa, he held various positions in Germany and abroad before joining the University of Bayreuth. There, he played a central role in repositioning the institution as a centre of excellence in African research, no longer focusing solely on Africa as an object, but also on Africa as a partner and producer of knowledge.

As Dean of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence—funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) since 2019—Seesemann has proposed a paradigmatic shift away from extractivist and unidirectional approaches towards a logic of multiperspectivity, interconnection and epistemic reciprocity (Seesemann 2020). His aim is to reconfigure African Studies within a shared global space, in which researchers from the African continent are no longer simply informers or collaborators, but full players in theoretical reflection.

His vision is in line with contemporary decolonial critiques, while maintaining a rigorous empirical approach and a rare field ethic. He argues for a break with neo-colonial logics of academic exchange, for example by defending South-South mobility, the cross-translation of local knowledge, and the valorisation of Islamic thought as an endogenous intellectual resource, and not just as a subject for study.

Finally, its work goes beyond the strict academic framework. Through Africa Multiple, it actively supports forms of public and artistic engagement, civic initiatives and collaborative platforms that challenge the traditional separation between research and society. In Bayreuth, this takes the form of partnerships with African institutions (universities, research centres, NGOs), but also with diasporic African communities in Germany, although the latter are still poorly represented outside the university context.

So, the celebration of his birthday should be seen not just as a personal acknowledgement, but also as an opportunity to reflect on the scope—and the limits—of the Bayreuth African Studies project. Asking the question of *African Studies in Bayreuth* also means asking to what extent the knowledge relationships forged since the 1970s and 1980s have really transformed the relationship between the university, (Bayreuth) society, and the African continent.

Conclusion: Challenges and the Future of African Studies

Africa is not an external object of study, but an integral component of the intellectual and social history of the university, and of the region itself. This integration has been perceptible right from the institution's inception, and is manifested through academic, cultural and civic initiatives that closely link the university to its regional environment. What I had initially perceived as a geographical error—confusing Bayreuth with Beirut—turned out to be a revealing misunderstanding: the richness of Bayreuth is not apparent at first glance. It is discovered over time, through the stories we share, the links we forge, the histories we write.

The project to build the university and establish African Studies was not driven by a single figure, but by a community of players convinced that understanding Africa—in all its complexity—required new approaches, original forms of collaboration.

This heritage must be defended with all the more conviction in the face of extreme right-wing populist waves and the rise of identity-based discourse in Europe. This calls for a broader program of action, aimed more at the general public. Although the Cluster's official language is English, talking about Africa in this region also requires more frequent use of the German language, to encourage better reception of the debates in the local public arena. This requires concrete initiatives supported by university chairs, in close collaboration with civil society and cultural institutions. It's no longer just a matter of teaching in the classroom, but of actively engaging outside the university walls: in schools, libraries, cultural spaces, local media, and within the city itself. Such engagement is essential to building a nuanced understanding of Africa, deconstructing the stereotypes still alive, and defending the university as an open, critical and inclusive space at the heart of the region.

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Anti-Racism

Stefan Ouma

Not diversity. But anti-racism. On top of that: A committee—another term that does not make you many friends. Yet, this is what was founded at Bayreuth University in 2020. Rüdiger proved to be an ally from the outset in institutionalising anti-racist principles at the University of Bayreuth both within the Cluster of Excellence Africa Multiple and at the university as a whole. Consequentially, he was a founding member of the "Anti-Racism Committee". When others gaslight structural racism by holding that they "don't see color" or call for "greater differentiation", Rüdiger has not shied away from calling a spade a spade, both within our university and in the wider German public (sometimes attracting the ire of far-right voices). He reminds us that leadership positions can be used to challenge the very foundations of racialized, classed and gendered power geometries that shape universities. Of course, this work is ongoing, remains unfinished. Of course, Rüdiger could do it under very particular circumstances. You can achieve so much more as a white, heterosexual man. You can achieve so much more once you become a Cluster Dean than you could as an ordinary professor. You can do so much more as someone who speaks German fluently. Positionality matters, as Rüdiger would probably admit without hesitation.

Trump's dismantling of DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) efforts in the US, and the cowardly submission of many institutions, which have decided to bow to an explicitly white supremacist agenda, have consequences that are felt beyond the US. It remains to be seen what will happen to anti-racist efforts in Germany, where voices from far-right discourses have set the pace for much of our politics and where, paradoxically, the very same forces that support a Cluster of Excellence in African Studies might campaign against Gender or Postcolonial studies. What will happen to anti-racist efforts in Germany, where voices across the political spectrum have jumped on the "anti-wokeness bandwagon"? Most of our universities are not in a good position as they have, if at all, been stuck with sanitized diversity politics rather than a deeper anti-racist agenda. At a time when the party *Alternative for Germany* (AfD), along with other political forces purportedly representing the "middle of society" ("die Mitte der Gesellschaft"), target universities as spaces of knowledge production, we need bold and resilient leaders to protect our institutions.

We need more Rüdigers. However, as Rüdiger would agree, we also need more Rashids, Robertas, or Rirhandus who can challenge the status quo from a position of power. The struggle continues.

B

Bayreuth

Thoko Kaime

In Bayreuth Town, where scholars roam,
There's a Cluster that's top of the dome.
Africa's the theme, and guess who's in charge?
It's Rüdiger, quick on the barge!

Meetings and memos, emails galore —
That's that Ruediger for sho!
With 2.0 in the bag and many plans in hand,
We will make Bayreuth the best of the bunch.

C

Children's Literature and Recentering Orature in Kenya

Obala Musumba

Introduction: Orature and Children's Literature

African Orature is an important pillar of children's literature in Kenya. Its relevance has been elevated by the ongoing debate on the reclamation of indigenous African epistemologies. Exposing African children to this knowledge at these early stages of their life is perhaps the most effective way of achieving this goal. The significance of this resides in the proclamation by many African scholars that indigenous African knowledge should provide a base on which all other forms of knowledge are anchored and nurtured in the African's consciousness (Diop 1974; Bitek 1974; Mugo 1991, 1994; Thiong'o 2007). The term orature was coined by a Ugandan linguist, Pio Zirimu, in the early 1970s "to counter the tendency to see the arts communicated orally and received aurally as an inferior or of lower rung in the linear development of literature" (Thiong'o 2007, 4). Okot p'Bitek (1974) articulates this concept by asserting that:

> …it is through the study of African oral literature that the student will acquire a deeper knowledge of African language, which is a direct route to the thinking and feeling of our people. It is only through a thorough knowledge of the way our people think and feel that can speak to them on the same wavelength. (127).

It is on this plane of thought that I emphasize that African orature has much more desirable impact in one's life when introduced at childhood. The curators of literature in Kenya have since come to this realization and encourage the writers and practitioners of Children's compositions to integrate African orature in them.

Children's literature in Kenya targets children at all levels of the curriculum of education of the country starting from pre-primary to junior years at secondary school. The school curriculum is designed and supervised by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) which also approves and recommends the kind of learning materials children are exposed to at school. Children's literature is important as it plays a big role in the child's all-round development. It acts as a pivotal cog "… in the process of building human beings that will have the wherewithal to live useful, productive and profitable lives within modern-day society" (Adesina 2021, 977). Today, children's literature in Kenya comprises both written material and orature and even in the case of written material, orature still retains a commanding presence through employment of oral features that define it (Muriungi 2021, 26). Orature comprises oral narratives, oral poetry, proverbs, riddles, puns among other forms.

One of the most remarkable developments in the realm of literature in Kenya was the campaign to abolish the English Department at the University of Nairobi in 1968. The campaign was led by, among others, Ngugi wa Thiong'o who passed away recently. Valorization of African orature occupies an important space in the raft of recommendations proposed in the letter. The letter emphasizes that the study of oral literature enables an African to enter deeper and broader understanding with a shift in the way s/he perceives knowledge, "… his familiarity with oral literature could suggest new structures and techniques; and could foster attitudes of mind characterized by the willingness to experiment with new forms, so transcending 'fixed literary patterns' and what that implies – …" (Thiong'o 1972, 230). To prove that this was a Rubicon in Kenyan literature, the proceeding decades witnessed a flurry of creative and critical works that foregrounded orature departing significantly from hitherto marginalization that had been imposed by a colonial curriculum of education. Since then, orature has established itself in Kenyan literary canons as it has done throughout the African continent over the past decades. This has happened at different layers. The first one is the integration of orature into written genres of literature such as prose fiction, drama, poetry among other written works (Muriungi 2021). The other equally or even more important layering is where orature is served to the audience in its entirety: pure and unadulterated. At this level, there are a number of literary texts with collections of oral narratives, oral poems, proverbs, riddles, among other orature performances.

Closely related to this latter category is the centring of orature in the educational curriculum in Kenya through performance and activities related to orature that are organized and sponsored by the Ministry of Education. These performances are organized all over the country starting from the smallest administrative units called zones. A few schools found in a zone compete to get the representatives at the next level, which is a sub-county. From there, the best performers move to the county, then the regions, and finally to the national level. These activities have been going on for many decades since Kenya's independence in 1963, although for children in primary school, it was introduced as a form of a drama in 1980. Emmanuel Tsikhungu (2011) highlights the contribution of drama performed at the annual school festivals to the development of children's literature in the country. Although his focus is limited to drama, the festival has since expanded to embrace almost all aspects of orature.

> The Kenya Primary School Drama Festival was introduced into the festival in 1980 … Since then, many Kenyan children have encountered well organized drama for the first time in their lives through this Drama Festival. The aim of bringing the Primary Schools participation to the Festival was to introduce the primary school children to drama so that they can learn through it as well as get entertained in the process. Drama was then and is still seen as a tool for socialization, education and entertainment (Tsikhungu 2011, 469).

These performance avenues and children's literature in general serve to nurture the young people's talent, and most importantly, expose them to their own African orature and other African people's cultural artefacts.

This paper interrogates how African orature, particularly the oral narratives, centre the child figure in children's literature in Kenya. It focuses on the trickster narrative, which belongs to a subgenre of oral narratives that illuminates the intricate interaction between children and the adults in a relationship that surreptitiously and humorously inverts known order.

Constructing the Child through Orature

Indigenous African knowledge captures a cosmology where the child is an important member in the sense that s/he holds the future of that world. Although this significance varies from one community to another at different levels, there are unbending facts about the subject of the child that cut across communities. For instance, an unborn child and an infant are the link between the living and the underworld. This link to the ancestors and gods dwindles with the child's growth as s/he becomes more worldly. This spectrum of the value attached to the child inform the apparent ambivalence that African communities exhibit towards their children. An oral narrative, thus, plays the best role in expressing this ambivalence. For instance, whereas some narratives allegorize the child 'suffering oppression' in the world that is controlled by the adults, others refract the child as the main custodian of the community's continuity that should be protected at all costs. Simiyu (1973) captures the premium placed on children in the society.

> Children are thus considered as a means of perpetuating life and culture beyond the short life of the parents and the living members of the society, and not as a means of production, although this aspect of the question is not ignored. They are precisely the link between the past (the grandparents), the present and the future. (Simiyu 1973, 180)

The need for the preservation of the community is what leads to the stringent measures that the child is put under in order to grow into a responsible adult of desirable character as designed by the society. To achieve this, strict disciplinary regiments are put in place. Indeed, there are many sub-genres of oral narratives that are designed to mould the character of the child into a law abiding, moral, and profitable members of the society. Monster narratives, for example, are such stories where an ogre transforms him/herself into a beautiful lady or man and positions him/herself at a strategic point to lure young men and ladies that do not follow the adults or parents' advice. Once such a young man or woman is lured by the beauty of the stranger, s/he is gobbled down. As Kimingich Wabende postulates, ogre stories "… therefore taught the young children about community values, which were mostly captured in the Ogre narratives and animal stories" (Wabende 2021, 960).

The entrenchment of African orature in children's literature in Kenya is an important step in the reconstruction of the 'child-subject' to refract the societal expectations while enjoying imaginary power over the adult members of the society presented in trickster narratives.

On the Art of Friendship: A Synopsis

In this section, I am interested in exploring trickster narratives which form the most popular sub-genre of oral narratives with children as the target audience. The plots of most of the narratives allegorize the child pitted against the world of the adults. They are imbued with nuances of victory for children over the bullying of not so clever adults. Unlike the ogre narratives, trickster narratives are set on the backdrop of humor with the big animals displaying unmatched gullibility. The narrative selected for illustration is based on the relationship between small and big animals as well as between small animals. The story which is set among the Luo[1] community of Kenya is entitled "On the Art of Friendship."

"On the Art of Friendship"[2] is an oral narrative from the Luo community, which revolves around the relationship between the Hare and other animals and birds. It is a long narrative that begins with the friendship between the Hare and the Eagle who were close friends. The Hare visits the Eagle who prepares a meal for him. The Hare is surprised that the Eagle has prepared bread[3] without the stew to eat it with. But when the bread is ready, the Eagle flies to the nearest village and comes back with a chicken to eat the bread with. Later on, the Eagle visits the Hare, and the Hare also prepares bread without stew. The Hare tries to imitate what the Eagle did by pouncing on the chicken, in the neighborhood, but the owner of the chicken sees him and chases him away. The Hare is frustrated and embarrassed for failing to provide stew for his visitor. He is humbled into requesting his visitor to intervene. The Eagle accepts and gets the chicken, which they prepare and eat the bread with. The Hare ends the friendship because of the embarrassment he suffers. The same trend is followed with the Tortoise, the Ant, and the Pigeon. All these animals and birds have abilities coming from their nature, which the Hare is portrayed to lack though he wants to compete with them and ends up fooling himself. However, the Hare's trickster traits are revealed when she befriends Onyang' Onyang', the Crocodile. When he visits Onyang' Onyang's home, he notes that Onyang' Onyang's wife lays the eggs on the veranda of the hut. The Hare cunningly suggests that he is better off sleeping on the veranda rather than in the

1 The Luo people are found in many parts of Africa. The ones referred to in this paper are found in the western part of Kenya.

2 This narrative was first rendered in Dholuo, the language spoken by the Luo people, and it was translated by Okumba Miruka.

3 The bread in this narrative refers to stiff porridge, popularly known in East Africa as ugali which, though a Kiswahili word, has entrenched itself in the English of the region. It is a popular meal in western parts of Kenya, and it is made from flour of a mixture of dried millet, sorghum, and cassava.

hut with his hosts when time for retiring to bed comes. He uses the bonfire outside to roast Onyang' Onyang's eggs and eat. The sweetness of the eggs makes the Hare unable to control himself and breaks into a song expressing his wonder at how delicious Onyang' Onyang's eggs are. Onyang' Onyang' whose hearing is a bit impaired asks the Hare what he is singing about. The Hare changes the song in praise of the veranda's serenity and how conducive it is for sleeping, which lulls Onyang' Onyang' to sleep. The following day, Onyang' Onyang' carries the Hare on his back across the river to his home but while in the middle of the river, Onyang' Onyang's family discovers that the Hare has eaten all the eggs on the veranda. They shout to Onyang' Onyang' with the news, but because of Onyang' Onyang's hard of hearing, he asks the Hare what the message his family his family is relaying could be. The Hare tells Onyang' Onyang' that his family members are urging him to hurry across the river to avoid the rain that is about to fall. The family members keep on shouting their message until Onyang' Onyang' gets it clearly enough. He grabs the Hare's foot, but the Hare tricks him that it is a log that he has grabbed. Onyang' Onyang' leaves the leg and grabs a log instead, while the Hare swims to freedom. The story thus ends with a mischievous Hare fleeing to freedom Scot free.

The Hare as the 'Child-Hero' in the Adult World

This narrative is a composite of many shorter stories normally told to/by children among the Luos and many other communities in East African region. The Hare is represented in the narratives as the protagonist trickster. It is equivalent to Ananse, the Spider, in the West African trickster narratives (Finnegan 2012, 277; Adesina 2021, 978). However, it is important to note that the Hare is mostly symbolic of the child character when pitted against the big animals such as elephant, buffalo, lion, leopard, crocodile, rhinoceros, among others. This may not suffice in the case where the contest is between the Hare and other fellow small animals, in which we see it being portrayed as a morbidly envious animal, always seeking to compete with his friends and wanting to be seen as the best among his peers. In this portrayal, he consistently makes a fool of himself with his unsuccessful tricks on these small animals. For example, in the story, Onyoso (a black ant with massive deposit of fats in the abdomen) produces oil by melting the extreme end of his buttocks. The oil is a necessary ingredient for the bitter vegetables that he has prepared for his special visitor, the Hare. Instead of appreciating this rare ability from his friend, the Hare promises to do the same when Onyoso visits him next. Indeed, it does not take long before Onyoso, at the insistence of the Hare, visits; the Hare prepares the bitter vegetables, heats the rod, and attempts to melt the end part of his abdomen in imitation of Onyoso. The results are not only disastrous but utterly embarrassing. He scalds himself seriously and has to plead with Onyoso to melt his own buttocks for them to complete the meal. This kind of embarrassing imitation is repeated with the Eagle and the Tortoise.

In the narrative, where the Hare duels with a big animal, Onyang' Onyang', the Crocodile, the Hare is represented as a clever and witty animal. The crocodile on the other hand is assigned symbols of weakness, cognitive frailty, and clumsy psychomotor abilities. The big animals represent the adult figure while the Hare stands for the child. The Hare's successful trickery of the Crocodile is symbolic of the psychological victory of children over their overbearing and patronising adult keepers: such as parents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, teachers, etc. The Hare does his tricks through wit, persuasion aided by a sharp tongue and mind. These representations are also vital tropes in the child's identity formation.

On top of the symbolic significance, there are other functions of narratives including tricksters such socialization and entertainment. Narratives are important instruments of socialization as stories are designed to inculcate societal norms into the young mind of the child. According to Afolayan (2021), oral narratives help children to appreciate cultures from both their communities and other communities equipping them with the ability to acknowledge diversity that entangles the global communities. He also emphasizes their appeal to emotions and their use for catharsis.

> They help people to appreciate other cultures. Storytelling helps students to recognize the unity in diversity among the various cultures of the world … the global understanding that folk narratives bring … Its power to break down barriers and explain the reasons for those barriers we tend to protect ourselves with, is both unique and interesting." (Afolayan 2021, 1002)

The selected narrative is an allegory of friendship between small animals and small and big animals. The narrative opens with a comparison of friendship between small animals, which are taken to be equal. It emerges that when there is no advantage overdetermining the friendship, the important and defining element of friendship becomes one's character. This story is thus interweaved by the motif of friendship, which is an essential purveyor of the communal philosophy that is the fulcrum of the African society. Friendship is weighed on a continuum metric of values ranked at its extreme ends, and yet dissolving the borders, that separate "people" based on their insignificant differences. The Hare who is ontologically different from the Eagle is thus able with ease to forge a friendship just as he befriends the Pigeon, the Ant, and the Crocodile. The pillars of this friendship in the narrative are conceived to be, among others, trust and reciprocity. Trust and reciprocation are exhibited when the Hare meets with his friends in their homes as well as his own home to eat and make merry. Contrariwise, outstanding obstacles to friendship in the narrative are flagged as negative competition and betrayal. When these two vices are admitted, friendship is sacrificed with effect that the community is hard put to stick together again. The story is thoroughly humorous and entertaining, but it is also imbued in didactive nuances for the young people. One reads caution to the children in the narrative that unnecessary competition can lead to frustration, disillusionment, and even injury.

Another important element that emerges in the narrative is the setting. Narratives are often set in the immediate environments of the communities in which they are rendered. In the selected narrative, all the animals used, Hare, Eagle, Tortoise, Pigeon, Ant, and Crocodile, are common phenomena in the country of the Luo people of Kenya. In the story, you also find the features of the environment such as the sky, tropical rains, assorted grains like sorghum, millet, cassava, maize, among others. There are also vegetables like *akeyo* and traditional oil. All these are important tropes of the way of life of the people in which the narrative is set. The animals, birds, and insects used as characters are highly symbolic. The star protagonist, Hare, is associated with intelligence, wit, innovativeness, and alacrity. He is also a symbol of cunningness and mischief, which makes him appealing to the child readers or audience when the narrative is woven around his stratagems. Eagle, in the Luo community, like in many other communities where it is found all over the world, is a symbol of courage, strength and resilience. It is the king of the birds because of these qualities and commands a lot of respect from other animals whenever it features in the oral narratives. The tortoise symbolizes longevity, patience, and wisdom. It is mythologized to be the germane of just law such that when it bows its head it is presumed to be always legislating and not sleeping. Because it can live for up to one hundred and fifty years, it is bequeathed with custodial powers over wisdom like that which is attributed to the sagely elders in a given community. "The Swahili name for the Tortoise is Mzee Kobe (*mzee means elder*) implying the Tortoise is wise" (Wabende 2021, 971; emphasis added). Its patience permits endurance of harsh and unpredictable occurrences in the environment such as stormy rains, prolonged dry seasons, cruel animals, among others. Staying for over one and half centuries surely calls for that kind of patience. His shell does not only provide him with shelter and protection but also aids him in getting food when it is the last option. Akuru, the Pigeon, is a symbol of peace. In the story, he is equipped with the supernatural powers to command the grains to pack themselves in various granaries when the heavy rain is just about fall.

Conclusion

This paper has been able to show the value attached to children in Kenya as shown through efforts to recentre the indigenous African epistemology that not only acknowledges the presence of the children in their midst but also nurture them into seamless members of the society. African orature, which is an essential branch of this epistemology, has been examined in the context of the children's literature in Kenya where its functions have been foregrounded. Though not interrogated from its cultural dimension, African orature has been proved to be a pivotal signpost of epistemological emancipation of the African consciousness. In addition to its aesthetical superiority, African orature also boasts of almost unlimited functionality. Oral narratives are used to inculcate societal values in the young people, teach the cultural practices of their communities and of people from other communities across the global. It is the unifying factor of diverse outlooks to matters related to culture. It is also a source of catharsis and entertainment. Although African orature can be termed as a late entrant in the children's literature institutionalized in the curriculum of education in Kenya, its impact cannot be gainsaid.

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D

Diaspora, Displacement, and Desire in East African Asian Literature

No New Land*

Peter Simatei

East African Asian literature offers a unique perspective on the intersection of migration, identity, and memory. Rooted in the colonial and postcolonial histories of countries like Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, this body of work reflects the complex experiences of South Asian communities who settled in East Africa and were later displaced due to political, social, and racial factors. Writers such as Moyez Vassanji, Peter Nazareth, Jameela Siddiqi, and Yusuf K. Dawood explore themes of exclusion, hybridity, and nostalgia, while interrogating the shifting boundaries of home and belonging.

Their works question both the homogenising ideologies of the postcolonial nation-state and the essentialist politics of diaspora. They depict migrants caught between histories, cultures, and identities—unable to fully belong to either their ancestral homelands or their adopted countries in Africa or the West. The East African nation-state emerged from a nationalist struggle against colonial rule. This process relied on a vision of shared cultural origins and heroic anti-colonialism. However, the construction of post-independence national identity was often exclusive. Those not considered indigenous—such as the Asian population—were left outside the dominant narrative of nationhood. The result was what Homi Bhabha refers to as an "ambivalent" national identity, internally fractured by difference (Bhabha 1994, 148). Although the Asian community had been present in East Africa since the late 19th century, largely due to British colonial recruitment of Indian laborers and traders, their place in the postcolonial national imagination remained contested. This was

* Some of the ideas in this paper first appeared in "The Migrant Experience in East African Asian Writing.", *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* 26, no. 2 (2004)

particularly true in Kenya and Uganda, where African nationalism saw them as economic beneficiaries of colonialism who had failed to support anti-colonial liberation (Mazrui 1968, 65). Their complex historical roles were reduced to a monolithic portrayal of privilege and aloofness.

East African Asian communities often viewed themselves as temporary residents or "guests" in Africa. This idea of guesthood justified their reluctance to participate in nationalist movements. In *In a Brown Mantle*, Nazareth's characters articulate this detachment, expressing the belief that liberation was "somebody else's fight" (Nazareth 1972, 49). Vassanji's Shamsi community, similarly, avoids political engagement, focusing instead on family, trade, and religious loyalty (Vassanji 1989, 84). This aloofness, although functional under colonial rule, became politically untenable in the postcolonial era. African nationalism sought to dismantle racial hierarchies and colonial privileges, advocating for a reconfiguration of identity based on indigenous belonging and African unity. Against this backdrop, the Asian community's reluctance to fully participate in anti-colonial struggles became a source of resentment.

This detachment, however, was not universal. Certain individuals within the Asian community, such as Pio Gama Pinto, Makhan Singh, and Girdhari Lal Vidyarthi, played important roles in the struggle for independence. Yet, as depicted in East African Asian writing, the community at large often hesitated to engage politically, in part due to the preservation of economic interests and a fear of losing their privileged position within colonial structures. Consequently, post-independence policies of Africanization—aimed at promoting African ownership and participation—were seen by many Asians as abrupt and unjust reversals of fortunes, despite their own complicity in the previous system.

This political aloofness, though partially a survival strategy, was shaped by colonial structures that promoted racial segregation and economic compartmentalization. Many Asians internalized these divisions, benefitting from economic opportunities while remaining socially separate from Africans. Consequently, when independence arrived, their lack of involvement in the nationalist cause made them targets of resentment, and eventually, state policies such as Uganda's 1972 expulsion of Asians under Idi Amin.

Despite historical tensions, East Africa is remembered in many works as a place of religious tolerance and cultural richness. In *The Feast of the Nine Virgins*, Siddiqi's narrator recalls a time when mosques, temples, churches, and gurudwaras coexisted peacefully, and religious festivals brought together people of different faiths (Siddiqi 2001, 112). This idyllic memory, however, is juxtaposed with depictions of internal class divisions and racial superiority within the Asian community. As Siddiqi suggests, the social harmony of the past was often built on a false sense of unity—a unity constructed against the backdrop of African exclusion. The narrator notes that this cohesiveness "was only possible out of a sense of having a common enemy—the Black Man" (Siddiqi 2001, 134). Similarly, in *The Gunny Sack*, Vassanji explores how the Asian community absorbed colonial and Arab stereotypes of Africans, reinforcing a Manichean binary that depicted Africans as inferior (Vassanji 1989, 101).

The older generation of East African Asians, particularly those depicted in Vassanji's works, often attempted to recreate Indian identity in exile. Their community rituals, naming practices, and social structures replicated an idealized India, transplanted into African settings. This internalized nostalgia, what Vijay Mishra calls "the projection of India onto another geographical space," allowed the diaspora to sustain a sense of belonging even in dislocation (Mishra 2007, 135). However, this strategy also limited integration. By turning inward, the diaspora avoided meaningful cultural exchange with African societies. As a result, their cultural survival often came at the cost of isolation and political vulnerability.

In contrast to the essentialism of the older generation, younger characters in East African Asian literature embrace hybridity. Salim Juma in *The Gunny Sack* is one of such figure. A descendant of an African slave and an Indian merchant, Salim adopts the name "Huseni", embracing an identity that reflects multiple origins (Vassanji 1989, 46). His identity is marked by fragmentation, ambiguity, and adaptation. Siddiqi's characters also embody hybrid transnational identities. One character is described as "Born in Bombay, raised in Mombasa, married in Kampala, educated in London… and died in Vancouver. Where was this person actually from?" (Siddiqi 2001, 158). These characters inhabit what Bhabha calls the "third space" of cultural negotiation—no longer tied to a single origin but continually reshaping themselves in response to their environments (Bhabha 1994, 55).

For many East African Asians, resettlement in Western cities like Toronto or London brings disillusionment. In *No New Land*, Vassanji depicts the experiences of Tanzanian Asians navigating the racialized urban spaces of Canada. Initially attracted by the promises of multiculturalism, they soon encounter discrimination and stereotyping. The characters attempt to distinguish themselves from other South Asians—particularly Pakistanis—by asserting their East African roots and wearing culturally distinct attire like the Kaunda suit (Vassanji 1989, 89). These efforts, however, fail to prevent racist attacks and social exclusion. The community becomes ghettoized in Don Mills, a suburb that offers little of the "haven of peace" that Dar es Salaam once symbolized. The characters lament that "the blacks kicked us out, now the whites will do the same" (Vassanji 1989, 93). The West, far from being a space of liberation, becomes another site of marginalization.

The cultural displacement faced by migrants is often depicted through the transformation of symbolic spaces. In *No New Land*, Nurdin Lalani visits a peep show named "Dar es Salaam, The Heaven of Love"—a cynical play on the literal translation of Dar es Salaam as "haven of peace." This moment highlights the cultural erosion and moral confusion experienced by migrants, especially when removed from the collective codes of their earlier communities (Vassanji 1991, 136). Lalani's moral decline—consuming alcohol, visiting pornographic venues—is not merely personal but emblematic of the broader dissolution of community values in diaspora. The attempt to reconcile past and present creates psychological strain and cultural fragmentation.

Faced with marginalization in the West, many migrants turn to East Africa as a lost paradise. Yet this nostalgia is fraught with contradictions. In memoirs such as P.S. Nayar's, Uganda is remembered as a place where one wanted "to live and die," until "Africanization" shattered the illusion of communal harmony (Nayar 2001, 72). However, such recollections often omit the racial dynamics that made African nationalism necessary. Peter Nazareth, in contrast, urges that any reflection on the expulsion of Asians from Uganda must consider whether the community "participated in creating the conditions for the expulsion" (Nazareth 2008, 142). Milton Carrasco agrees, arguing that many Asians saw themselves as superior to black Ugandans and continued discriminatory attitudes after independence. The backlash against these hierarchies, combined with populist nationalism, resulted in their political vulnerability (Carrasco 2002, 119).

The migrant experience in East African Asian literature is one of contradictions and complexities. Writers such as Vassanji, Nazareth, and Siddiqi portray a community shaped by privilege and marginalization, nostalgia and disillusionment, hybridity and exclusion. Their works challenge both nationalist narratives that erase minority histories and diaspora discourses that romanticize cultural purity and belonging. The migrant experience in East African Asian writing is a narrative of contradictions: nostalgia and alienation, privilege and exclusion, mobility and displacement. The works of Vassanji, Nazareth, Siddiqi, and others trace the shifting trajectories of a community once entrenched in colonial hierarchies, later expelled by nationalist politics, and now struggling to find its footing in Western multicultural societies.

These writers do not offer easy resolutions. Instead, they present the diasporic subject as one caught between worlds, negotiating complex inheritances and uncertain futures. Identity, in this literature, is not a destination but a journey—an ongoing process of remembering, forgetting, adapting, and resisting. In doing so, East African Asian writing not only captures the migrant condition with remarkable depth but also offers insights into the broader human experience of belonging in an ever-changing world.

Belonging, in these texts, is not static but always in flux. Migrants exist in a space between worlds, marked by multiple affiliations and fragmented memories. Whether in Kampala, Dar es Salaam, Toronto, or London, the search for home remains elusive. Yet through this dislocation, East African Asian writing articulates a powerful vision of human resilience, adaptation, and the continuing struggle for identity in a changing world.

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E

English Drama, African Impulses
A Fresh Look

Michael Steppat

Introduction

Early Modern England is clearly separated neither from the cultural and ethnic influence of Africa, nor from the subtle impact of Islam. Africans were present in the country during the Middle Ages, but only in very small numbers, and it was during the 1550s that this began to change. Sir John Hawkins was one of the first English persons who enslaved Black people, deporting them to England and America. The people to whom this happened were ethnically and culturally diverse, yet the tendency was to speak about them with interchangeable synonyms: these include "black(a)~~moor~~", "Aethiopian," "Blackman," as well as M[ ] and N[ ], while the terms Arab and more commonly Turk were used with similarly loose connotations. The generalizing term M[ ] would usually designate Muslims, regardless of their ethnic grouping (Barthelemy 1987, 6–8). This composite sector of the population seems to have grown to a notable size, since it grew to be a matter of concern to the royal government.

Dissatisfied with the "great numbers" of the Black population, allegedly causing employment rivalry with the English, Queen Elizabeth I issued executive orders of expulsion in 1596, 1599, and again in 1601 (Ungerer 2008). These orders were a racist proclamation, aiming at proclaiming the superiority of whiteness and the need to prevent it from being "degenerated". Yet, they were hardly carried out in practice; for enslavers an economic factor of rival accumulation was at stake. As far as they were men, they mostly belonged to the elite class of wealthy merchants. There were English merchants located in Spain in the early 16th century; and some decades later, the beginning of English enslaving voyages between Guinea and the Caribbean, created the infrastructure for the purchase of African slaves by some wealthy English households.

As the archival records show, Africans were employed in skilled menial work but mostly in chattel service. By the mid-16th century, small communities were forming, as well as interethnic unions. Records of Black urban people occur continuingly from the early 1580s onward, and we can gather that these people formed "a pervasive, repetitive, and accelerating presence in Elizabethan London" as well as a vital contribution to the capital's economic resources in accumulating profitable items from south of the Mediterranean (Habib 2008, 116). On a smaller scale than in Portugal, but growing, the European enslavement of Africans and the Black population represents "a new world discovered" for Europeans, more than the Columbian conquering, enabling "unimaginable material wealth and human discovery" (Habib 2008, 22). Generally, though, any African living on European soil and elsewhere was in danger of being enslaved, because the laws prohibited this rather than protecting Black people from being enslaved.

Awareness of the presence of African people along with imported goods in early modern London and also a few other English cities, as well as the knowledge of trading voyages to the African shores make it very plausible that imaginative stories of the East and South were highly appealing to theatre audiences and gave playwrights a motivation to depict such events and settings on the stage. In a wider geographical sense, characters who swear by Mohound and Mahound already appeared in medieval drama, as in the case of the York Harrowing.

For the early modern period, however, in this article we will trace a few strikingly inventive depictions of Africans that do not convey stereotypes such as audiences were likely to expect. We will devote attention especially to Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, and two tragedies by William Shakespeare: *Titus Andronicus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Eldred Jones from Sierra Leone has described stories about Africans or M[ ]s as highlighting the "harems of the north African rulers and descriptions of the courts of West African Negro kings" as well as trade (Jones 1965, 87). The actual range of such depictions is rather diverse, and they are not easily summarized. A sequence of early modern English plays that feature African characters, whether speaking roles or not, begins with Marlowe's two-part tragedy *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587) and reaches to Philip Massinger's tragicomedy *The Renegado* (1624), as well as later works. Academic discussions of M[ ]s in the English dramas tend to begin with the Moroccans of Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, though these are not the first African stage characters in the period. We should not suppose that the literary images of such exotified characters were intervening into racism. On the contrary, the literary presentation of Black people largely fed into racist constructions that projected unattractive characteristics onto these people: they are shown to be aggressive, covetous, cruel, lustful, greedy, and racially inferior. Yet, in a few cases Black characters are presented as more easily approvable in moral terms, showing courage as well as a capacity for hard work and genuine love. On the whole, however, it seems more logical, from a strategy of racist Othering and from economic considerations, in given intersections, to invest dramatic energy in the creation of less appealing African characters, because such renderings offer "an attractive Other and a popular exotic subject," capable of stimulating the audience's imagination regarding Black people (Laamiri 2003).

The playwrights who were capable of causing this effect gained their knowledge about African settings and events from several sources. There were historiographical accounts and also travel reports that appeared as books. There were enslavers and colonizers, merchants, traders, privateers, and seamen who carried on trade with northern and western Africa and could talk about their experience. In Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, Barabas tells the audience: "I hope my ships / I sent for Egypt and the bordering Isles / Are gotten up by Nilus' winding banks: / Mine Argosy from Alexandria, / Loaden with Spice and Silks, now under sail […]" (1633, ll. 131–135). Then, there were narratives by enslaved traders and seamen who had been captured by Turkish and North African pirates and finally released to return home. Of course, though, this was not even close to the atrocities of the European industrial deportation of Africans that calculated with more than half of the enslaved people dying. The deportation and selling of Africans to Hispanic America was important enough in this period, yet "it was rivaled in potential by the Portuguese trade with Africa"; this continent was "crucial" to English maritime activity in the Atlantic, and African voyages were "truly the nursery" for English mariners (Hall 1995, 16, 19). Some of these people would have contact with those associated with the popular theatres, in urban meeting places and sometimes in court circles where plays would also be performed.

One fruit of these contacts was to bring African characters, events, and settings to the attention of London playgoers. In the pseudo-historical play *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* Robert Greene in the late 1580s introduces Arcastus, King of the M[ ]s, and Claramont, King of B~~arbary~~, but hardly gives them speaking roles. In his revenge tragedy *The Jew of Malta*, Christopher Marlowe, being driven by racist imagery, at the same time shows a slave market featuring M[ ]s, Turks, and Jews.

Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great

Yet in a very different vein from these works, Marlowe introduces us in *Tamburlaine the Great* (Part 1) to Zenocrate, the daughter of the Soldan of Egypt. After staying with her uncle (Marlowe 1590, 1.224), she is now a part of Tamburlaine's conquest (with an "offensiue rape": 1.1055). Although she is betrothed to the Arabian ruler, Tamburlaine—the historical Timur—woos her with promises of material wealth: "Thy Garments shall be made of Medean silke, / Enchast with precious iuelles of mine owne: / More rich and valurous than *Zenocrates*" (1.308-310). Instead of asserting his military privilege, he comes close to giving her a choice: "If you will willingly remaine with me, / You shall haue honors, as your merits be […]" (1.471-472). The alternative, inevitably, would be slavery. She gradually acknowledges his generous and "princely" treatment of her (1.1089), realizing that a match with him would allow her higher esteem even "[t]han *Iuno* sister to the highest God" (1.1104). Indeed, she relishes the notion that vanquished rulers must "sue to me to be your Aduocates" (1.1352). Hence, she is driven by ambition and a thirst for supreme power, which Tamburlaine is prepared to grant her.

Before long, however, she reconceives her role and begins to plead with him to treat vanquished people, including Egyptians, as well as her father mercifully: "Yet would you haue some pitie for my sake" (1.1666). By this time, Tamburlaine has already acknowledged that she has power to "calme the rage of thundring *Iupiter*" (1.1298)—this explains the etymology of her name, which associates *ruling* or superiority and *Zeus* or Jupiter. With the same religious pluralism, and attention to Islam, Zenocrate goes on to lament the cruel treatment of the Turkish emperor and his wife: "Ah myghty *Ioue* and holy *Mahomet*, / Pardon my Loue, oh pardon his contempt […] / And pardon me that was not moou'd with ruthe, / To see them liue so long in misery" (1.2282-2283, 2288–2289). She undergoes an inner struggle, not unlike a tragic heroine, as her father in "the Egyptian fields," together with the king to whom she had been betrothed, prepare to battle her lover: "my poore pleasures are deuided thus, / And rackt by dutie from my cursed heart" (1.2301, 2306–2307). Finally, Tamburlaine confesses that she "hath calmde the furie of my sword / Which had ere this bin bathde in streames of blood [...]" (1.2362-2363), and for her sake "Egyptians, Moores and men of Asia" will be tributaries to her father (1.2443).

As Tamburlaine becomes "Lord of *Affrica*" and "Generall of the world" (1.1381, 2376), the Egyptian princess and her Soldan father share his authority. She has managed to exercise a strong influence on her mighty husband and becomes "diuine" (1.2432). In Part 2, she urges him to abandon military conquest (2.291) and, going even further, not to plant "angry war" in their sons' minds (2.370). As she eventually enters on her death bed, Tamburlaine again proclaims her divinity:

> *Apollo*, *Cynthia*, and the ceaslesse lamps / That gently look'd vpon this loathsome earth, / Shine downwards now no more, but deck the heauens / To entertaine diuine *Zenocrate*" (2.730-733). When she dies, he despairs: "Behold me here diuine *zenocrate*, / Rauing, impatient, desperate and mad, / Breaking my steeled lance [...]. (2.825-827)

The way she is genuinely revered by her husband and by his followers, together with her virtues and her divinity, suggest analogies to the veneration of Elizabeth I—and beyond this especially of the Blessed Virgin Mary, highly unorthodox in protestant England but a standard rite for Spanish conquerors (see Henry-Offor 2015). In her intimate association with Egypt, Zenocrate's characterization is not usually examined in connection with staged Blackness, yet it does belong with a consideration of African-based characters and settings in early modern drama.

Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*

African matters play an immense role again in George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (ca. 1591), a play that has survived in a short and apparently abbreviated quarto version. In the 1570s two M[ ]ish forces were contending for control of the Moroccan regions of Marrakech and Fez. The legitimate ruler was Abd el-Malek, named Abdelmelec in the play, yet he was challenged by his brother's son Mulai Mohammed el-Meslokh, the play's Muly Mahamet (with spelling variations and minor historical confusions). This challenger had usurped the ruling position in 1574 but had been ousted two years later. In this struggle, Abd el-Malek gained Turkish support, whereas Mulai Mohammed successfully sought the backing of the Portuguese ruler Don Sebastian—who in turn found support in Spain, Rome, and in the services of an English mercenary leader named Thomas Stukeley. The decisive battle between these forces took place in the summer of 1578, in a North African town named El-Ksar el-Kebir, and it turned out to be a battle that would “astound Europe and alter the course of history in two continents” (Bovill 1952, 137). In the battle the challenger and his alliance were ultimately defeated; Don Sebastian and the English mercenary were killed, Mulai Mohammed was drowned, while Abd el-Malek himself died of illness, to be succeeded by his brother Ahmed el-Mansur.

Peele devotes considerable attention to Mulai Mohammed, whose role is that of villain (Hyland 1999, 95–96; Mangum 2002, 16–17). His side is cynical about the incentive for military action: “gold is the glue, sinewes, and strength of war, / And we must see our treasure may go safe, / Away” (Peele 1907, sig. B1r). Abd el-Malek and his supporters were on friendly terms with the English government, commercially and politically, and Peele’s dramatic interpretation presents this side more favorably than the challenger’s. As a consequence, Peele’s drama offers an especially early rendering of morally and culturally attractive African people (on the terminology, the M-word being used, see Guinle 2008, 28–29). Peele was able to do this because he recognized individual distinctions between various Africans and the values they represent, without being bound to conventional prejudices regarding the Othering of religion and culture. The play’s presumably European Presenter announces this differentiated understanding of the play’s events:

> Honor the spurre that pricks the princely minde,
> To followe rule and climbe the stately chaire,
> With great desire inflames the Portingall,
> An honorable and couragious king,
> To vndertake a dangerous dreadfull warre,
> And aide with christian armes the barbarous Moore,
> The Negro *Muly Hamet* that with-holds
> The kingdome from his vnkle *Abdilmelec*,
> Whom proud *Abdallas* wrongd,
> And in his throne instals his cruell sonne,
> That now vsurps vpon this prince,
> This braue Barbarian Lord *Muly Molocco*. (1907, sig. A2r)

The “honorable” young Portuguese king with other Europeans is rushing to aid a “cruell” and “barbarous” usurper, while the “B~~arbarian~~” M[ ], allied with the Turks, is “braue.” This ambivalence of values creates a complex dramatic interpretation of the events. Ambivalence is also introduced when both sides invoke a zest for revenge (as in 1907, sigs. A2v, A4v, N2v), suggesting not only the genre of revenge tragedy but also a potential and residual vindication of the challenger’s cause though not perhaps his character. The English ambassador in 1577 speaks of Abd el-Malek as “one that liveth greatly in the feare of God, being well exercised in the Scriptures, as well in the olde Testament as also in the New, and he beareth a greater affection to our Nation then to others because of our religion, which forbiddeth worship of Idols […]” (Hakluyt, 1903/4, 6:289). Islam here appears very close to protestant Christianity, against the Catholic Portuguese who support Abd el-Malek’s rival. This proximity was not necessarily something wholly implausible to the public experience of the English, because in their country M[ ]s and Turks were “everywhere,” in coastal towns and in the streets and the courts (Matar 1999, 39). Many of the English knew such people because “they had worked and lived” with them, by no means always resulting in hatred but rather “accepting or admiring” them (Matar 1999, 6). Abd el-Malek appears in the drama as a pious Muslim who appeals to divine justice in a way that is designed to make an English audience sympathetic to him:

> Abdilmelec here
> Throw vp thy trembling hands to heauens throne
> Pay to thy God due thankes, and thankes to him
> That strengthens thee with mightie gracious armes,
> Against the proud vsurper of thy right. (Peele 1907, sig. A3r)

There appears to be a confusion of speakers in the study by Al-Olaqi (2016, 82). In the speech, at any rate, the adjectives are carefully placed to enhance a sense of the speaker’s ethos, and there are further instances of this guidance of sympathy in the play. Rather than appear wrathful toward Don Sebastian, who has become his enemy, Abd el-Malek finds him “lead with deceiuing hope” and “carelesse,” and announces that he himself has “in pittie to the *Portugall* / Sent secret messengers to counsell him,” thus hoping for a chance to resort to diplomacy (Peele 1907, sig. D3r-v).

Don Sebastian might appear to be a European champion in his professed mission to “plant the christian fath in Affrica,” backed by the English mercenary leader who proclaims “Saint George for England” (1907, sig. D1v). Yet their entire enterprise is ill-advised and, while momentarily seeming to be on the verge of success, ultimately fails—a failure both of Catholicism and of the European alliance. It is too late that the Portuguese ruler realizes he has been deceived by “[a] face so full of fraud and villanie” (1907, sig. F2v), against the righteous Muslim prince. Yet during a phase of the battle when the enemy seems to be gaining the upper hand, Abd el-Malek dies in despair, whereupon his brother laments “Braue Abdelmelec, though thrise noble Lord, / Not such a wound was giuen to Barbary, / Had twenty hoasts of men beene put to swoord / As death, pale death with fatall shaft hath giuen” (1907, sig. F1v-F2r). The quality “braue” is associated with this M[ ] throughout, since the opening Presenter’s description. Fahd Mohammed Taleb Al-Olaqi (2016, 88) highlights “the Elizabethan playwrights’ cross-cultural understanding and accord” as seen in the depiction of Abd el-Malek; this appears to be a generalization that would need more careful distinction of individual styles and perceptions.

Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* (with Peele)

As for Peele, he presumably collaborated in *Titus Andronicus* (probably written in the period 1588–1593), a very early tragedy that belongs to the Shakespeare corpus. It is the opposite of *The Battle of Alcazar* in that the action is not historical but fictional, drawing on a range of presumable sources for various parts. The action is rather complex. Titus Andronicus is a Roman general who is returning from a campaign, having captured the queen of the Goths (Tamora) together with her three sons and Aaron the M[ ], who is her secret lover.

This Black character shows a development from the characterization of Mulai Mohammed el-Meslokh, while both are villains in the dramatic scheme. We do not learn how Aaron comes to be among the Goths (perhaps the Visigoths in Spain?), or what his social standing is among them (perhaps a tutor?), so that we are free to speculate on how he is “embedded” in their culture (Bartels 2008, 81). As an act of retribution for his own dead sons, Titus sacrifices Tamora’s eldest son despite her impassioned pleas. Predictably, this act ensures her hatred. As the play then presents a range of further atrocities committed by Roman characters or leaders in the subsequent action, the schemes that will be devised by Tamora and Aaron against the Andronici do not appear to be singularly outrageous or savage. In Rome, at any rate, at the time of Titus’s return, a bitter competition for the imperial throne is raging between the sons of the late emperor (Saturninus and Bassianus). In this situation, Titus is asked to take the throne, but he declines in favor of

Saturninus. The latter offers to marry Titus's daughter, yet she is actually betrothed to Bassianus, who abducts her. Instead, Saturninus appoints Tamora as empress, a move that Emily Bartels finds at least in principle justified as evincing "cross-cultural connections" as against a "confining provincialism" (2008, 75, 78). Nonetheless, it gives Tamora a position that she can now use to take revenge on Titus and his remaining family. She and Aaron urge her two remaining sons to rape Titus's daughter secretly, then to cut her hands and her tongue to conceal their deed. Titus counter-schemes to trap Tamora's sons, so that he can kill them—and bake them in pies.

Throughout the tragedy's first act, which may have been authored especially by Peele, Aaron does not speak, he watches the unfolding action carefully and thus learns much about the unstable and almost chaotic power struggles among the Roman leadership. In an interesting reading, Emily Bartels turns against the notion of a Roman cultural purity and emphasizes that in Rome a crossing of cultures is "not the exception but the rule" (2008, 70). Yet there is a limit to this from the very beginning when Aaron's isolation leaves him very much on the fringe, if not beyond. The power struggles in Rome leave a gap for an outsider, which he is quick to perceive.

When Tamora becomes empress, Aaron opens the second act with a soliloquy in which he relishes her rise to power and muses about the new opportunity this gives him: "Then, Aaron, arm thy heart, and fit thy thoughts, / To mount aloft with thy imperial mistress. […] Away with slavish weeds and servile thoughts!" (1.2.12-13, 18). A soliloquy is a device that allows a character to reveal inner motivations and emotions to the audience, introspectively, without engaging in the social exchange of dialogue that might require a façade to protect the speaker's interiority. It is thus used for the purpose of adding psychological complexity to a characterization, and this is clearly the intention in Aaron's case. From here on, he is remarkably capable of invoking Greco-Roman mythology (Olympus, Prometheus, Lucrece, Philomel …) in order to subject Romans to a range of received texts, which he inscribes on their lives (Chaudhury 2001), as a strategy of gaining and maintaining an unexpected authority. Thus, in the first part of the tragedy, he appears as a brutal schemer who attains the trust of the Goths and the Romans, even as he uses his superior wit to advance Tamora's revenge, expecting that she will undo the whole colonizing "commonweal" of Saturninus (2.1.24) with its assumed pretence of civilized public responsibility.

His ambition might confirm an audience's expectation of a savage and barbarian M[ ], yet the fourth act introduces a surprising turn when his and Tamora's son is born. The nurse who enters with the Black baby is fully aware, like Tamora herself, of the political fallout if the court should learn about this birth:

> A joyless, dismal, black, and sorrowful issue! / Here is the babe, as loathsome as a toad / Amongst the fair-fac'd breeders of our clime" (4.2.66-68). Beyond the political warning, her invective is racist in its animal imagery, by implication extending to the father himself. To protect her status, the empress has commanded the baby's death; her sons instantly get ready to obey, yet Aaron rounds on them all: "'Zounds, ye whore, is black so base a hue? (4.2.71)

He is using a Christian oath ("God's wounds"), though anachronistic, potentially implying a divine refusal to regard black skin as "base," and a few lines later he hurls contempt on the young men's whiteness: "Ye white-lim'd walls! Ye alehouse painted signs! / Coal-black is better than another hue / In that it scorns to bear another hue; / For all the water in the ocean / Can never turn the swan's black legs to white [...]" (4.2.98-102). He thus calls the young white men hypocrites and implies they are not genuinely human. Their "painted" quality suggests to Anne Mangum that white skin is "thin and transparent" (2002, 25), yet the painted sign image is likely to point to a counterfeit representation that lacks reality. This difference is not a matter of detail, since it affects the larger understanding of ethnicity in the tragedy.

Aaron's pride in offspring now becomes his highest value, because the child is "myself," to be kept safe "maugre all the world" (4.2.107, 110)—a motivation that might seem to link him with Titus himself, were it not that the Roman general has killed his own son Mutius in the first act for a momentary disobedience. To save Tamora's imperial status, Aaron finds a way to replace his son with a Gothic baby while he conveys his own child to the Goths to have him raised in safety. He utters a vision of bringing up his son "[t]o be a warrior and command a camp" (4.2.180), possibly a Gothic camp as the context implies; a playgoer some decades later might think of Aaron's son as growing up to be Othello, albeit with a secretly white imperial mother. At any rate, in the Gothic realm Aaron encounters Titus's exiled son, Lucius, who claims the imperial throne and is leading a Gothic army to invade the capital city. When Lucius, at the head of the Gothic forces, meets Aaron (carrying his baby), he calls him "the incarnate devil" and "ravenous tiger" (5.1.40, 5.3.5), yet the M[ ] turns his self-righteousness around by exclaiming "If there be devils, would I were a devil, / To live and burn in everlasting fire, / So I might have your company in hell [...]!" (5.1.147-149). Lucius did indeed dismember Tamora's son in the opening scene, and is not morally superior to Aaron—while he is now leading a ‘barbarian’ army against Rome in his thirst for power.

Though Lucius is resolved to kill Aaron, he is persuaded to spare his baby in exchange for vital information from him about what has been happening in Rome, which he needs in order to advance his claim. What is remarkable about the depiction of the range of actions is the enhanced complexity of the Black villain figure, a new development as against Mulai Mohammed. Aaron himself cannot be reduced to a formula, and the characterization is quite likely a process of continuing exploration of identity frames (see also Anderson 2020). He remains obstinately and even excessively spiteful against Roman leaders, uttering rants that make a mockery of their professed moral virtues, and now empowering an army of Tamora’s own people to conquer the city—and showing his willingness to sacrifice his own life in order to allow his son to live. Considering the Roman lip-service to civilized conduct, Aaron can be found to possess more “moderation and self-discipline” than they in practice (Royster 2000, 447).

Lucius sentences Aaron to be set “breast-deep in earth [...] fast’ned in the earth” (5.3.179, 183) and famished. Emily Bartels emphasizes that this means he will be denied due burial (2008, 65), yet the visual connotation goes beyond this to identify him with mere earth, below the level of humans and animals. This is perhaps designed to recall Diodorus Siculus’s information that the Ethiopians were “the first to be generated by the earth” (1935, Book 3.2, 2:91), hence picturing an African’s regression to this appropriately pristine state. Leo Africanus describes some people of Congo who in their native religion throw themselves “groueling” on the earth and cover their faces with dust, thus, as he indicates, lowering their minds as far as possible (Al-Wazzān 1600, 378). Perhaps more to the point, “[i]n African cosmology there is mutuality between humans and the earth: the earth has the omnipotent power to punish transgressors” (Tafira 2015). Yet the Lucian punishment in the tragedy is a singular degradation, answering the way Titus’s sons are trapped into a “gaping hollow of the earth” (2.3.249). These Roman aristocrats have accordingly been termed “autochthonous offspring of the earth” (D’Amico 1991, 144), almost as if they were Ethiopians, so that their trap denies any *pax Romana* heritage.

A reason for Aaron’s degradation may be that, even though Saturninus earlier described Lucius as enjoying the people’s support, Lucius seems to fear that his power base is somewhat shaky. After Aaron’s scheming against the Roman leadership, it takes the strongest possible deterrent of capital punishment to keep the people Lucius wishes to govern from relieving or siding Aaron]: “If any one relieves or pities him, / For the offense he dies" (5.3.181-182). The Black baby apparently survives, its further destiny being no part of the dramatic design that shapes this tragedy. Because of the boy's escape from destruction, Aaron has been analyzed as embodying "a human capacity for survival and renewal," able to become "the next patron of *virtù*" contrasting with Titus (D'Amico 1991, 145). Yet that is not established in the play, it seems to rest on Aaron's fantasy about his child's future.

In these ways, Elizabethan dramatists made advances in exploring the considerable potential of creating complex and ambivalent African stage characters and events. The experience gained in depicting the opposed Moroccans in Peele's play as well as Aaron enabled strong further developments as in the Prince of Morocco (*The Merchant of Venice*, Act 2) and "Othello, the M[ ] of Venice", the first character to qualify as a tragic protagonist. It has been discovered that *Othello* forms a transtextual network with a West African folktale (see Arndt 2018), a prominent case of African narrative integration. Investigations also reveal an impact of *Alf Layla Wa Layla* on *Othello*, as well as a presumable influence of Antarah Ibn Shaddad (Elhanafy 2024, Chapters 3.2, 3.3). In *Othello* and, even more so, *The Tempest*, as Arndt argues, Shakespeare is aware of the violence that is caused by racism and colonialism and narrates it in a very critical way. This is definitely a different tone as compared to other white writers of his time and to his earlier work, including *Antony and Cleopatra* (Arndt 2023). Shakespeare is not only "a sensitive critic of the pitfalls of power," but also of "the pitfalls of racism," scrutinizing early modern "colonialist rhetoric" and thus by extension its enduring legacy into our time (Arndt 2018, 394–395).

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

Egypt and its feminine aura come to life again. In a greatly enhanced way, this happens in Shakespeare's mature tragic writing: a classic of world literature, *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606–1607) features an Egyptian queen in its title, the temporal setting now being not the medieval era but antiquity. Jack D'Amico (1991) includes this tragedy among his extensive analyses of "The M. in English Renaissance Drama": this implies an identity for Cleopatra that is somewhat anachronistic. At any rate, if Zenocrate was a fictional character within historical action, Cleopatra VII (Thea Philopator) is authentically historical. Like Zenocrate, Cleopatra is partnered with a conquering hero and associated with divine status, yet the parallel does not go much further. For the context, we need to recall that she finds a way to form a bond with Mark Antony, as member of the Roman imperial ruling team or triumvirate together with Octavius Caesar and Lepidus. Antony spends time with her in Egypt, as a lover, until a rebellion in Italy threatens Octavius's rule, and in this situation he returns to Rome for the sake of a triumviral reunion. As a consequence of the political negotiations there Antony approves the idea of marrying Octavius's sister Octavia, whereupon he moves with her to Athens for some years. But eventually the latent rivalry between him and Octavius flares up, causing him to leave his wife and return to Egypt and its queen. There Antony elevates Cleopatra to supreme status, promising her and her children the co-sovereignty over the greater part of the eastern Mediterranean. This enables Octavius to declare war against her, challenging her and Antony to a sea battle at Actium. Their forces are ultimately defeated, and subsequently in Egypt Antony erupts in fury against the queen, who then sends him a report that she had killed herself. Antony botches his own suicide. Learning too late that the report was false, he commands to be carried to Cleopatra in her monument, where he dies in her arms. Octavius succeeds in capturing the queen, yet with some deceit she takes her own life with the bite of an asp.

In dramatizing this action, Shakespeare follows fairly closely the account in Plutarch's *Life of Marcus Antonius*. For the moralizing historian, Cleopatra is motivated mainly by political ambition, showing negative characteristics for the greater part of the action; his account can be read as implying that she takes her life mainly for fear of humiliation rather than for any consistently romantic attachment. A major question in understanding the tragedy is how far Shakespeare's presentation of Cleopatra is guided by Roman authors: since Octavius's ultimate victory, which enables him to turn into the emperor Augustus, Roman commentators tend to disparage Cleopatra along with Antony. Unlike Zenocrate, Cleopatra does not exist only within the tragedy, so that the historical utterances are an element of the reception situation. Indeed, the drama should be "reread in its given embeddedness in wide realms of inter- and transtextuality" (Arndt 2018, 399).

Thus Propertius, after 23 BCE, denounces her as a harlot queen seeking to enslave the walls of Rome to her tyranny (3.11; 1929, pp. 215, 217). Horace speaks of her dizzy brain made mad, while he praises her fearless suicide (Horace, Odes 1.37; trans. 1872, 38–39). Plutarch calls Cleopatra's allure a "pestilent plague and mischiefe" (Spevack et al. 1990, 420). In the early 3rd century, Cassius Dio describes her as enslaving and bewitching Antony and his followers, and hoping to rule over the Romans (50.5; 1917, 5:445, 447). In the 4th century, Aurelius Victor accuses her of having had such insatiable lust that she prostituted herself (sec. 86; 1577, sig. G4v). Later, in the mid-14th century, Giovanni Boccaccio emphasizes that she committed a number of crimes and gave herself to her pleasures, as the prostitute of kings (1963, 192–197).

Such attitudes are suited to extolling the superiority and benign rule of Augustus, which in the English Stuart context would be prudent seeing that the new King James I is heralded as a new Augustus. Shakespeare would take such requirements seriously, and indeed his Cleopatra is termed, in a sexist racism's erotic exotification, a lustful "g~~ipsy~~" (1.1.10), while the play's Antony himself in a moment of rage calls her "Triple-turn'd whore" and rails against "this false soul of Egypt" (4.12.13, 25)—who has bewitched and then betrayed him. She herself speaks of being a "morsel for a monarch" (1.5.31), rather like the Corinthian harlot Lais (see Erasmus 1542, fol. 342r). It is not surprising that literary critics find Shakespeare emulating the indictments inherited from "Octavian's propagandists," so that his dramatic design "tallies" with the classical sources (Jaworska-Biskup and Jonca 2024, 104, 106).

> Is Cleopatra, then, the dramatic African villain at the dawn of the Roman imperial era, as Aaron is near that era's end? Yet there is more to the story, and these Anglo-European perceptions hardly do justice to the tragedy as a whole. The image of Cleopatra herself is quite different, and far more favorable, in medieval Arabic writings, the authors of which stress her learning and creative skills as in the case of al-Masʿūdī. (see El Daly 2005, 133–135)

If Zenocrate was raised by her husband to the level of the divine, Shakespeare's Cleopatra identifies herself with the goddess Isis (3.6.16-19), almost all of the invocations of that deity in the play being by female speakers. Yet by contrast with Zenocrate Cleopatra, like Antony, ultimately fails on the action level in her grand ambition, first at the battle of Actium and then when she is captured by Octavius. How can she then possibly become an object of enduring fascination? One answer can be found in the famous lines in which the Roman officer Enobarbus declares early in the play that no custom can "stale / Her infinite variety" so that "vildest things / Become themselves in her" (2.2.234-235, 237–238). It is by means of tragic poetry, and especially in the action's final part, that Cleopatra can justifiably be perceived to rise to the status of "the strongest of all Shakespeare's personalities" as she "dies upward into a sublime beyond as Hamlet did" (Bloom 2017, 62). Yet this becomes possible not so much from an adaptation of the usually recognized European source materials but from the play's creative use of African impulses, which have rarely been noted.

We should hence look briefly at one or two instances where these inform the textual surface. After his physical death, the captive Cleopatra unfolds a polyvalent dream vision of Antony, which manifests not so much his past life but rather the power of her imagination: "I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony. / […] His face was as the heav'ns, and therein stuck / A sun and moon, which kept their course, and lighted / The little O, th' earth […]" (5.2.76, 79–81). Sober Roman voices, despising Antony, and those who follow them in the critical history will answer Cleopatra's question whether there might be such a figure with a more or less courteous and conclusive "No" (as at 5.2.94). Still, the dream merits a bit of attention. The lines just quoted are almost an echo of *Tamburlaine the Great,* 2.730-731 (as rendered above). It has hardly been observed, also, that the sun and moon, appearing together, are significant in alchemic transformation, an art that was known to have Egyptian origins. In a dialogue of sun and moon offered in *Clangor Bvccinae*, for instance, these bodies form a "commixtio [or communio] luminarium" when they come together so they can enter the house of love, "domum amoris" (*Artis* 1593, 1:465). With such images Cleopatra discovers, or perhaps strengthens, a transcendental love for Antony that did not always appear clearly during their earlier times together. Together, too, the sun and moon "in the same direct line" form the eye and light of Horus (Plutarch 1603, 1308) while the earth, which is mythologically identified with Isis (Comes 1567, Explicatio fol. 336r), becomes irradiated. Antony's dimension is not that of the little O, yet the performative enunciation creates its own semiotic space, one in which an Isiac Cleopatra gains the brilliance of *commixtio luminarium*.

In the process of discovering a transcendental union, beyond the earlier ambitions of military success, Cleopatra poetically gains a healing and regenerating authority. With great difficulty, Cleopatra and her maids draw the dying Antony up to her high level in her monument, during which action she rather breathlessly wishes that "[t]he strong-wing'd Mercury should fetch thee up […] Die when thou hast liv'd, / Quicken with kissing" (4.15.35, 39). The god Mercury / Hermes is joined in symbiosis with the Egyptian Thoth, who is reputed to have written works of alchemy (see for instance Britannica, "Hermes Trismegistus"; Veseli 2024, 259–269). At the same time M/mercury plays a significant role in alchemy, so that Sir Edward Kelly (1555–1597/98) acknowledges Avicenna's description of "a living spirit of unexampled potency," quicksilver; the element is actually "the wanton serpent that conceives of its own seed, and brings forth on the same day" though in some cases it can also wreak harm (published posthumously 1676; 1893, 23–24). Cleopatra's purpose is to "quicken" Antony, through and beyond physical death, and the dream vision becomes one method to reveal this power—if not to the Roman imperial leadership then certainly to the early modern readership and a theatre audience. An allied method is the service of the "wanton serpent": it becomes intimately associated with the "serpent of old Nile," Antony's name for Cleopatra (1.5.25), and with the "serpent" that she has commanded to be brought to her because "his biting is immortal" (5.2.246-247). It is Isis, the goddess with whom Cleopatra identifies, who delights in healing human beings and is capable of granting immortality (as in Diodorus, Book 1.25.2-6, 1935, 2:81). But the association between the serpent and the river becomes pertinent when we recall the mythical Ọṣun, whose movements are like a snake or serpent, and who heals by a river's water as "the perpetually renewing source of life" (Murphy and Sanford 2001, 2). Beyond the sources already cited, communication with members of the African proto-community in early modern London makes a circulation of some elements of heritage at least conceivable (e.g., Arndt 2023, 30). In these ways, and more, Shakespeare's Cleopatra imaginatively attains a status beyond captivity and physical destruction.

Conclusion

The Renaissance used to be thought of as an age when ancient European knowledge was recovered. Yet such knowledge was actually fused with "instreams of Africans" in early modern Europe, and this enabled the age to become "a world of possibility and experimentation" (Vinson 2012, 116). We can consider the resulting cultural transformations as reshaping the popular theatre together with dramatic literature as well as cross-cultural awareness. In a generalising and not always carefully developed argumentative context it has been maintained, moreover, that we should regard the Renaissance as "a re-birth because of the primacy of Egypt" rather than of classical Europe, and that during this epoch the Europeans, initially the Italians, "adopted Egyptian knowledge as the basis of their own" (Asante 2015, 150). Extending northward across the Alps, this may indeed become a viable reading of history. Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka has declared that the poetic utterances of Shakespeare's Cleopatra can be absorbed only by an Egyptian or one steeped in that civilization's religious cults—"and allied religions, including Islam," with distinct echoes in the Islamic Book of the Dead (Soyinka 1983, 6–7), as associated with Imam 'Abd ar-Rahim ibn Ahmad al-Qadi. Yet we should not lose sight of the preceding dramas, each of which has brought forth subtly differentiated African characters and thus its own distinct "world of possibility."

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F

From ACC to AMRC

A Man, a Vison with the Others!

Eveline Sawadogo/Compaore

We have come so far! From West, East, South and Europe!
We have believed, pushed, and made progress!
We did it because we have a vision!
A vision we trusted, we put every single effort, we pulled together
A vision we carry, share, and promote without borders
A shining vision for Africa we are all proud!
Then we are all engaged in:
Actions through research
Creating synergies, interactions, collaborations known as the heart of success
Community of practices, competence building, strong engagement and conviction
And in Front of us
A man who holds tight the flag, the flag that resists to storm and strong wind and waves
A man who is convinced that our flag is unique and must continue to float!

Because
We have come so far! From West, East, South and Europe and here we are!
We still believe, we still push and continue to make progress!
We all fully shared the same vision!

Through:
Actions, research, engagement, leadership, motivation, collaborations, and interactions. In fact,
Members from different locations West, East, South, and Europe stand behind the man! Because,
Reconfiguring African studies remains our common vision, a vision for a just

world,
Century of impacts is on the way!
Yes, we will achieve our common goal!
We have a vision.
We have the determination.
We are where we are because you are who you are Rüdiger Seesemann!
Long life to the Africa Multiple Research Centres!
Thank you for leading Rüdiger Seesemann!
Happy 60th Birthday Rüdiger Seesemann!

G

Gießen Genießen

*Ansgar Nünning**

Wenn dieser Text ein Beitrag zu einem kleinen deutschen Städtelexikon wäre, dann könnte er etwa so beginnen wie der informative und kenntnisreiche Artikel über Gießen in der Wikipedia: "Gießen ist eine Universitätsstadt im Landkreis Gießen in Mittelhessen und mit 88.933 Einwohnern (Stand: 31. Dezember 2023) die siebtgrößte Stadt des Landes Hessens und eine der sieben Sonderstatusstädte des Landes. Als Sitz des Regierungsbezirks Gießen und des Landkreises ist sie Verwaltungszentrum Mittelhessens, bedeutender Verkehrsknotenpunkt und eines der Oberzentren der Region." Solche nüchternen Informationen im Buchhaltungsstil reißen einen zwar nicht vom Hocker, aber allen Leserinnen und Leser, die schon lange den Wunsch verspürten, sich endlich einmal über die siebtgrößte Stadt des Landes Hessens umfassend zu informieren, sei dieser Artikel wärmstens als Einstieg empfohlen. Man(n) und Frau erfährt dort viel Wissenswertes über Geographie, Geschichte und Bevölkerung dieser mittelgroßen Universitätsstadt, über Politik, Kultur und Sehenswürdigkeiten sowie über die Stadtentwicklung, Baudenkmäler, Wirtschaft und Infrastruktur, auch wenn Flora, Fauna und Tierwelt für meinen Geschmack zu kurz kommen. Obschon es einen weiteren Hauptartikel in der Wikipedia mit einer Liste von Persönlichkeiten der Stadt Gießen gibt, schließt

* Hinter meinem Namen müsste eigentlich "with a little help from my friends" ergänzt werden. Wertvolle Anregungen für diesen Text verdanke ich meinen wunderbaren Gießener Mitarbeiterinnen und Kolleginnen. Für gemeinsame anthropologische und ethnographische Erkundungen in Gießen, großartige gemeinsame Projekte, unglaublich viel Spaß und noch viel mehr werde ich zeitlebens meinem Freund Roy Sommer unendlich dankbar sein. Alles, was ich über das Notaufnahmelager Gießen (NAL) weiß, verdanke ich dessen Pressesprecher Linus Maletz, der wie ich sein Leben in vollen Zügen zwischen Heidelberg und Gießen pendelnd genießt und der auf meine Bitte hin dankenswerterweise als Ghostwriter und Impulsgeber für die beiden Absätze zu dieser neuen und wichtigen Institution in Gießen fungiert hat. Danke, lieber Linus!

auch der Artikel zur Stadt mit einer kürzeren Liste berühmter, großer und weniger großer Persönlichkeiten, die aus Gießen stammen. Beide Listen sind trotz ihrer Länge natürlich bei weitem nicht vollständig, was allein schon daran abzulesen ist, dass der in Gießen geborene und in Bayreuth lehrende Professor für Islamwissenschaft Rüdiger Seesemann fehlt.

Da dieser Text jedoch ein Beitrag für eine Festschrift mit dem schönen Untertitel "A Rüdiger Seesemann Glossary" sein soll, schien mir der Essay eine viel besser geeignete Textsorte zu sein. Im Gegensatz zu einem Lexikonartikel erhebt ein Essay weder einen Anspruch auf Faktizität, Neutralität oder Objektivität noch auf enzyklopädische Vollständigkeit. Die Form des Essays zeichnet sich bekanntlich durch ihren experimentellen und fragmentarischen Charakter aus. Ein Essayist versucht gar nicht, seinen Gegenstand erschöpfend zu behandeln, sondern er wählt einige prägnante Aspekte aus, die er für bedeutsam hält. Aus der eigenen Subjektivität und Perspektivität macht der Essayist kein Hehl. Daher fängt er "nicht mit Adam und Eva an, sondern mit dem, worüber er reden will; er sagt, was ihm daran aufgeht, bricht ab, wo er selber am Ende sich fühlt und nicht dort, wo kein Rest mehr bliebe", wie Adorno in seinen *Noten zur Literatur* bemerkte.

Im Sinne der Transparenz daher vorab die vollständige Offenlegung aller relevanten Informationen zur Subjektivität und Standortgebundenheit des Essayisten: Der Verfasser dieses Essays lebt zwar nicht in Gießen und stammt auch nicht aus Mittelhessen, lehrt und forscht aber seit 29 Jahren an der dortigen Justus-Liebig-Universität, der er trotz verlockender Rufe nach Erlangen und Freiburg bis heute die Treue gehalten und das nie bereut hat. Gießen mag zwar eine "graue Stadt ohne Meer" sein, der die Gießener Pop-Band OK Kid eine Hymne dieses Titels gewidmet hat und die es im Hinblick auf Attraktivität, Lebensqualität oder Schönheit vielleicht nicht mit Barcelona oder Bologna, Mailand oder Madrid aufnehmen kann, aber ich habe mich immer als Botschafter dieser Universität (und manchmal auch der Stadt) gefühlt und verhalten.

Nur ein einziges Mal ist mir bei einer Pressekonferenz ein Satz rausgerutscht, der sich auf eine Seite von Gießen bezieht, die gewöhnungsbedürftig ist und mit der ich mich bis heute nicht so recht anfreunden konnte: "Das Einzige, was mich an Gießen stört, ist die in der Bevölkerung sehr verbreitete Gewohnheit, die Stadt schlechtzureden, dieser unausrottbare Hang zur 'Selbstverzwergung'". Dem anwesenden Redakteur der *FAZ* gefiel dieser Satz leider so gut, dass er die letzten drei Worte zum Titel seines Artikels machte, allerdings glücklicherweise mit dem Zusatz "Wider den Hang zur

Selbstverzwergung". Gleichwohl gehört das Schlechtreden der eignen Stadt bis heute zum Repertoire der Angewohnheiten der dortigen Bevölkerung, die sich bezeichnenderweise selbst als "Schlammbeißer" bezeichnen, obschon sie durchaus Anlass und Grund hätte, Gefallen an ihrer Stadt zu finden und Gießen zu genießen.

Erschwerend hinzu kommt natürlich, dass das Klagen über die vermeintliche Hässlichkeit dieser Stadt auch unter ortsunkundigen Besserwissern und Redakteuren deutscher Medien recht verbreitet ist. Stellvertretend für andere Beispiele sei ein Artikel mit dem bezeichnenden Titel "Unterirdisch schön" aus *ZEIT Online* vom 15. September 2014 genannt, der zu großen Teilen daraus besteht, viele der Negativklischees über diese Stadt wiederzukäuen. Vom berühmt-berüchtigten Zitat Georg Büchners, der Gießen "abscheulich" fand und der Stadt "eine hohle Mittelmäßigkeit in allem" zuschrieb, über die Fußgängerüberführung aus Brutalbeton mit drei überdimensionierten Löchern, die von den Einheimischen liebevoll "Elefantenklo" genannt wird, bis zu allerlei anderen architektonischen Sünden schreitet der Autor fast genüsslich von einem "finsteren Hotspot" zur nächsten "stadtplanerischen Verrohung".

Nicht ganz Unrecht hat der Verfasser dieser Schmähschrift, die von der lokalen Presse zu Recht zurückgewiesen wurde, m.E. allerdings mit seiner im Vorspann bereits angekündigten ("Die Stadt will lieber Letzter sein.") Einschätzung, "mit Mittelmaß" gebe "sich der Gießener nicht zufrieden": "Lieber ist ihm der letzte Tabellenplatz." Aufgrund dieses Hangs zur Selbstverzwergung musste ich bei der Lektüre von Rainald Goetz Schlüsselroman *Johann Holtrop* unwillkürlich bei einem Satz an Gießen denken, auch wenn er sich in der Geschichte wohl auf Gütersloh bezieht: "Grauenhausen wurde der Ort des gemäßigt mittelmäßigen Grauens [...] genannt." (Götz 2014, 54).

Wer jedoch eine Stadt nur deshalb schlechtredet, weil sie grau ist, nicht am Meer liegt und aus ihrer Mittelmäßigkeit keinen Hehl macht, sollte erstens an die weisen Worte des großen Bochumer Philosophen Frank Goosens denken, der ohne übertrieben große Differenzierung bekanntlich treffend bemerkte: "Woanders ist auch scheiße." Zweitens sollte er oder sie einfach mal die Augen aufmachen und mit wacher Neugierde einen frischen Blick auf die siebtgrößte Stadt des Landes Hessens werfen, die sehr viel mehr zu bieten hat, als misanthropische Miesmacher meinen.

Um es also an dieser Stelle ein für alle Mal klarzustellen: Ganz grau sind in Gießen nur der Asphalt und der Beton (allerdings woanders auch – siehe Frank Goosens zeitlose Weisheit), und wirklich grauenhaft und grauenhausenhaft sind nur die Neigung eines Großteils der Bevölkerung, die siebtgrößte Stadt in Hessen schlechtzureden – und der darin zum Ausdruck kommende Hang zur Selbstverzwergung. Ansonsten ist Gießen eigentlich ganz anders – und es kommt auch manchmal dazu.

Geografisch im Zentrum Deutschlands gelegen und bezogen auf die Bevölkerung schon fast eine kleine Großstadt ist Gießen vielen nur als ICE-Halt nördlich von Frankfurt am Main bekannt. Wer dort nicht aussteigen möchte, kann direkt bis nach Hamburg, Rostock, Stralsund oder sogar bis Bergen auf Rügen durchfahren und dann am Meer Urlaub machen. Gießen liegt wie gesagt nicht am Meer, sondern ist eine weitere deutsche Stadt, die 1944/45 ihre architektonische Schönheit im Bombenregen nahezu vollständig einbüßte. So könnte der Blick eines durchschnittlichen Westdeutschen auf diese Stadt beschrieben werden. Von amerikanischen Kollegen wird man bisweilen sogar unverblümt gefragt: "Where the fuck is Geißen?" Da man als bekennender Gießener abschätzige Kommentare von Bewohnern anderer Städte (und Kummer aller Art) gewohnt ist, verliert man bei solchen verbalen Entgleisungen natürlich nicht die Fassung, sondern weist höflich darauf hin, dass die Einheimischen die Schreibweise 'Gießen' bevorzugen, auch wenn ich manchmal hinzufüge: "but this may be open to debate". Kurzum: Das Wissen von Ortsunkundigen über die Stadt hält sich in Grenzen und ist überschaubar.

Gut, Gießen ist kein Fall für Liebe auf den ersten Blick, und auch beim zweiten Blick würden wohl nur wenige von einer Traumstadt oder Stadt fürs Leben schwärmen. Gießen ist halt nicht Rom, die 'ewige Stadt', der der Kunsthistoriker Golo Maurer eine hinreißende und unbedingt lesenswerte Liebeserklärung mit dem schönen Titel *Rom: Stadt fürs Leben* (2024) gewidmet hat. Wer wie der aus dem Nordend von Frankfurt am Main (also quasi aus einem Vorort von Gießen) stammende ehemalige Fußballprofi Andi Möller vor der Wahl steht, nach Mailand oder Madrid zu gehen, mag natürlich "egal, Hauptsache Italien" sagen. Hingegen soll manch ein Studienanfänger, der von der früheren "Zentralstelle für die Vergabe von Studienplätzen (ZVS)" nach Gießen geschickt wurde, etwas bedröppelt aus der Wäsche geguckt haben, als er in diese definitiv nicht in Italien liegende Stadt kam, die auch auf den dritten Blick wenig Ähnlichkeit mit Mailand, Madrid oder Rom hat.

Selbst als Botschafter von Gießen kann man die erste Enttäuschung eines Studienanfängers sogar ein wenig verstehen. Wenn man mich mit vorgehaltener Pistole zwingen würde, fünf andere mittelgroße deutsche Universitätsstädte zu nennen, die eventuell NOCH schöner sind als die siebtgrößte Stadt des Landes Hessens, so würde ich nach gewisser Bedenkzeit wohl einräumen, dass Bamberg, Freiburg, Heidelberg, Münster und Tübingen auch nicht schlecht sind. Weitet man die Vergleichsperspektive gar europaweit aus, dann fielen mir nach langem Nachdenken vielleicht Bergamo (oder Bologna, Florenz, Rom, Venedig oder jede andere Stadt in Italien), Graz, Helsinki, Lissabon und Stockholm ein. In den genannten Städten sind im Übrigen genau diejenigen Universitäten beheimatet, mit denen die Justus-Liebig-Universität seit 18 Jahren sehr erfolgreich im europäischen Promotionsnetzwerk PhDnet "Literary and Cultural Studies" kooperiert – gewissenermaßen Vororte von Gießen, quasi Hilfsausdruck.

Darüber hinaus hat Gießen guten Geschmack bei der Wahl seiner Partnerstädte bewiesen, auch wenn diese nicht direkt mit dem ICE erreichbar sind. Das beschauliche und geschichtsträchtige Winchester, das im Mittelalter die Hauptstadt Britanniens war, gehört zu den schönsten Städten Südenglands, und auch die oberitalienische Stadt Ferrara in der Po-Ebene ist eine Reise wert, sofern man gutes Essen, Kultur und schöne Renaissancebauten mag. Das Gleiche gilt für die anderen Partnerstädte Gießens wie das nordöstlich von Budapest gelegene Gödöllö, das ostböhmische Verwaltungszentrum Hradec Králové in Tschechien, Netanya an der israelischen Mittelmeerküste, San Juan del Sur an der südlichen Pazifikküste Nicaraguas und Wenzhou in China. Städtepartnerschaften und internationale Netzwerke erinnern einen zudem daran, dass es bei ohnehin müßigen Städtevergleichen nicht um einen *Germany's Next Top Model* City-Wettbewerb geht. Vielmehr sind Kollaboration, Kooperation und Partnerschaft viel besser für alle Beteiligten als Konkurrenz und "sinnlose Wettbewerbe" (Mathias Binswanger). Im Hinblick auf architektonische Schönheit und die Zahl der offensichtlichen Sehenswürdigkeiten wird die siebtgrößte Stadt Hessens den Sprung in die Champions League kaum schaffen, aber mit etwas Entdeckerfreude werden Besucher/innen feststellen, dass es viele gute Gründe gibt, um Gießen zu genießen.

Obgleich man der Selbstdarstellung von Orten durchaus ein gewisses Misstrauen entgegenbringen mag, besteht dazu in einer Stadt, die eher mit ihren Reizen geizt und nicht zu Superlativen neigt, kein Anlass. Was auf der offiziellen Homepage der Stadt "Über Gießen" steht, stimmt einfach: "Gießen ist eine lebendige, junge, bunte und liebenswerte Stadt." Was wohl nur Wenige wissen, ist ein Grund dafür, dass diese Stadt so jung und quicklebendig ist: Gießen ist tatsächlich Tabellenführer bei der so genannten 'Studierendendichte' in Deutschland. Was mag dieses bürokratische Wortungetüm wohl besagen? Dass Studierende nach durchzechten Nächten in Pits Pinte noch morgens meist sehr dicht und nur begrenzt aufnahmefähig sind? Nein, Tabellenführer ist Gießen, weil in keiner anderen deutschen Universitätsstadt

Studierende einen so hohen Anteil an der Gesamtbevölkerung haben wie in der siebtgrößten Stadt Hessens.

Es sind jedoch nicht nur die vielen Studierenden, die Gießen so bunt, lebenswert und liebenswert machen, sondern auch die hohe Anzahl von Menschen aus aller Herren Länder. Viele Migranten und Übersiedler sind in die Stadt gekommen oder vor Kriegen und Krisen nach Gießen geflüchtet und haben im dortigen Notaufnahmelager, auf das wir noch zurückkommen, Zuflucht gefunden. Mehr als 10% der Bevölkerung sind 'Ausländer', und mehr als 20% der deutschen Einwohnerinnen und Einwohner hat einen so genannten 'Migrationshintergrund'. Wenn also mal eine Hauptstadt der Bunten Republik Deutschland gesucht wird, die Udo Lindenberg in dem gleichnamigen Song zu Recht hochleben lässt, dann könnte sich Gießen durchaus bewerben. Auch bei der letzten Umfrage zur Lebenszufriedenheit in deutschen Städten hat Gießen deutlich besser abgeschnitten, als abfällige Äußerungen mutloser Miesmacher oder nörgelnder Nestbeschmutzer vermuten ließen.

Wer Gießen genießen möchte, wird in der Stadt viele schöne Orte finden, um genau das zu tun. Obgleich niemand Geringeres als der berühmte Chemiker Justus von Liebig, dem die Gießener Universität ihren heutigen Namen verdankt, in einer maßlosen Übertreibung einmal bemerkte, "Das Beste an Gießen ist sein Bahnhof", werden entdeckungsfreudige Besucherinnen auch nach der Ankunft am schönen Sandstein-Bahnhof viele Plätze finden, die zum Verweilen einladen. Da ein kurzer Beitrag in einem ABC-Glossar nicht genügend Platz bietet, um einen auch nur annähernd umfassenden Überblick über alle Attraktionen und Sehenswürdigkeiten Gießen zu geben, wähle ich als Essayist einfach einige Lieblingsorte aus.

Wirklich wundervoll (im Wortsinn von 'voller Wunder' der Natur) ist der Botanische Garten, der nicht nur zu jeder Jahreszeit einen Besuch und einen Spaziergang wert ist, sondern laut Wikipedia auch "der älteste botanische Garten nördlich der Alpen, der sich heute noch an seinem ursprünglichen Standort befindet". Da sich der Haupteingang an der Rückseite des Alten Schlosses befindet, kann man beide Sehenswürdigkeiten auf einem Spaziergang genießen. Wissenschaftlicher Leiter des botanischen Gartens ist Professor Volker Wissemann, der 2010 den Preis für Exzellenz in der Lehre erhielt und seinen Studierenden offenbar genauso viel Aufmerksamkeit und Zuwendung schenkt wie den 8.000 Pflanzenarten im wunderschönen botanischen Garten, was man bei einem Rundgang durch dieses Kleinod förmlich spürt.

Ein weiterer Besuchermagnet ist das 2002 eröffnete "Mathematikum", das Gäste in wenigen Minuten zu Fuß vom Bahnhof auf dem Weg in die Innenstadt erreichen. Das Mathematikum ist das erste mathematische Mitmach-Museum der Welt, in dem junge und auch ältere Menschen experimentell und spielerisch die Welt der geometrischen Figuren, des Rechnens und der Zahlen kennenlernen können. Täglich kann man Schulklassen mit alterstypisch verhaltener Energie und überschaubarer Motivation zu diesem Museum trotten sehen, aber auf dem Rückweg schaut man meist in strahlende Gesichter von Kindern und Jugendlichen, die im Mathematikum offenbar mehr gelernt haben als in vielen Schulstunden und dabei unübersehbar auch noch jede Menge Spaß hatten.

Das Mathematikum in Gießen ist für mich ein Musterbeispiel dafür, was Menschen mit Begeisterung und Begeisterungsvermögen, sehr viel Energie und Enthusiasmus, originellen Ideen sowie ganz viel Arbeit und einem sehr langen Atem auf die Beine stellen können. Das liegt in dem Falle vor allem an einem positiv verrückten Wissenschaftler, der von seinem Fach beseelt ist und dessen Enthusiasmus ansteckend ist: Professor Albrecht Beutelspacher, den Initiator und Spiritus rector des Mathematikums, der im Jahr 2000 erster Preisträger des Communicator-Preises, des Popularisierungspreises des Stifterverbands für die Deutsche Wissenschaft, war. Wer je die Freude und das Privileg hatte, Albrecht Beutelspacher live bei einem Vortrag oder im Radio zuzuhören, wie er über Mathematik und Zahlen spricht und ins Schwärmen gerät, der wünschte sich, in allen Fächern solche Lehrer gehabt zu haben, die einen inspirieren – auch wenn man als Ehefrau vermutlich bisweilen fast eifersüchtig werden könnte auf die 3, die 4, die 7 oder eine beliebige andere Zahl, denn Albrecht Beutelspacher liebt sie alle – nicht die Frauen, sondern die Zahlen.

Ansteckenden Enthusiasmus und große Spielfreude kann man auch an vielen anderen kulturellen Orten in Gießen genießen, beispielsweise im Stadttheater. Allein schon das freistehende neoklassizistische und vom Jugendstil beeinflusste Gebäude, das 1907 erbaut wurde, ist ein echter Hingucker und widerlegt quasi im Alleingang, das alles in Gießen ‘hässlich‘ sei. Stimmt erstens nicht, und zweitens kann keine Stadt etwas dafür, wenn viele schöne alte Gebäude leider durch die verheerenden Luftangriffe im Zweiten Weltkrieg zerstört wurden. Dank eines hoch motivierten Ensembles ist dieses Fünfspartenhaus immer wieder für Überraschungen gut und hat eine überregionale Ausstrahlung, die man nicht unbedingt von einem Theater in der siebtgrößten Stadt Hessens erwarten würde. Im Gießener Stadttheater kommen nicht nur Freunde des klassischen und zeitgenössischen Schauspiels voll auf ihre

Kosten, sondern dank des vielfältigen Repertoires auch diejenigen, die sich für Musicals, Opern, Operetten oder modernes Tanztheater begeistern.

Gießen genießen wird Gästen auch dadurch leicht gemacht, dass diese Stadt – wohl auch dank ihrer hohen 'Studierendendichte' – über eine bemerkenswerte Dichte an vielen guten Gaststätten und ebenso erschwinglichen wie schönen Hotels verfügt. Da ein kurzer Essay den einschlägigen Plattformen keine Konkurrenz machen kann oder will, können Interessierte selbst nachschauen, welche Gast- und Schlafstätten dort mit wie vielen Punkten empfohlen werden. Obschon ich alle asozialen Medien und digitalen Rankings konsequent boykottiere und mich an solchen Daumen-hoch- und Daumen-runter-Abstimmungen nicht beteilige, möchte ich meine persönlichen Empfehlungen zumindest hier preisgeben. Sehr gut speisen kann man etwa im griechischen Restaurant "Knossos" direkt an der Lahn, im alteingesessenen und in einem wiederaufgebauten Fachwerkhaus gelegenen italienischen Restaurant "Zum Löwen", in dem zu später Stunde das ganze Personal an einem großen Tisch gemeinsam das feine Essen geniest, und im "Rosmarin" direkt am Philosophikum, übrigens allesamt Restaurants, in denen Gäste auch sehr gut von netten Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern bedient werden, die mit ihrer Freundlichkeit das Vorurteil von Schland als einer Servicewüste täglich Lügen strafen. Ein Geheimtipp unter den Hotels ist das Parkhotel Sletz, das seit vielen Jahrzehnten von dem liebenswürdigen Ehepaar Kraus geführt wird und das sich mit seinem frischen Frühstücksbüffet und seinem familiären Charme wohltuend abhebt von den großen Hotelketten, die in allen Städten mehr oder wenig ähnlich sind.

Einem leidenschaftlichen Kulturwissenschaftler möge man es nachsehen, dass er die traditionsreiche Justus-Liebig-Universität (JLU) als besondere Attraktion Gießens hervorhebt. An der JLU allein gibt es so viele Highlights, dass die Länge dieses Textes nicht ausreichen würde, wenn er nur die wichtigsten davon aufzählen würde. Stellvertretend für viele weitere Disziplinen und Kolleg/innen seien etwa die Herz-Lungenforschung genannt, die zur Weltspitze zählt und seit 2006 ununterbrochen mit dem Exzellenzcluster "Cardio-Pulmonary Systems"in der Exzellenzinitiative bzw. Exzellenzstrategie gefördert wird. Am Institut für Organische Chemie sorgen der Leibniz-Preisträger Peter R. Schreiner und seine Kolleg/innen dafür, dass Gießen trotz seiner vermeintlichen Vorliebe für den letzten Tabellenplatz auch in dem durch Justus von Liebig begründeten Fach den Platz an der Spitze behält. Das Gleiche gilt etwa für das von Monika Wingender gegründete und geleitete Gießener Zentrum Östliches Europa (GiZO) und für das Institut für

Angewandte Theaterwissenschaft, das mit seinem einzigartigen Profil seit langem die deutschsprachige Theaterlandschaft prägt. Mit dem Theaterlabor der JLU hat das Institut für Angewandte Theaterwissenschaft, das so herausragende Persönlichkeiten und Projekte hervorgebracht hat wie den viel zu früh verstorbenen Dramatiker und Regisseur René Pollesch (1962–2024) und das Dokumentartheater-Kollektiv Rimini Protokoll, nun auch einen architektonischen Leuchtturm mitten in der Stadt.

Seit dem Sommermärchen im Jahre 2006, in dem Deutschland zwar nicht die WM gewann, die Justus-Liebig-Universität aber plötzlich durch die Exzellenzinitiative zur erfolgreichsten Universität in Hessen wurde, gibt es in Gießen für Promovierende und Postdocs in den Kulturwissenschaften eine weitere Attraktion, das International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC), das als Pioniermodell für die Reform der Doktorandenausbildung in Deutschland gilt. An den Anblick von mittelgroßen, aber eben nicht mittelmäßigen Städten wie Bayreuth und Gießen auf der Exzellenzlandkarte –gleichsam als kleines gallisches Dorf in Mittelhessen, das von römischen Legionären aus den Lebens- und Naturwissenschaften umzingelt wird – mussten sich zwar viele erst gewöhnen, aber das Lebensprojekt des großen Gießener Anglisten Herbert Grabes und dessen Motto “Putting Gießen on the Map” nahmen dadurch Gestalt an. Da Wissenschaft (zumindest für schräge Vögel) ja die Fortsetzung des Fußballs mit anderen Mitteln ist, hat das GCSC gleich das Motto der Heim-WM adaptiert: “Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden”. Seitdem fühlt man sich als Botschafter der Stadt nicht mehr ganz so allein, denn viele junge Geisteswissenschaftler und Kulturwissenschaftlerinnen schwärmen nun in anderen Ländern von ihrer wundervollen Promotionszeit in Gießen.

Zum Schluss sei noch der jüngste Grund genannt, warum Gießen ganz gewiss eine Reise wert ist: Das am 17. Juni 2025 offiziell eröffnete Notaufnahmelager Gießen (NAL) ist ein bundesweit einmaliger Erinnerungs- und Lernort, der das Zeug dazu hat, ein ähnlicher Besuchermagnet zu werden wie das Mathematikum. Für viele Ostdeutsche und ehemalige Bürger der DDR hatte und hat Gießen einen ganz anderen Ruf, als es das Stereotyp von der Mittelmäßigkeit vermuten ließe: Denn infolge der Gründung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der mit ihr in Konkurrenz stehenden Deutschen Demokratischen Republik war das Notaufnahmelager in Gießen eine zentrale Anlaufstelle für Geflüchtete, Auswanderer und freigekaufte DDR-Bürger. Nahezu eine Million Menschen kam auf diesem Weg in das Notaufnahmelager am Meisenbornweg. Wenn Ostdeutschland 1989/90 einen “Freiheitsschock” erlitt, wie der Historiker Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk in seinem ebenso großartigen wie leidenschaftlichen Buch *Freiheitsschock: Eine andere Geschichte Ostdeutschlands von 1989 bis heute* (2024) argumentiert, so lag das gewiss nicht an Gießen, denn diese Stadt entfaltete für ehemalige DDR-Bürger nach der Massenflucht eine symbolische Strahlkraft als “Tor zur Freiheit”.

Als erster landeseigener Gedenkort des Landes Hessen hat sich der Lern- und Erinnerungsort Notaufnahmelager Gießen das Ziel gesetzt, die Geschichte dieses Lagers zwischen 1945 und 2018 zu erzählen und dabei einen Schwerpunkt auf die Rolle der SED-Diktatur in der DDR zu setzen. In der neu konzipierten Dauerausstellung werden nicht nur historische Abläufe und Ereignisse aneinandergereiht, sondern es werden persönliche Geschichten und Schicksale erzählt und durch eindrucksvolle Exponate ergänzt. In Zeiten, in denen Flucht und Migration sowohl gesellschaftlich als auch politisch kontrovers und mitunter empathielos diskutiert werden, möchte der Lernort aufklären über Fluchtgründe, Strapazen auf dem Weg in ein neues Leben und die Herausforderungen des Neuanfangs. Wie alles im Leben ist auch Gießen eine Frage der Perspektive, und ein Besuch im Lern- und Erinnerungsort Notaufnahmelager Gießen gibt jungen Lernenden und interessierten Menschen aller Altersgruppen die wunderbare Gelegenheit, Gießen aus der Sicht von Geflüchteten kennenzulernen, die in dieser Stadt Schutz vor Kriegen und Krisen suchten. Gießen als Gastgeber für Übersiedler und Zufluchtsort für Geflüchtete: die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden.

Wenn mir die Herausgeberin dieses Glossars noch mehr Platz eingeräumt hätte, dann würde dieser Text noch viele Seiten weiter gehen. Da dieses Hohelied auf Gießen aber bereits jetzt Überlänge hat, seien weitere Attraktionen nur noch in stichwortartiger Kürze genannt. Zu den vielen weiteren Highlights zählen etwa das Liebig-Laboratorium und Liebig-Museum, das Oberhessische Museum in der Innenstadt, das Zeughaus, der alte Friedhof am Nahrungsberg und das Neue Schloss der Landgrafen von Hessen. Gießen genießen können Gäste auch am Schwanenteich im Stadtpark Wieseckaue und bei dem musikalischen Sommer auf dem wunderschönen Kloster Schiffenberg, das auf dem Gießener Hausberg liegt und ein beliebtes Ausflugsziel ist. Allen, die noch viel mehr über die siebtgrößte Stadt Hessens erfahren und weitere Gründe kennenlernen möchte, warum man Gießen genießen kann, denen sei zum Schluss noch das kleine Büchlein *Gießen zu Fuß* (2021) von Norbert Schmidt und Marc Schäfer empfohlen, die sich beide als “Gießener aus Leidenschaft” bezeichnen und zwölf schöne Spaziergänge durch die Stadt mit vielen Geschichten aus der Geschichte schildern.

Auch wenn ich als Ex-Kölner und glücklicher Heidelberger kein "Gießener aus Leidenschaft" oder wie Rüdiger Seesemann von Geburt bin, werde ich weiterhin Botschafter dieser zu Unrecht unterschätzten Universitätsstadt bleiben. Bei der Recherche für diesen Text habe ich mit Freude festgestellt, dass ich nicht der Einzige bin, für den die Worte 'Gießen', "genießen' und 'Leidenschaft' durchaus zusammengehören und in einen Essay passen. Die letzten Worte möchte ich daher gerne Justus von Liebig, dem Namensgeber der Gießener Universität, überlassen, der in seinen "Eigenhändigen Aufzeichnungen" aus den 1860er Jahren auf seine 28-jährige Tätigkeit mit Dankbarkeit und Freude zurückblickte. Obgleich mein Rückblick nach 29 Jahren an der JLU ähnlich dankbar, positiv und wohlwollend ausfällt, möchte ich gerne zum Schluss nochmals betonen, dass dieser Essay hoffentlich angedeutet hat, dass es noch sehr viel mehr Gründe in Gießen für "leidenschaftliches Genießen" gibt als nur die Arbeit:

> Im Mai 1824 begann meine Laufbahn in Gießen. Ich denke stets mit Freude zurück an die 28 Jahre, die ich dort verlebte; es war wie eine höhere Fügung, die mich an die kleine Universität führte. An einer größeren Universität oder einem größere Orte wären meine Kräfte zerrissen oder zersplittert und die Erreichung des Ziels, nach dem ich strebte, sehr viel schwieriger, vielleicht unmöglich geworden. Aber in Gießen konzentrierte sich alles in der Arbeit, und diese war ein leidenschaftliches Genießen.

H

Hope

Aleo Susan Arndt

Hope. I used to hope.
I used to listen.
Listen to your sounds of hope!
Your sounds of hope have been there for me.
In blue. In orange. And in yellow.
Do you even listen to me, hope?
Did you ever?

The heavy-footed ones don't like my kind.
They call me witch, as if I'm not somebody's child.
They will burn me, at first light in the morning.
I will be gone.
Because you are gone.
You left me just like everybody else has always done.
Always.

Yes, this is the sound you hear,
when our kind dies by torture.
This morning will not be mine.
I will be gone.
Because you are gone.
Because you have left me.
Always.

Hope.
I used to hope.
I used to listen.
Listen to you sounding, hope!
Your sound of hope has been there for me.
In blue. In orange. And in yellow.

And did they?
The heavy-footed ones?
Did they hear me, did they see me,
did they allow me to belong?
Of course, not. No. They did not.

And then, what did you do, hope?
What did you do?
Huh?
You f***ing lapsed into silence!
The most deafening silence
I have ever heard.
Is there any pain louder
than the pain of losing your only love?

How could you betray me, hope, by choosing ignorance over me?
You left me. You betrayed me.
Just like everybody else has always done, always.

Did I survive?
Oh yes, I did.
Yet I used to survive, because you used to resile me.
The resilience you bothered to share with me, made me bear anything.
Anything.
And now?
Who the f*** needs a resilience that decides to fade away?

Hope, do you listen?
Do you even care to listen?
I am telling you the story of my life, I am even admitting that your sound has been my only resilience. And you do not even bother to listen?
I hate you…
… because I love you.

I will dream.
Dreaming, I will.
Of swimming in the sky.
Of walking on water.
Of not minding the pain.
It's humming. It's thundering. It's exploding – the sky I mean.
Exploding into a dream that has always been stronger than anything else.

YET.
If you do not listen to me, I am the one who is listening to me.
If you do not see me, I am the one who is seeing me.
If you do not care for me, I am the one who cares for me.
And if you do not resile me, I am the one who is resiling me.
Because I know how to swim in the sky.
Because I know how to fly.
Because I am alive.
And I will be.

Intersectionality*

Aleo Susan Arndt

Human worldmaking has always been shaped by power—understood, in its etymological root, as the capacity "to be able." Its core function is to preserve itself: to dominate, structure society, and construct legitimising narratives that reinforce the power of those who wield it. Power is power because it is owned by very few only. As such, it is meant to serve those in power—like conferring a privileged access to resources and rights, representation and belonging. People in power make sure it stays this way. This power and the privileges thus granted to some are exclusive and particular. And this only works by denying many other people any access to these privileges. Those in power invent this to be norm/ality, which includes positioning themselves as the norm/ality that is destined and entitled to order the other ones as their "Other." Those excluded from power are not just not able to access the privileges. What is more, those in power *other* human beings to exclude them from norm/ality so as to make them pay the bills for the people in power. The othered ones experience this exclusion as oppression, exploitation, and discrimination.

This is not about sensitivities or opinion. This is a violent structure that keeps repeating itself across generations and geographies, shaping both individual lives and collective histories. Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) famous insight "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" points to this very process: people are born into social positions as coded by power. Some are born on the very Olympe that is inaccessible to others. While the latter cannot but know this inequality and thus have to integrate it to their identity, those in power often do not even need to think about it (which is a privilege of its own). This is what Toni Morrison (1992, 9–10) refers to as "evasion," as a means by which those in

* In this essay, I have adapted ideas and passages from another article (Arndt 2025) on intersectionality as theory of practice. The article in question is listed in the reference section.

power imagine that it is most normal that they are privileged. This allows them to not care about the consequences and, moreover, to blame that the Othered ones are responsible for their being excluded and discriminated against (Arndt 2020). Evasion can even stretch to outright denial of the existence of structural discrimination and inequality, allowing those in power to mistake structural discrimination as hypersensitivity, isolated incidents, or imagined grievance. This, however, fuels any discrimination. Because: What is not seen cannot be named, what is not named cannot be discussed, and what is not discussed cannot be transformed. As a result, injustice and discrimination remain just as intact as the power responsible for this.

Refusing to name oppressive structures for fear of reinforcing them risks rendering them invisible. This is why Gayatri Spivak (2014, 96) advocates for strategic essentialism: the tactical use of identity categories to expose and contest the logics of power that have created the positionalities that frame them. This is not about affirming fixed identities, but about challenging the underlying power and violence. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) call this a process of "abrogation and appropriation"—turning tools of oppression into instruments of resistance. One example is "Black" as a term of empowerment that fights the racist "n-word;" and the asterisk in "s*he" becomes a queering of gender binaries that transgresses the violence of the binary male-or-female-only-model.

Intersectionality is an intervention into this: it aims at naming, talking about, confronting, and intervening into power-structured forms of discrimination and inequality, while looking at the intersection of different modes of power. Intersectionality is, however, not to be reduced to multiple discrimination. Intersectionality is about the simultaneity of different strands of structural discrimination against Black woman.

The concept of intersectionality emerged from Black feminist critique, especially the recognition that neither mainstream *white* feminism nor decolonial or Black liberation movements adequately addressed the realities of Black women. Patriarchal structures pervaded Black liberation movements, while *white* feminism often claimed to speak for all women while implicitly centering *white* experiences only and doing racism. A stark example can be found in the writings of early feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft (1830, 4.24) and Hannah More (1792, 305), who spoke of "women" without marking that they meant "white rich women only." What is more, they used "slave" as a metaphor to describe the oppression of *white* women without acknowledging that Black women were not metaphorically, but literally and brutally enslaved—and that white women are part and parcel of profiting from the European enslavement of Africans and colonial domination as well as of white supremacism in general. Very few Black women, like Sojourner Truth, were given some visibility in feminist spaces. Yet these moments were tokenistic and lacked critical engagement with colonialism, slavery, or racial apartheid.

This politics of ignoring given complexity is what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) calls "the danger of a single story." Black feminists, such as Sojourner Truth or Zora Neale Hurston, challenged these defaults as early as the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a deeper theoretical reckoning thereof. "Womanism"—a Black feminist tradition shaped by thinkers like Alice Walker (1983) and Chikwenye Ogunyemi (1985)—emerged as a transdisciplinary alternative that bridged activism, art, and scholarship.

It was in this critical climate that Kimberlé Crenshaw published her foundational essay "Mapping the Margins" (1991), popularising the term "intersectionality." Her analysis of the 1976 case *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors*—in which Black women's claims of discrimination were dismissed because, as it was argued, the company employed both Black men and *white* women—illustrated the need for a new framework to see that all the women who were employed were *white*; and all the Black people who were employed by were men.

Intersectionality was thus born to account for the ways racism and sexism, as well as classism, compound each other and are mutually constitutive. Drawing on the metaphor of a crossroad, Crenshaw proposed a prism through which we can see how different systems of oppression operate simultaneously and interdependently.

Starting from its focus on Black women, intersectionality has expanded to include other axes of power and oppression—such as ableism, heteronormativity, and coloniality—without abandoning its being grounded in the interplay of racism, sexism, and classism and the intersectional discrimination against Black women. Intersectionality is not simply a framework for recognizing "multiple discriminations;" it insists on examining how these dynamics interlock and shape one another—in the lifeworlds of Black women and, in complementary fashion, in other collective positionings.

With respect to this, it is important to stress that intersectionality is not just about discrimination. It also attends to privilege. Returning to the GM lawsuit as given sample: Black women were most discriminated against in terms of last hired and first fired. Black men were discriminated against by racism yet retained patriarchal privilege, while *white* women faced sexism but benefited from racism as *white* supremacy. Drawing from this interplay of being privileged and being discriminated against, intersectionality thus not only analyses oppression but also pinpoints at power and privileges. And intersectionality insists that such privileges need to be reflected and invested into solidarity. This comprises envisioning *white* feminists confronting whiteness and Black men sharing power to challenge patriarchy.

Intersectionality is a recursive process: it observes the workings of power, communicates its findings, and develops interventions for structural change. But because systems of power are not static, neither is intersectionality. It must adapt its tools and methods in response to shifting social realities. At its core, intersectionality is a speculative, dynamic mode of critical thought—always seeking to understand, and to transform, the complex entanglements of power that structure our world.

Intersectionality has started off as a prism to see and name the intersection of racism, sexism, and classism. As such, it became a powerful tool of intervention and change in activism, arts and academia (in given intersections). Intersectionality has been mobilized and applied by social movements as well as in rhizomic fields of knowledge production.

As for academia, many scholars across all disciplines have employed intersectionality as a concept, while, for example, working from within of feminist theories or postcolonial theories. And just like feminism generated gender as a concept that eventually blossomed as a theory into a discipline that is pillared in numerous humanities, intersectionality exists as concept that has been advanced into a theory and established itself as an inter- and transdisciplinary discipline that not only spans academic fields but also, by its very objective, connects with activism and the arts. And this is why academia often recoils from intersectionality. It is wary of its being "too political". To many, the term evokes activism rather than analysis, and thus threatens the illusion of scientific neutrality and objectivity. But is not the essence of scholarship to revise, to disrupt, to rethink knowledge, and the modes of the production thereof? Every major epistemic shift—every scientific revolution—has emerged in the context of broader societal transformations, transformations that inevitably intersect with politics.

Take the Manhattan Project: could it ever be considered apolitical? Or Galileo Galilei, who upended centuries of androcentric belief by proving that the Earth revolves around the sun. Because his findings challenged the authority of the Church, they were cast as political—even heretical. In the same way, the study of racism cannot be separated from politics. From the fifteenth century onward, entire disciplines—philosophy, theology, anthropology, biology, linguistics—were complicit in constructing racism as a pseudo-scientific rationale for colonial conquest. This allowed imperial violence, from the Maafa to the Shoah, to be framed not as horror, but as mission, progress, or fate.

Such ideologies wore the mask of scientific legitimacy, and yet when today's scholars confront racism—especially from within literature, culture, or history—they are often dismissed for being "too political" or "ideological." But silence is political, too. Not speaking up against racism, whether in a book studied on campus or on the bus driving toward it, is a political decision. How could such omissions and "I don't care"-attitudes *not* be political?

Indeed, power structures rightfully feel that intersectionality might give them a hard time. And this is why our collective endeavors to institutionalize academic intersectionality at the University of Bayreuth have been torpedoed throughout the last decade, without, however, being able to stop its path towards implementation. Thanks to Rüdiger Seesemann, and many others.

At first, in 2016, we founded the university network GeQuInDi (Gender, Queer, Intersectionality, and Diversity Studies). It was designed to be a network for academic activism with respect to both universitarian and societal challenges, for transdisciplinary research networks and teaching. This could not have been possible without visionary people like Miriam Bauch, the head and heart of Bayreuth's *Servicestelle Chancengleichheit*, and, for example, Fadi Saleh—who has held the first lecturer position in Intersectionality Studies at the University of Bayreuth, even all across Germany.

Building on offered interdisciplinary and cross-faculty courses in these areas, in 2019 we founded, with the support of Stefan Kurth from the *Servicestelle Diversität*, the supplementary study program "*Intersectionality Studies and Diversity Competencies*" (ZIDK).

During the same period, the research profile line "*Intersectionality,*" affiliated with the emerging research focus "*Cultural Encounters and Transcultural Processes,*" was developed as a foundational structure for research under the spokeswo*manship of Aleo Susan Arndt.

Intersectionality also became a central pillar of the Excellence Cluster "Africa Multiple. Reconfiguring African Studies." In its first phase (2018–2025), this has been evidenced by numerous individual research projects, workshops, and lectures—such as those within the framework of the Knowledge Lab or the Intersectionality and Critical Diversity Literacy (ICDL) Lecture Series convened by the Gender and Diversity Office (GDO), Christine Vogt-William. Also, the Intersectionality Junior Research group as lead by Serawit Debele, contributed immensely to this. In the meantime, Serawit Debele's work was awarded by the University of Bayreuth with a professorship on "Gender and Religion."

All of these processes have been constantly supported and moulded by the Dean of the Cluster of Excellence "Africa Multiple. Reconfiguring African Studies," Rüdiger Seesemann. He also made intersectionality become a core agenda of the Cluster of Excellence, also explicitly spelling this out for the Cluster of Excellence's second phase (2026 to 2033).

In 2021, the Faculty of Language and Cultural Studies of Bayreuth University awarded Kimberlé Crenshaw an honorary doctorate—in recognition of her pioneering work in establishing intersectionality as a research paradigm and as a promise to multiply her work.

In June 2022, Susan Arndt, Serawit Debele, Mario Faust-Scalisi, Matt Hannah, Kristin Skottki, and some more colleagues managed to found Europe's first Doctoral College for Intersectionality Studies as run by the trade-unionist Hans-Böckler-Foundation. Accordingly, the University of Bayreuth launched the Doctoral Program for Intersectionality Studies (PKIS), establishing a dedicated PhD curriculum "Intersectionality Studies." In 2025, the professorship from Aleo Susan Arndt was eventually redenominated into "English Studies and Intersectionality Studies" by the Faculty Board of Language and Literatures.

Even though this has been a successful implementation of structures for doing intersectionality, this has been far from easy and far from being concluded. Throughout the process, there were many colleagues in powerful positions within the faculties or the university's directorate who caused blockades, setbacks, and backlashes. This has been especially obvious with respect to our endeavor to implement Europe's very first MA Intersectionality Studies. After ten years of fighting against this innovative studies program under false premises, coming up, again and again, with new demands, rules and hypocritic "concerns," eventually the MA Intersectionality Studies is now about to reach a breakthrough. If all goes well, it will welcome its first students in 2027. Thanks to Rüdiger Seesemann's countless efforts.

Yes, intersectionality confronts power, and it refuses to separate knowledge from the structures that shape and sustain inequality. But this commitment to justice does not undermine its scholarly value; rather, it deepens it. Intersectionality insists that theory must not be detached from life and world-making—that knowledge should serve transformation and that transformation should know how to strive for even futures. Far from weakening academic inquiry, its praxeological orientation strengthens it, offering a framework for thinking and acting toward more equitable futures. Intersectionality holds the promise of building shared, sustainable, and more just worlds—across both global and local terrains. This is also what Rüdiger Seesemann's work has always been about.

It is by no means an exaggeration to hold that there would not be any Intersectionality Studies at the University of Bayreuth without Rüdiger Seesemann. He has been too good to be true as an unwavering ally and visionary. Being aware of *white* supremacy and the ways in which it has privileged him, he is most decisive about investing his privileges and vision into solidarity and the reconfiguration of the humanities from within Intersectionality Studies. His firm belief in the cause of intersectionality, as a means to pave better futures, made him invest his excellent knowledge of leadership and power structures into a reconfiguration of universitarian structures. His disgust for abuse of power, his visionary magic to think out of the box, his unprecedented research ethics, his dedicated fight against injustice and discrimination, his ability to hope into the future, his unique rhetorical skills to pin arguments down to what needs to be seen and said, and his love for human beings have been milestones for implementing intersectionality as a future pillar at the University of Bayreuth in a most sustainable way—and for a new era of Critical Humanities.

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J

July

Aleo Susan Arndt

Because July is your month,
it knows to intervene and see,
how to translate care into philosophy,
re-archiving the bibliography.
Your July is a month to understand
that to pick the battles is a plan,
for world-making finding a new mode,
to revolutionise the globe.
We intervene—not to redeem the archive,
but to reframe the supremacist gaze,
to see why the universe was silenced by whom,
and how to disrupt and share privileges soon.

Your July will always have known
up front,
the heavy-footed ones rule the world,
until they won't.

K

Knowledges and Social Orders

Natéwindé Sawadogo

Introduction

The colonial legacy still structures perspectives on work in Africa, particularly the perspectives regarding productive work, or work which bears progress and social order. According to these perspectives, social order could in no way be associated with work that takes place outside the formal or official economy. It is, however, clear that work that takes place in this latter setting is related to the Western school system and the capitalist industrial organization. Workers of the "informal sector" and the activities, which therein take place would be, the thinking goes, in contrast, reflection of social disorder. Yet, there is a critical need to make a difference not only between marginalized precolonial work and the informal economy resulted from capitalist economic crises, but also the need to empirically appreciate the central role of the informal economy as a driver of social order and innovation in the African context. Social theory has, though, largely embraced the institutional perspective to the point of ignoring the crucial role of the informal sector in the ongoing contemporary social transformations in Africa, in comparison with bureaucratic, formal occupations. African countries display different socioeconomic setup where informality takes the centre stage (Akuoko, Aggrey and Amoako-Arhen 2021; Benjamin and Mbaye 2012) in the face of the neo-liberal approach to informality on the continent that largely neglected the informal sector's contribution to development. In this regard, in Ghana for example, as elsewhere in Africa, authorities have been preoccupied with displacing informality or absorbing it into the formal sector (Akuoko, Aggrey and Amoako-Arhen 2021). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), 2018)). 61% percent of the working-age population—2 billion women and men—are in the informal economy. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), informal employment represents 86% and 92% of men and women's total employment, respectively. The informal business economic sector in developing countries represents a strong economic multiplier effect (Tichaawa 2017; Bennett and Rablen 2015; Hussmanns 2004). Through its content and its role, the sector represents, in the context of contemporary societies, a distinct area of economic activity and a segment of essential importance in the economic and social life of the majority of countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (Benjamin and Mbaye 2014; Grant 2015; Rogerson 2005, 2018). There are few incentives for the state to produce official economic statistics in environments with large informal sectors and subsistence agriculture (Egger et al. 2021).

> The rapid expansion of the informal sector or economy in both developed and developing countries has not only captured the attention of researchers, development analysts, government officials and international agencies but is also prompting a massive profusion of literature on the topic (Onyebueke Geyer 2011, 65).

This is almost consistent with the sociological theory on the professions. There is a significant gap in our knowledge regarding labor force and its organization in Africa and how it shapes social changes.

This paper sets out to examine the dominant literature on the relationships between social order and knowledge hierarchies as it applies to African societies, in which new communication technologies are transforming the modes of access to knowledge and the appropriation of this knowledge for transformative processes led by informal labor force, though often mistakenly criminalized. In this paper, I want to recapture two key ideas from the literature on the professions and examine them from a relational approach to moral order. The first is to get away from the upward mobility focus and consider the similarities between occupations (Plato 1916; Hughes 1984), and the second is to reintroduce the macro-level of professional ethics (Plato 1916; Weber 1992; Smith 1929; Durkheim 1992). As the sociology of the professions moved to a system approach to professionalization, these two amendments to sociological theory of the professions can further our understanding of the moral organization of the occupations (Abott 1988).

Data and Methods

The paper uses the conceptual lens of Foucault, particularly his concept of "discourse" (Foucault 1967, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973). Foucault suggests that, in all societies, the production of discourse is controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed (Foucault 1971). This paper explores then the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion of types of works and their consequences on knowledge of African societies more generally. The data covered the literature (theoretical and empirical) in sociology, history, anthropology on the "professions," or more generally on "occupations," from the earliest to the recent publications. In total, 159 references have been selected and reviewed. To analyse the data, I proceeded like Bourdieu; that is to say, "for each of the 'moments'…That I distinguished (and which partially overlap), I try to establish on the one hand the 'cognitive style' of the current in question, and on the other hand its relationship with the historical conditions, the mood of the time" (Bourdieu 2004, 9).

The paper is structured into three main parts. First, it reflects on the problem of order before even the middle-age, in antiquity. Second, it explores the sociological literature on the professions, by identifying the evolution of this debate on the distinctive character of occupations with professional status. Finally, it reflects on the extent to which existing literature helps to understand other societies, which are not necessarily displaying the same dominant characteristics as Western societies.

Workers and Ethics Before the Professions

Consider three classic texts, one from the fifth century BC, and the two others from the twentieth century AD. "[E]very soul pursues," Plato writes in his *Republic*,

> This good (i.e. justice) […] as the end of all actions, divining its existence, but perplexed and unable to apprehend satisfactorily its nature, or to enjoy that steady confidence in relation to it, which it does enjoy in relation to other things, and therefore doomed to forfeit any advantage which it might have derived from those same things" (Plato 1916, 226). In the half of the twentieth century, one of the great sociologists, Everett Hughes, suggested that "We need to rid ourselves of any concepts which keep us from seeing that the essential problems of men at work are the same whether they do their work

> in the laboratories of some famous institution or in the messiest vat room of a pickle factory. (Hughes 1951, 318)

Twenty years later, Hughes's student, Eliot Freidson stated

> The foundation of medicine's control over its work is ...clearly political in character, involving the aid of the state in establishing and maintaining the profession's pre-eminence. [...] And the autonomy of the individual practitioner exists within social and political space cleared and maintained for his benefit by political and formal occupational mechanisms. (Freidson 1970, 23–24)

If the antiquarian study of the professions is included, systematic studies of the professions go back as far as to 1915 (Flexner 1915). From the publication of Flexner's paper in 1915 to that of Freidson's book on the profession of medicine in 1970, which opened up the black-box of professional institutions, there is over one and half century of span. It is curious that for such a long time, studies on the professions neglected these social constants that Plato centuries ago, and Hughes, in relatively recent time, have raised, for a mere "constant preoccupation with upward mobility of occupations" (Hughes 1984, 418).

To return to Plato's text, it is important to note that historical data does not attribute the origin of the word "profession" to the Greeks. The word originates in Ancient Roman society (Sawadogo 2008). It is first recorded in 1200 from Old French as "vows taken upon entering a religious order." It comes from the Latin noun *professio* which stands for "public declaration." The verb it is derived from is to profess, of the Latin *professus* "having declared publicly," of *profitieri* "declare openly," (first recorded in the 1520s) from *pro-* "forth" and *fateri* (pp. *fassus*) "acknowledge, confess," akin to *fari* "speak." The verb to profess, "take a vow" in a religious order, appeared in early 14c. A profession successively, therefore, meant "occupation one professes to be skilled in" (from early 15c.), a "body of persons engaged in some occupation" (from 1610), and in a more secular term, from 1888, "prostitution," in talking for example about the *oldest profession*. In English then, the adjective 'professional' appeared in early 15th century. to designate religious orders, and in 1747 to refer to careers, especially of the skilled or learned trades from 1793. As a noun, 'a professional' as 'one who does X for a living', is used from 1798, but recorded from 1811, as opposed to "amateur," used from 1851. With respect to the noun 'professor', it is recorded from the late 14th century. to mean 'one who teaches a branch of knowledge,' coming from the Latin noun *professor* , "person who professes to be an expert in some art or science, teacher of highest rank," and from the agent noun *profitieri*, "lay claim to, declare openly;" but as a title prefixed to a name, it dates from 1706. The aristocratic pretention inherent in the word probably prevented its use by Ancient Greece philosophers.

The word 'profession,' it can be seen, relate to power. From the Middle Age ecclesiastic institutions to the modern bureaucracy, through Feudal political systems, orders of values shaped the content and the distribution of knowledge (Sawadogo 2008). The hierarchy of these values in each social system resulted in a hierarchy of occupations therein. These categorizations were so strong as to take the character of substance, that is, of a property which is considered to be intrinsic to each category of occupation. However, this central place of power, to which I will return later, underlined one of the important features of professional ethics, which the Greeks clearly delineated and yet barely discovered in the early twenty-first century (Freidson 2001).

Greek philosophers first discovered the principle of social evolution and explained the foundation of the division of labor in their ideal state reflected in Plato's *Republic*. Plato stressed the co-existence of individual-society as a necessity of our humanity, in the same way the other subsequent emerging elements in the world are for the society and for the state; because, as the translator of the Republic of Plato reported it, "Man, isolated from his fellow-men, is not self-sufficient" (Plato 1916, xiv). Thus, man's existence required the development of functions, which became more complex as the community increased, filled by different people: first, there were husbandmen, builders, clothiers, shoemakers; then emerged the need for carpenters, smiths, shepherds, and grazers; subsequently, with the development of commercial activities, merchants, sailors, shop-keepers, hired laborers appeared. Furthermore, the increase of the needs of the population will lead to the need of increasing and maintaining the territory of the state, thus constituted, making soldiers necessary. However, in addition to these necessities of life, members of the state will need luxuries, and if these have to be supplied, it must contain cooks, confectioners, barbers, actors, dancers, poets, physicians, and similar kinds of functions. The social order, thus, would rely upon three functions which make the architecture of the state: the function of "Guardian," which must be fulfilled by "the oldest, the most prudent, the ablest, and above all the most patriotic and unselfish members of the body" (Plato 1916, xiv); that of "Auxiliary," which "consists essentially in the ever maintaining a right estimate of what is, or is not, really formidable" (Plato 1916, xviii); and the function of "producer," filled by husbandmen and craftsmen. Depending of the qualities of each of the above members of the state, s/he can occupy any of these three functions. Nobody is naturally too humble to be prevented from the guardianship, nor naturally too proud to be protected from the craftsmanship. For example, in this regard, Plato writes "none of the occupations which comprehend the ordering of the state belong to woman as a woman, nor yet to man as a man; but natural gifts are to be found here and here, in both sexes alike; and, so far as her nature is concerned, the woman is admissible to all pursuits as well as the man" (Plato 1916, 161–162). Beyond the idea of philosophical quest for truth which characterizes philosophers, those who must rule the republic of Plato, "the friends of wisdom, those who seek wisdom but not formally possess it" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 3). What is particularly relevant to our purpose is Plato's symmetrical and multi-level conception of the Good, and therefore of ethics, with regard to all the occupations of his ideal state.

The symmetrical conception of the "Good" is reflected in the teleological view of Plato, that is, in the view that final causes exist in nature; everything has a purpose.

> The teleological view … simply consists in seeing everywhere a certain function to be exercised, a certain work to be done, a certain end or good to be worked out. The good of anything is to be or do what it is meant to be or do. …the word "good" means that which anything is meant to do or to be. A man's life is morally good in proportion as it exhibits purpose, and not merely purpose, but a purpose going beyond himself. (Joshep 1948, 12)

Every soul without exception pursues that as this is in its nature: the shepherd pursues the good of his sheep, the pilot's end is to protect the sailor, and the physician's interest is the health of the patient. "And thus," Plato writes:

> all who are in any place of command, in so far as they are rulers, neither consider nor enjoin their own interest, but that of the subjects for whom they exercise their craft: and in all that they do or say, they act with an exclusive view of them, and to what is good and proper for them. (Plato 1916, 22)

This implies that any craftsman must comply with the division of labor and stick to what s/he knows best, and not go beyond, because "The just man goes not beyond his like, but his unlike; the unjust man goes beyond both his like and his unlike" (Plato 1916, 31). As far as the interest of artist is concerned, Plato does not conceive that her/himself pursues her or his interest, for the division of labor makes it an end for someone else; so that the "advantage," of a professor of an art:

> the receipt of pay, does not come to each from his art, but, strictly considered, the art of healing produces health, and the art of wages pay; the art of house-building produces a house, while the art of wages follows it and produces pay; and so of all the rest; –each works its own work, and benefits that which is its appointed object. (Plato 1916, 27)

This pursuit of the good, which is inherent in every art in the strict sense (because "no craftsman errs"), does not lead Plato to ignore contrary behavior; "Unjust" men might be found among the three classes of the state, from the guardians to the craftsmen, thus differentiating the "genuine" artists from the "counterfeit" ones within each occupation. This leads us to Hughes statement according to which all occupations, humble or prestigious, face the same contingencies, so that it is both empirically questionable and theoretically inappropriate to attribute occupations definitive attributes; because "if a certain problem turned up in one occupation, it [is] nearly certain to turn up in all" (Hughes 1984, 420). Then, if this is so, how can one account for the fact that some occupations become dominant over some area of social life? To answer this question, Hughes moves to another level of analysis, that of the symbolic character of knowledge and expertise. His central concept for this account is that of "moral division of labour,"

> that is, of the processes by which differing moral functions are distributed among the members of society, as individuals and as categories of individuals. Some people seek and get special responsibility for defining values and for establishing and enforcing sanctions over a certain aspect of life; the differentiation of moral and social functions involves both the area of social behaviour in question and the degree of responsibility and power. (ibid: 288)

The status of different occupations in a society reflects the status of the need each claim to fulfil and that of the knowledge use for this end. The more the values of these needs and expertise are closer to those required by the state, the more likely they will be granted the monopoly over the definition and satisfaction of these needs. In this regard, the ethics of an occupation does not only consist in acting as Plato suggests in the interest of things over which it has authority, by a skilful implementation of expertise, but also this ought to meet the ends instituted by the society as a whole, and which the state defines and oversees through its Auxiliaries.

In Plato's ideal state, the "guardians" occupy this moral role in the division of labor. As the magistrates of the state, they are selected from "the oldest, the most prudent, the ablest, and above all the most patriotic unselfish members" of the society. I am aware that real world processes deviate from Plato's ideal state; what Plato's moral and political philosophy helps uncover though is the delocalization of one level of professional ethics; the moral end of a profession has another source than within itself. This is clearly shown by Max Weber with regards to modern bureaucracy; by developing an organization based on impersonal criteria and on efficiency, modern bureaucracy (public or private) has created the moral framework for the professional whose job is only to fill an office base on specific expertise (Weber 1978). The political power of a professional over a certain matter of life has its source in the state (Freidson 1970); not an intrinsic characteristic of professional expertise. This underlines the macro-level of occupational ethics shown in the *Republic* of Plato.

Through this critical analysis, it is revealed that: (a) the definition of moral values corresponds to a specific function, fulfilled by the state, because the role of this occupational group is to "think" (Durkheim 1992); (b) the ends of all occupations are the same, which is to pursue the interest of the object of which they have the craft; and every occupation as far as it is that it claims to be cannot have other purpose than doing what justifies its being; yet they are all subject to contingencies; (c) the status of an occupation in a society reflects its distance to the state's normative requirements; the production of these norms are opened to contingencies and depends on the balance of power in a society; (d) moral order in the occupations (low or high rank) is best understood as involving the work of more than one occupations (be it in regulated or open market), because the values which direct occupational behavior are produced by specific inter-related functions; the study of more than one occupation is not an incidental choice, but a methodological prerequisite.

For years, the sociology of the profession has been diverted from this perspective; the social science of the professions of contemporary societies, developed or not, has paradoxically its foundations back down to Ancient Greek philosophy through classical economics up to classical sociology. From an organic account, which did not prejudge the attribute of emerging occupational institutions, the sociology of the professions then took an uncritical approach which simply described them as they see themselves and others; the critical turn diverted sociological interpretation from professions' own representation of themselves, opening thus the black-box of professional 'natural' wisdom; in its latest development, the sociology of the profession had to return to the first half of twentieth century with Hughes (1951); but the macro-level of occupational ethics, which I now recover, was just far away, and almost forgotten. Freidson (2001) seems to think that such a third party in professional responsibility is a threat; this literature review shows that occupational ethics is rather a teamwork.

In the following section, I proceed to bring more detail about the theoretical development of the sociology of the professions to date, with the view to reintroduce the missing link to the understanding of social order.

The Sociological Constructions of the Occupations

The sociological approach to the profession was organicist first, then functional. It later turned to a more conflict and strategic perspective, in which professions were viewed as the only beneficiaries first, and second with the state as a strategic ally, thus bringing sociological theory of the professions back down to Plato (1916) and to Hughes (1951).

Nature-structural developments: August Comte ([1844] 1856) was concerned with explaining social evolution and in laying down a road to structural changes for modern society. But he was not specifically interested in the expert of teleological objects, nor that of metaphysical or positivist objects; Spencer (1896) demonstrates how structural changes results in complexity and hierarchy in the division of labor, as society moves from traditional to modern mode of organization; yet, he was not particularly addressing the magician, the king, the priest, or the civil officer of these social organizations; similar view can be state about Tonnies (1955), Weber (1978), and others. All had seen in the professions the gate-keepers of the "absolute values" of the developing modern society, and the guarantees of the public good in a democratic society. Spencer and Durkheim, and the others were aware of the fragility of human motives, but had, for the most part treated irregular behavior by the professions as a reflection of dysfunctional institutions. In general, they had not been interested in conceptualising the professions as separated from the social system they were analysing.

The teleological approach of these classical sociologists to society preserved them from a mere evaluative interpretation of occupations. Such a teleological view, in asserting the existence of an underlying order in society, took a holistic approach. Holism supports that new "phenomena, such as life, individual consciousness, and 'folk soul' emerge as a result of the organization of parts into wholes, by way of creative synthesis" (Udehn 2001, 38); but the whole is irreducible to a mere aggregate of the parts. Analogically, for "social holism, society … is supervenient upon, but irreducible to, human individuals and their actions" (ibid:39). Fundamentally, the evolution of the society is a continuous process of integration and differentiation, from simple to complex. Founders of Sociology had their encounter with the professions, and occupations more general, through their interest in these broad processes. Their framing of it, the temporality and interrelationships between sequences of evolutions differ from one author to another; but generally, they share the idea of complexity and integration in relations to the structure and characteristics of the occupations which make-up the emerging structures. For instance, in his *Principles of Sociology*, Spencer (1896) accounts for the evolution of societal needs and their implication on occupational structure. Basically, he examined the genesis of the medicine-man and priesthood. The core thesis is that the emergence of the two functions reveals the needs of the society concerned. Since these needs are dynamic, the history of these functions replicates the history of societal needs. Occupations split up and mingle according to the changing human needs. The function of priesthood, thus, took over that of medicine-man. To use Spencer's words, we see a "partial usurpation by the priest of the medicine-man's functions" (Spencer 1896, 42).

The processes continue with the emergence of the modern state, and occupations emerged as a product of the disintegration of ecclesiastic social bonds. Similarly, the society of Durkheim (1947) is bipolar. Beliefs and practice draw their foundations either from religion in the case of traditional society, or from occupational groups in the case of modern society. The evolution of occupational groups parallels the emergence of modern society and made it possible. Contrasts are made by Tonnies (1955) between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, and by Weber (1978) between ideal types of legitimacies. Nevertheless, although they address occupational structures in their characterization of each sequence of the social evolution, these authors do not make occupations as a topic of study, and do not scale them within a hierarchy. Instead of taking into account the issue of hierarchy between occupations in their research interests, sociologists who subsequently studied social order are going to continue, in their ways, the functionalist analysis of modern societies; still, on contrast to the classics, they will be dedicated, with less critical view, to the description of those occupations claiming the status of profession.

Symbolic congruence-identity production: Two interrelated phenomena make this sequence of sociological thinking the most conservative, with respect to the interpretation of professional dynamics. First, the philosophical foundation of sociological theory remained that of holism, even if the established concept was referred to as functionalism, which combines ideas of structure and function in the approach to cultural integration and variations. Second, professions themselves became more conscious of their identities as distinct from other kinds of occupations. The study of the professions, though now more systematized, was marked by this functional approach to social dynamics and by the shaping of sociological inquiry by the way professions perceived themselves (and vice versa). In other words, the founding scientific literature about the professions was functional and less critical to their object of study. It mainly emphasized the instrumental role of the professions against the asymmetric expert-client relation. Professionalization thus appeared as a logical effect of the evolution of structural guarantees for the expert-client mediation. The first attempt to account for such an attribute has been regularly identified with a paper by Flexner (1915). In this paper, the author stressed the central significance of the "professional spirit," as a distinctive disposition of the professional. This disposition reflects a set of six attributes which would define a profession: two of the attributes are cognitive, and refer to the intellectual and learned aspects of the profession. Another is moral and affective. It concerns the personal responsibility of the professionals and their altruism. Two others are organizational. They refer, on the one hand, to the institutional organization of the profession's body of knowledge and, on the other hand, the ritualistic processes of its transmission through education, and to the internal organization of the profession. The sixth attribute is about the goal of this system of knowledge and its institutions of governance: practical and problems-solving. Yet Flexner's work is a precursor to the sociology of the professions. As Dingwall reminds us, "[…] these have, for the most part, been treated as of mainly antiquarian interest" (Dingwall 1983, 1).

Parsons's work (1939, 1951, 1964, 1968) and that of Hughes (1958, 1971) have been considered as being of major influences on contemporary research in the study of professions. Two core features emerge from Parsons's interest in the professions in modern society. First, he was concerned with the conditions and mechanisms of the maintenance of the social order in this new social context. The professions were considered in this functionalist perspective as an alternative to the disintegration of traditional social institutions in the ordering of social relations in modern society. The balance of power between client and professional is analyzed within a framework of role system, with dominant authority granted to the latter. As Abbott comments, "[f]or Parsons a professional's power over clients was necessary to successful treatment …. It was grounded in expertise, guaranteed by professional control, and offset by the trust between professional and client" (Abbott 1988, 86–87).

The second feature of Parsons's interest in the professions are his arguments against the universalism and abstraction of the utilitarian principles about economic motivations. Drawing, mainly, from Weber on the structure of action process, he argued for a historically grounded moral order, which utilitarian theory disregarded. The study of the professions, as non-profit occupations, was a mean to this theoretical confrontation with utilitarianism. He placed the distinctive collectivity-orientation of the professional within the institutional framework which made it possible. In this view, he contended that, "[w]hatever difference there may be from a psychological point of view between the typical motives of physicians and businessmen must be analyzed with this in mind, taking it as a starting point" (Parsons 1991, 473).

This functional approach to the mechanics of social order was the dominant framework of the time. It is particularly with Carr-Saunders (1928), Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933), and Marshall (1939) that an attribute approach had been significant. Indeed, Carr-Sanders and Wilson were the first to attempt an analysis of the professions in Britain, and as Abbott (1988) and many others observe, the properties which they identified became the core of later definitions of a profession. Marshall (1939), like Carr-Saunders and Wilson, was aware of the increasing number and varied types of profesions, but particularly stressed the changing patterns of their relationships with the welfare state. In the early 1960s, the way in which researchers addressed the professions shifted toward a more naturalistic approach, in the kind of organist approaches within classical sociology. The function of the professions did not matter so much to those who were studying them. What mattered was the natural history of the different occupations, which led them to the relatively full self-control. In this structural view, professionalization was portrayed in terms of an explanatory category about the ongoing processes of self-governance as an indicator of accomplishment by some occupations (Millerson 1964, Wilenski 1964). Despite the limitations of its linear approach, criticized in later writings (Abbott 1988), "the explicit focus on structure and its evolution led to theories about the historical forces driving the structure, and hence the structuralists developed the explicit models of professionalisation […]" (Abbott 1988: 15).

In sum, the functionalist approach, with its focus on upward mobility and the description of status professions, significantly differs from the symmetrical view suggested in Plato's civil state, and by Hughes (1951), who was though writing at the same period. Nevertheless, with regard to morality, if one considers only the aspect of craft, the professions are here seen to display attributes of Plato's "just man," in relation to which, the physician, like any professor of an art towards its object, is considered not as "a maker of money," but "A healer of the sick," acting therefore for the interest of the patient (Callhan 2006); the interest of the physician is in turn the end pursued by another function: the "art of wages." At the end of the decade though, the following statement of Adam Smith would fit very well with the idea which was beginning to prevail among researchers about the professions; in the eighteenth-century Smith said:

> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our diner, but from their regard for their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity, but to their self-love and never talk to them of our own necessities but to their advantages. Nobody but a beggar chuses to depend chiefly upon the benevolence of his fellow-citizens. (quoted by Callahan and Wassunna 2006, 16)

Symbolic dissonance–identity crisis and the emergence of critical thinking about the professions:

Studies on the professions during the 1960s can be characterized as "sociology in the professions," because of their relatively uncritical character; and those which were going to dominant the 1970s onward, considered as studies in the "sociology of the professions." The interpretation of the status of the professions in society significantly changed. From the functional perspective, it moved to a monopolist one. In this later view, the structural developments were considered instrumental to professional dominance. Their service orientation was replaced by self-interested motivations, making professionalization a collective endeavor for mobility.

The first decisive move toward this approach came from Eliot Freidson. His *Profession of Medicine*, first published in 1970, initiated the theoretical split with traditional theories, which seemed to be proving increasingly inadequate. Parsons's role system in the physician-patient relationship was reassessed in the light of Becker's (1963) theory of deviance and Hughes's (1958, 1971) concepts of "licence" and "mandate." If Parsons addressed the issue, it was from a vertical standpoint, where medical knowledge was pre-supposed as authoritative. Freidson argued for a pluralistic analysis of illness as an historical category, which varied with the values of social categories in the society. The power of the medical profession to define illness and health and to lead the governance of public health found its significance when related to the field of power. This exclusive right over the market was provided by the State through licensing and was made relatively legitimate by the overall society through the authority granted to them. This dominance was unambiguously interpreted mainly as initially resulting from the State's demand. His subsequent writings further grounded this argument of professional dominance, although he found it hard to support empirically professional claim (Freidson 1970b, 1975, 1983, 1986).

Like Freidson, Terence Johnson (1972, 1973a, 1973b) disputed the impressive character of professional claims to public service. Like Freidson with regard to the medical profession, he supported the idea of the manipulative character of medical knowledge. It was not only historically embedded, but it also generated clients' needs. The most radical accounts of the processes of the professional expropriation of society's needs have been epitomized by Illich's work (1975). Yet the significant contribution of Johnson was to ascribe professional power to interweaving networks of relationships, where professional autonomy appeared as contingent and always negotiated; for professions have never escaped from the patronage of a third party (Johnson 1973b). The collegiate control over work had been very brief in history. As he underlined it, when addressing the issue of the increasing pressure from third party in professionals' sphere, "these alternative solutions [professionalism and third party control] to the problem of controlling the professional-client relationship provide a framework for the classification and analysis of professional occupations" (Johnson 1973b, 122–23). This suggestion prefigured the later reconceptualisation of Freidson (1994, 2001); and the relational approach to the profession developed by Abbott (1988) was then reawakened with the rediscovery of Norbert Elias' work on the professions (Elias, [1939] 2000, 1964, 2007). In stressing the epistemological and theoretical contribution of Johnson (a junior colleague of Norbert Elias), Cain (1983) succinctly put it that;

> Johnson's approach represents an advance on the classic statements such as, for example, that of Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1964); first, because it is *relational*; second, it questions the taken for granted *desirability of professionalism*

> and third, it departs from *empiricist nominalism*. …. The fourth merit of Johnson's approach is that it allows for mobility of jobs between categories… (Cain 1983: 108)

Another major contribution to the monopolist approach is from Larson (1977). Like Freidson and Johnson, and unlike Béland (1976), Ben-David (1963, 1966) and Bledstein (1976), she emphasized the external instrumental consequences of professionalism for professionals as collectivities. Professions were, unlike the early literature supposed, market organizations. They derived their power from the expropriation of social meanings by dominating them intellectually and organizationally. However, Larson made a considerable regression compared to Freidson and Johnson. Freidson and Johnson wrote within the traditional definition of the profession at the time, but were still sceptical about its potential to advance theorizing. Larson, in contrast, while she reversed the traditional image of the profession and professional, remained within the whole traditional model; because she focused her study within themes and assumptions from Anglo-American perspective on the professions, and ruled out occupations which were inconsistent with her framework.

However, within the very monopoly approach substantive changes occurred by the end of the 1980s. The lessons drawn from comparative studies supported arguments about some insights from the Parsonian perspective, and confirmed the disenchantment of the myth of the professions that had been initiated by Hughes. In line with Parsons, Freidson (1986, 1988, 1994, 2001) reasserted the centrality of professions in contemporary societies, with a reasoned demonstration of the legitimate boundaries of such dominance. Such a return to the classics was possible thanks to a skilful integration of supposedly conflicting traditions, where Parsons and Hughes (1958, 1971) were seen to be complementary (Freidson 1978). The professions were reconceived within the general framework of the sociology of work. Its structural developments and its nature must not be pre-supposed, as Parsons and others did, or decreed by 'fiat' (Dingwall 1983), that is in abstract. By conceiving of the "concept of profession as a limited number of occupations which have particular institutional and ideological traits more or less in common," Freidson (1994, 16) reoriented the debate toward what he termed 'professionalism'. As a way of organizing an occupation, the profession, in this new perspective, "represents much more than only a status, for it produces distinctive occupational identities and exclusionary market shelters […] which set each occupation apart from (and often in opposition to) the others" (Johnson 1972, 45).

To be sure, in the second edition of the *Profession of Medicine* (1970), Freidson was already aware of the significant changes that were taking place within the profession of medicine. Despite the authoritative discourse of the profession of medicine, it remained vulnerable given its dependence on decisions of other parties. It is not possible, even advisable, for the professions to control all the conditions in policy-making, for example. The technical expertise of the professional is then shaped by values of the other participants. In addition, individuals' decisions to consult cannot be controlled. Furthermore, the emergence of intermediary agencies between professionals and clients makes their autonomy more vulnerable. These are the critical limits of the profession of medicine. Freidson's introduction to *The Professions and their Prospects* (1973) mapped the space and the dynamic of third parties in professional work, an issue already scrutinized in *Professional Dominance (1970)*. The centrality of professional expertise over its environmental contingences was strongly supported in *Professional Powers* (1986). As he stressed it early, "in any case, when an occupation has become fully professionalized, even if its work characteristically goes on in an organization, management can control the resources connected with work, but cannot control most of what the workers do and how they do it" (Freidson 1973, 23). By early 1990s, this argument took shape. *Professionalism Reborn* (1994) is a collection of significant papers from Freidson's whole career and at the same time a state of the art of the sociology of the professions. It is a reflexive book which, by taking stock of his unpublished conceptual discussion (1978) and of insights from Goode (1960; 1969) and Tawney (1920), subtly reconceptualises the notion of professions and develops a theoretical policy. The scenarios of this theoretical policy found their development in his last book *Professionalism: The Third Logic* (2001). Here he discusses the Weberian ideal-type and applies it to the analysis of the professions, by developing models of professionalism. As Johnson (1973a, 1982) suggested, Freidson considers professionalism as a scale within which different occupations, according to their state of professionalization, interact. In this model, Freidson states:

> I use the word "professionalism" to refer to the institutional circumstances in which the members of occupations rather than consumers or managers control work. […]In the most elementary sense, professionalism is a set of institutions which permit the members of an occupation to make a living while controlling their own work. (Freidson 2001:12; 17)

Freidson cogently analyses of professional ethics, but by opposing interrelated occupations, he is diverted from a relational analysis of professional ethics, which I am now considering. Nevertheless, Freidson has made a significant contribution to the development of the sociology of the professions, and to the understanding of professional ethics. He conspicuously showed the centrality of expertise for the professions and revealed the important contingencies which could potentially put it at risk. However, by focusing on the external consequences of professionalism and its implication for social order, he did not develop a deep account of the process of professionalization. Interprofessional dynamics and mechanics of third-party influence were less developed, although still present in his work. Yet his legacy has been fruitfully appropriated. There has been a reawakening of the relational approach on the professions. The illuminating work of Abbott (1988) has become significantly influential among students of the sociology of the professions. Typically, Abbott sees professions as exclusive occupational groups and their body of knowledge as a significant resource in this competing relationship. His assumption of professionalization focuses on work rather than on structure. Such an assumption is considered to be a privileged lens for observing competition between professions in order to control their work, as well as for inquiring into the subsequent differentiations of the professions. He has moved from the classical organizational structure analysis to that of groups with common work. The control of jurisdiction is considered as having a level of saturation. The role of the state in the control of these jurisdictions is rather ambiguous, for it is a simultaneously a competitor, a producer of ecological niches, and a mediator of competing occupations through sets of regulations. Clients' differentiation is merely the product of professionals' market strategies, if it is not always channelled by the state. As Dingwall vividly summarizes it:

> [Abbott] sees occupations, or, in the case of the 'professional system', particular kinds of expert occupations, struggling among themselves to carve out a niche in the field of work, drawing boundaries around the territories they claim for themselves, extending them whenever they can, drawing back when they are forced to do so, sometimes lording it over their neighbours, at other times finding their own patch of land under threat of colonization. (Dingwall 2008, 94)

The study of occupational jurisdiction is the latest distinctive approach to the professions. It poses a principle of symmetry between occupations by looking at their actual work, and then tries to understand occupational upward mobility. It approaches more than one occupation and makes the "state," as an occupational group, a part within the system of the professions. What I did is to recapture both the philosophical and sociological foundation of these functional and symmetric relationship, as well as the missing level of the system occupied by the state. Then for the purpose of my own research, I replace the focus on expertise brought forth in the system of the professions, by moral values as discussed by the political and moral philosophy of Plato (1916), and by Hughes in terms of moral division of labor. From a mere study of jurisdictional competition with focus on expertise, I move to the study of occupational moral jurisdictional competition with emphasis on moral values. The underlying assumptions of that approach distinguish it with those founding the study of single occupations.

Reconfiguring the Study of Knowledge, Social Order, and Social Transformation in Africa

When discourse about workers in antiquity and discourse about workers in contemporary society are brought next to each other, the discriminatory power of the latter is clearly shown. To explore this statement, I will take the example of African traditional healers. In fact, while today's African traditional healers would be listed in discourse on work and workers in the former, in the latter they would be excluded. Until present day, the occupation of traditional African healer is classified as an informal sector occupation. The day sociologists of the professions asked the question about the relationship between their concepts of the professions and the rationalizations of the professions about themselves (Dingwall 1983), the discipline started to make some significant theoretical contributions (Abbott 1988; Freidson 1970; Freidso 2001; Johnson 1972; Larson 1977). There is still another deep-seated preconception which has to be deconstructed if the present bottlenecks (Saks 2012) to theory development have to be overcome (Sciulli 2009); that is, a similar question about the relationship between sociologists' concepts about the professions, and the foundational enlightenment's "dogma" of the "Idea of progress" (Nisbet 1969). The notions of "traditional medicine" and "traditional healer" are part of those preconceptions which exercise constraining effects on the thinking of many researchers, and as such constitute a case which draws attention to the matter. Since the World Health Organization's (WHO) interest and subsequent institutionalization of these notions, researchers struggled to adjust them with the complex reality they have to account for (WHO 1976, 1978a, 1978b). In particular, from the end of the 1980s, researchers in Africa started to point out the narrowness of the notions without however engaging systematically with them (Gruénais 1988).

In the subsequent decades, neologisms of all kinds were developed by researchers. For example, the Congolese sociologist Tonda (1997) used terms such as "neo-traditional practitioners", "neo-researchers", and "non-biomedical specialists" (Tonda, 2002: 632 footnotes) to designate "producers of theories and practices of healing who are not included in the traditional registers: biomedicine, 'traditional medicine', religion, etc., but participate more or less in all these registers at the same time." In his study in South Africa, Xaba (2004) struggled to find the appropriate term and ended with spatial taxonomy "Indigenous", which he took as synonymous with "traditional medicine" as opposed to "modern medicine". Flint (2001), whose field was the same area, referred to the taxonomy of "African/Western." Bado a Burkinabe historian of medicine, argued that the term "traditional medicine" lacks a historical depth, and constructed his own neologism in terms of "empirico-metaphysic" as opposed to "empirico-rational" (Bado 1996; Bado 2006).

In fact, the terms are various: "traditional medicine/modern medicine", "orthodox medicine/non-orthodox medicine", "biomedicine/non-biomedicine", "conventional/non-conventional medicine", "Complementary medicine", "alternative medicine", "ethnomedicine", "parallel medicine", "soft medicine", "simple medicine", "official/non-official", etc. The conceptual problem goes beyond the specific case of Africa and is of interest to Western researchers as well, given the significant development of similar practices in their societies (Ramsey 1999). Within this variety of notions there are even discriminations in relation to the geography of the usages (Edjenguèlè 2009, Ramsey 1999). For example, the term "traditional medicine" is less respectful and is never applied to indigenous therapeutic practices of peoples of North America and Europe, whereas "complementary" or "alternative medicine" are rarely institutionally used for the medicine of Africans, Latin-Americans, developing Asia, and indigenous Australians (Edjenguèlè 2009); rather, the common usage is the reverse, thus recalling the deep-seated historical dichotomy between "civilied/modern" and 'primitive/traditional' societies. As for the practitioners, the WHO helped institutionalise such categories as "tradipractice", "tradipractitioner", "trade-therapy", trade-therapeutics, "tradi-therapist", "healer", "all this to avoid using the words medicine and physician" (Edjenguèlè 2009, 55).

The conceptual problem goes further back to the early Western anthropological studies. The problem presented itself to these researchers in terms of making a distinction between magic, religion, and "natural" healing, and correspondingly to associate these processes with distinctive practitioners, such as "magician", "priest", and "herbalists" (e.g. Ackerknecht 1982; Colson, 1962; Colson, 1977; Forde, 1964; Foster 2009; Malinowski 1948; Mbiti 1969; Parrinder 1961; Pritchart 1937; Rivers, 1924; Turner 1970, 1975). The mind-set of anthropology from the 1920s gives a misleading impression. Either Pritchart or Malinowski seems to engage in a more empirical study of Africans, or other non-Western systems of thought, as opposed to the theoretically oriented construction of classical anthropological accounts such as those of Levy-Bruhl, Frazer, or even Durkheim. However, in fact, the former considered the latter's conclusions, and then tried to find their empirical referents among the people they studied.

Acknowledging the logical structure of African or other non-Western societies' systems of thought amounted to these authors essentialising them rather than putting them within a genuine comparative historical perspective; in other words, they attribute to them incommensurable properties in relation to similar processes in their own societies so that cognitively, their conclusions do not help a deeper historical conceptualization. Until the publication of Horton's paper, there was no attempt to historicize African knowledge systems and technologies, except to place them, despite the incommensurability, below "Western science." Horton (1967) broke with this attitude by arguing that there is some continuity between African traditional thought and Western science, because they both fulfil the same function of need for explanation, prediction, and control. Ironically, Horton was also aiming to come up with the same conclusion as previous classical sociologists; that is to say, a justification of the pre-eminence of Western civilization and the Western origin of science. There have been many criticisms of Horton's paper, but Keita's recent paper sums up what can be drawn from it (Keita 2007). First, the comparative method was ill designed; instead of considering the African system of thought and technology as a whole, the author limited himself to traditional levels of thought. Second, even within this, he conflated metaphysical thinking into the mere religious system. Third, by tracing Western science to ancient Greece, he lost sight that science did not originate in Greece but in ancient Egypt, then a Greek colony; and by this way Africa, including Africa down to the South where he conducted his research (Keita 2007).

The result is that apart from the principle of comparison with which he can be credited, Horton's conclusions appear to be problematic. It is inappropriate to compare science and religion, because they aim to serve different functions. As Keita (2007, 147) puts it "religion serves a special function …Religion is concerned mainly with communication and maintaining kinship with departed ancestors and anthropomorphised beings in the form of deities or some single deity who is the source of all phenomena and who might be conferred a suprahuman moral authority." As such, it constitutes only a sub-realm of the metaphysical world, the other sub-realm being magic. By contrast, "Magic and science are concerned essentially with the explanation and manipulation of phenomena" (Keita 2007, 147). Horton refused to treat magic separately, and this led to his erroneous conclusions. However, only between religion and magic can a continuity thesis be supported. Through time, some answers to people's questions became available through common sense, thus amenable by science; and in turn, since science can also deal with the matters concerned with magic, advances in scientific inquiry erode the resorting to magic. This state of affairs points to the constraints which structure these potential sources of knowledge, depending on the social context. The fact is that Western societies triumphed from these constraints, which was also partly helped by commercial exchanges and colonial domination (Cook 2009). Conversely, scientific progress impacted on religion although, in contrast to magic, this realm has so far with varying degrees retained an enduring function in society (Keita 2007; Rivers 1924). In this connection, cognitively, what is encompassed within the ahistorical words and neologisms listed above, can be classed as "medico-magical medical practitioners", "medico-religious practitioners", "empirical medical practitioners", and "scientific medical practitioners". All these practitioners operated within the same society; in Western societies, the modern linear arrangement only occurred from the seventeenth century. The point is that both the more recent conceptual discussions (and its corollaries of neologism), and the earliest anthropological taxonomies, display a common pattern which consists of two processes. First, both are couched in evolutionary terms with varying degrees of systematization. Secondly, the definition of the people practising or using this expertise refers to names based on the expertise, technically, rather than in economic terms.

The fact is that this is a rather recent mode of thought, reflected in the 'idea of progress.' It is a modern idea (Hall and Gieben 1992; Van Doren 1967; Ginsberg 1953; Nisbet 1969; Nisbet 1980), prevailing from Ancient Greece through to the Middle Ages, down to the twentieth century. However, as Nisbet pointed out: "From at least the early nineteenth century until a few decades ago, belief in the progress of making, with Western civilization in the vanguard, was virtually a universal religion on both sides of the Atlantic" (Nisbet 1969, 7). The idea of progress held by the Ancients was cyclical, consisting in an idea of recurrent cycles of development, similar to that of the Christian religious epic, which is also cyclical but with no regard to recurrence. Only the modern period produces the "idea of linear progress; the vision of mankind without old age and decline, with ever-increasing knowledge ahead" (Nisbet 1969, 212). Constructed with regard to interrelated assumptions concerning the linear character of time and the irreversibility of change, an ameliorative corresponding movement towards perfection, its universality, and rationalization which did not require empirical evidence, the Western modern idea of progress drew into correlation two propositions (Nisbet 1980). On the one hand, there is the idea that the accumulation of knowledge in the Arts and sciences will always result in much improved knowledge, and on the other hand, that human nature is moving towards perfection in terms of morality and spirituality; the triumph of applied science was the seed of this hopefulness (Ginsberg 1953).

Clearly, the concept of progress embodied "the idea that through the application of reasoned empirically based knowledge, social institutions could be created that would make men happier and free from cruelty, injustice, and despotism" (Hall and Gieben 1992, 37). August Comte provided a searching account of this linear evolution, with an implicit Platonian model of government led by experts in science, with the priest leading the lowest stage (Comte 1869). Spencer (1896) systematized the parallel cogitative and occupational development from the medicine-man to the physician through the priest. Foucault (Foucault 2007, 2010) provided a cogent articulation of the relationship between knowledge and good government as reflected in Western governmental practices from the end of the eighteenth century.

The contemporary expansion of competing medical practices in Western societies, as shown above, reveals that the linear metaphor does not exhaust the issue. Revolts against rationalism and science, cultivation of rationality (religious and secular), growth of subjectivism and egotism are evidence of how symmetry does not hold in absolute terms. Moreover, not all Western thinkers left the idea of progress unchallenged; for example, Weber (1978) was sceptical about the argument. The point is that the symmetry between scientific progress and moral progress is a historical construct; there has not been always a linear relationship between knowledge and morals (Lloyd 1979). The understanding of this process is essential in order to better comprehend the implications of this association and to separate, at least analytically, the technical definition of an occupation from its economic categorization. In societies without the modern linear idea of progress, such as Ancient Greece, medieval Europe, and African traditional societies, the authors who sought to define different specialists cognitively (technically) failed; they rather resorted to moral categories. Spencer did so to differentiate the magician from the priest (Spencer 1888, Thomas 1903); in the face of this difficulty, Rivers suggested that "one of the means by which it is possible to distinguish medicine from magic and religion is an inquiry how far the leech is differentiated from the sorcerer and the priest" (Rivers 1924, 41). This can be done through the analysis of the formation of priesthood and its subsequent changes in terms of its focus on religious rituals and the beliefs which support them in the given society, or in terms of the secularization process, which erodes the symbolic dimension of the healing art. The fact is that as Weber pointed out:

> The sorcerer may sometime be very learned, while deep learning need not always characterize priest. Rather, the distinction between priest and magician must be established qualitatively with reference to the different nature of the learning in the two cases. (Weber 1978, 425)

Yet, the priest holds the modern equivalent professional role in the occupational stratification system in pre-modern societies. Almost all anthropologists who had been interested in African (or other non-Western or pre-modern European) religions or political organizations, even inadvertently, proceeded in a similar way. Few of them explicitly used moral taxonomies (Colson 1977; Forde 1964; Fortes 1987; Mbiti 1969; Parrinder 1961; Colson 1962; Pritchart 1937; Harwood 1970; Bonnet 1988; Turner 1970; Turner 1975).

Max Weber (1978) is one of the rare modern sociologists to have discovered the limitations of the linear and technical definition of the profession. He saw that the expansion of democratic values had led to institutional arrangements in offices, which resulted in the promotion of occupations whose access were based on non-particularistic standards; expertise is important but not essential as a discriminatory factor. This is Parsons's (1939) argument, which Sciulli (2009) had refined recently. There are also some, though not developed, such as Hughes (1984) who talked about "moral division of labour" to designate this occupational differentiation and hierarchies based on a moral taxonomy. The conceptual and theoretical problem is not intrinsic to the healer occupation; it applies to such diverse occupation as weaving, handcraft, trade, politics, music, dancing, sport, agriculture, etc.

Unsurprisingly, the debates in sociology which contributed, within Western scholarship, to a more reflexive theorizing of professions has hardly influenced anthropology throughout the discipline's history. In fact, when colonialists and anthropologists arrived in Africa, it was not only for them a reality to be discovered. For the latter, it was already an institutionalized entity to be described in order to make salient what were the distinctive characteristics of their own society, which had already received detailed conceptualization from sociologists and other theorists. In contrast, the formers were mainly driven by the transformation of African value systems, which they thought reminded them of their own repressed identity. The later destruction of these value systems, which constituted the superstructure of African societies, was considered to be a necessary step in the politics of the capitalist system of production. Beneath the difference between their projects, colonialists and anthropologists adopted parallel fictions which shaped their subsequent perspectives on Africa. By following even, in some cases, what he believed to be his "private aims," the anthropologist was doing no more than reproducing a discourse, which had been mostly set up outside him. Since this discursive field provided him with the framework about how to speak of things, he was not able to think of other things outside it, contributing thus to the distortion of a reality which he shed light only at the points of seizure for the colonial power. Hence, occupations as an object of anthropological study were stifled in Africa in labor, favor and recognized this failure (Foster and Anderson 1978). Shortly after, anthropologists called for new interest in the "professionalization of African medicine" (Last and Schavunduka 1984). This initiative did not stimulate further interests as it emerged at a period of shift in medical anthropological writing, mostly in medical anthropology toward large scale studies (Genest et. al. 2007; Baer et. al. 2003; Baer and Singer 2007).

Work seems to interest the anthropologists as something exterior. As a result of this, the focus has been on the "work" rather than the person who performs the work. The variables of the material life of Africans, which were studies by anthropologists are categories of political economy. Like Weber with Christianity, Malinowski (1925) incidentally studied the economic influence of religion and magic, as did Firth (1939), Nadel (1942), and Thomas (1959). Herzkovits (1952) and Pritchard (1956) studied the organization of material production within general social processes. The study of the organization of work and working groups (Roper 1958; Richard 1932), the sentiments of people (Kuper 1947; Tax 1953), their attitudes toward time and its patterns of allocations (Winter 1955, Sauter 1950, Delafosse 1921), were also significant. Others were interested in the mechanisms of distribution (Kuper 1947, Firth 1959).

In the 1960s, in reviewing the anthropological literature on work, Gosselin (1963, 511) stated that "anthropology has never used so far the notion of work in order to analyse and expose the functioning of the societies it studies." Two decades later, Copans (1981–1983) observed, in his review of the literature in the working classes in Africa, that the Africanists' studies about the issue were still marginal despite the growing interests during the previous decade. The reasons of such a lack, at least in the case of anthropology, could now be addressed easily.

The anthropological project seems to be, wittingly or unwittingly, largely a political project, that of controlling, of administration, of seizing the societies it studies. Overall, with respect to labor in Africa, anthropological inquiries were undertaken in response to the need of understanding problems, whose decisiveness could not be disconnected from the general imperial context of the West. Indeed, from the sixteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth century the discipline participated in the delimitation of the boundaries of modern civilization, in order to justify the extension of these very boundaries to integrate societies which were believed to be lacking such "universal values". With the redefinition of interests following the "scramble for Africa" as one of these a "natural world" to be pacified, by the beginning of the twentieth century, anthropology came to be interested in labor but not as an historical reality. Labor was as something to be moulded. In response to the colonial needs, wittingly or not, the anthropologist focused his eyes on potential surfaces of labor. Then anthropology was concerned with the mechanisms to tear the labor out from these surfaces without developing new formations around the bonds such labor might create. The intellectual history of anthropology about labor was a history of labor and the negation of its holder, that is: the worker. Even until the end of the third decade after independence, there were few attempts to rethink work within the framework of specialized functions. As a result of this, the renewal of interest in the professions by the 1980s has been undertaken with poor theoretical foundations. The anthropology of work which was initiated on the basis of its truncated knowledge was not rewarding, because it was based on evolving practical interests, and its attempts to shift toward a sociological study of the professions, mainly in the health field, could not be achieved with such a weak intellectual framework. Perhaps, anthropology is experiencing its enlightenment as Salhins (1999) believes. What seems to be clear though, from this study, is that the light is likely to come from a critical integration of sociological theories of the professions rather than from the remains of the anthropology of work (which is in fact the successor of anthropology or sociology of industrial relations). The French sociology of professions (Dubar et. al. 2005), and its sociology of work (Paradeise 2003) seem, in their current state, too weak to respond efficiently to the challenge. Since the end of the 1980s medical anthropology has been shifting towards systems studies with a pronounced preference for writing about abstract entities of traditional sociological macro theorizing: capitalism, world system, dependency theories etc. In such a context, the specific focus on a theory of the sick (not only his sickness) and the curer (not only his knowledge), are receiving significant interest.

Conclusion

The challenges faced by sociology, as social sciences more generally, is clear. First, anthropological studies about work in Africa has taken a Marxist perspective. Work and the processes it involved have been negated for a long time, because they have been considered to be a phenomena, which is foreign to 'non-civilized societies', and which should therefore be developed in the colonized. As a result, when it came to be an object of scientific discourse, the concern was mostly with how the labor force might be released in order to constitute a favorable environment for capital, and the consequences of these processes for indigenous identities. Furthermore, originally, the sociology of the professions was confined within modern American and British societies. The theoretical and empirical contributions that history has recently made to sociological theorising developed from studies of Western history. Unavoidably, the sociology of professions has, in order to carry out adequately its new agenda in contemporary Africa, to rediscuss its concepts. African societies are witnessing, like other societies, the development of the knowledge society, which primarily contribute to social transformation through the way people, particularly workers utilize new technologies. A better appreciation of the impacts of these new technologies will need a proper understanding of what work means in different contexts. The sources of knowledge, which used to be in formal organizations, have become more diverse and accessible. This context reconfigures social order and how different institutions contributes to it.

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Knowledge Lab

Robert Debusmann

The Knowledge Lab has been an essential pillar of the inter- and transdisciplinary work of the two phases of the Cluster of Excellence "Africa Multiple. Reconfiguring African Studies." It was designed to build the wonderland of academic inquiry, a studio for new and profound insights, where the clear source of collectively created wisdom never dries up!

Composed of two highly valued words—*Knowledge*, the Apollonian substance of academic activity par excellence, euphoric and powerful; and *Laboratory*, the place where this substance is alchemically produced—the Knowledge Lab of the Africa Multiple Cluster (AMC) 1.0 was to offer completely new collective forms of work. It was designed to mobilize long-cherished wishes and bold dreams of true and efficient intellectual encounters; it offered the canvas for divergent ambitions to bring about transdisciplinary production.

Indeed, the Knowledge Lab (KL) was not only designed to interlink the African Cluster Centres (ACC), the Bayreuth Academy, and the work of the Cluster's Research Sections, and to assemble the Cluster's academic members and their research projects to exchange ideas and methods, to engage in debates and systematic reflection. At the same time, it was also expected to integrate artists and activists and to stimulate transdisciplinary synergies. It was composed so as to provide the Cluster and its scholars with varied event formats, from frontal to interactive or open ones, and to include academics, activists and artists to encourage venturing and thinking outside one's boxes: academic lectures or seminars, but also performances or artistic productions, suited to the respective groups with their specific needs and topics. Joint virtual writing sessions or research tandems stand side-by-side with virtual classrooms, method studios, or clashing theories seminars. Not to forget decentral and flexible formats that take place *ad hoc* on the members' initiative or request.

The Knowledge Lab was meant to become a space to create a vibrant research environment, and at the same time to allow for virtual participation to include researchers across the globe. It was to facilitate debates and exchange among the involved disciplines and projects, stimulate the multidirectional flows of empirical findings, ongoing discussions, refined methodologies, and conceptual advances. These flows were to irresistibly generate additional analytical value, thus establishing the Knowledge Lab as *the* vibrant intellectual environment for the development of transdisciplinary synergies.

To keep these promises and respective expectations, specific pathways were moulded. First and foremost, three forums were designed to structure and channel the activities.

The ***Theory Forum*** was conceived as the venue for joint theory building. Assembling all members of the Cluster and their various projects, abstract, yet empirically grounded theoretical debates were to take place here. The researchers would relate their projects to the general research agenda of *Africa Multiple* and operationalize the main theoretical concepts for their own projects in turn. Regular discussion of the four heuristic angles, spatialities, temporalities, medialities and modalities, were expected to animate debates across the different disciplines and projects. After the first two years devoted to deepening the main theoretical concepts, and the following years used to further explore the four angles, the final year could be used to review the output of the common work for the reconfiguration of African Studies.

In addition, the ***Reflexive African Studies Forum*** was designed to focus on the (self-)critical reconfiguration of African Studies. The Cluster's members could engage here in critical and systematic reflection of the terms and premises of academic knowledge production by including African colleagues into research and debates, by questioning positionalities grounded in localities and disciplines, by revising "Africa" as an area, by rethinking "Africa" as an analytic concept as well as by developing a research and publication ethics.

Thirdly, a separate ***Methodology Forum*** was designed. It was expected to become a laboratory for the honing of methodologies across disciplines. By comparing and juxtaposing various methodological approaches, this forum was designed to identify possibilities and limits of the methods in use, and to collect experiences with the usage of other methods in the projects. In the long run, these exchanges and debates would help to establish and cultivate transdisciplinary research, approaches, and methods that inform the Cluster-based reconfiguration of African Studies.

So much for the wishes. An ancient curse says: your wishes shall be fulfilled. If we look at what has been realized of this roadmap, some of the wishes came true, while others were revised or remained unfulfilled.

Starting with what has been implemented. Each semester, the Knowledge Lab had an overarching theme that informed the content of the *Theory Forum*. To pursue the foci and annual themes, the Cluster members engaged, amongst others, in reading texts, holding and discussing lectures, and in convening annual international conferences.

- *Summer Term 2019*: Focus on the research foci of the Research Sections and their relation to the core concepts of the Cluster, namely multiplicity, relationality, and reflexivity.
- *Winter Term 2019/20*: Focus on integration of Cluster groups and units.
- *Summer Term 2020*: Annual theme *Relationality*.
- *Winter Term 2020/21*: Annual theme *Modalities*.
- *Summer Term 2021*: Annual theme *Modalities*.
- *Winter Term 2021/22*: Annual theme, *Medialities*.
- *Summer Term 2022*: Annual theme *Medialities*.
- *Winter Term 2022/23*: Annual theme *Spatialities*.
- *Summer Term 2023*: Annual theme *Spatialities*.
- *Winter Term 24/25*: Annual theme *Temporalities*.
- *Summer Term 2025*: Annual theme *Temporalities*

Complementing the theory discussion in the central Knowledge Lab sessions, the bi-weekly meetings of the Research Sections (RS) "Affiliations," "Arts and Aesthetics," "Knowledges," "Learning," "Mobilities" and "Moralities" also delved into these topics and respective theories. Over the course of time, these two levels, KL and RS, have become increasingly disconnected, due first to the Covid crisis, but also as a result of divergent theoretical interests among the growing number of members that could not be brought together under a common roof.

A number of high-level events were offered under the label of the *Reflexive African Studies Forum* every semester. These include the Intersectionality and Critical Diversity Literacy (ICDL) lectures, roundtables, and debates set up by the Gender and Diversity Office. They also include the seminar series that has been organized since summer semester 2022 by the Chair of Epistemologies of the Global South together with the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). In addition, individual discussion groups took up political and societal topics connected to African Studies. Furthermore, project leaders and research sections organized "decentralized" workshops dealing with the reconfiguration of African Studies within disciplines.

The *Methodology Forum* was smaller in scope and size than the other fora. Seminars and workshops organized by the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) for doctoral candidates were more relevant in this field than any Knowledge Lab programme. It also seems that methodological questions were often dealt together with theory or reflexive topics. Finally, project methods could at best be discussed at the project level or at the level of the Research Sections. Nevertheless, some central Knowledge Lab events were assigned to the *Methodology Forum*, including the regular presentations on the *Digital Research Environment*. The following events were happening as part of the Methodology Forum:

- Winter Term 2019/20: Symposium Intersectionality: Theory, Approach, Activism; Data and Theoretical Perspectives on Colonial Letters.
- Winter Term 2020/21: Emancipatory Methodologies: Transdisciplinarity and Dialogues of Knowledges in Intercultural Contexts; How to conceptualize "the field" in reflexive.
- African Studies?; Fluid Ontologies – Dissolving the Known?
- Summer Term 2021: Round Table and Workshop with the Editors and Contributors
- BIGSAS*works*! Special Issue "Fieldwork Experiences and Practices in Africa".
- Winter Term 2021/22: The WissKi Database.
- Summer Term 2023: State on Fluid Ontologies: Our path from data intake to semantic recommendations.

How did Cluster members and guests respond to the programme? Of course, there were many individual reactions; and yet, they can be clustered. These are some of the different types of Knowledge Lab participants that could be (jokingly) distinguished:

> *The Schlaraff (sits in his armchair and waits for the required piece of theory to be brought to him):* "Hey, waiter! Where's my tequila sunrise?"
> *The Silver Surfer (solitaire, board rider):* "I don't even live here. I'm on my way to my planet."
> *The Sleeper / the E-Mailer (sits down to do something else):* "I am multitasking,

well, what did you just say?"
The Subscriber: "Well, what's on the menu today? Am I actually hungry?"
The Educator: "I'd like to set up a working group with some of you on my topic."
The Flounder: "Okay, okay, I join in!"
The Chronically Ill (has misjudged the workload): "Sorry, I cannot come today. I have an urgent doctoral appointment."
The Constructive: "I have a suggestion!"
The Perfidious: "I have a suggestion for you!"
The Salvationist: "Stop! Turn back! You are in breach of the Cluster application!"

However, this initial period came to a sudden end with COVID-19. In response to the new working conditions resulting from the pandemic, Knowledge Lab meetings were completely shifted to digital communication formats. The forms of collaboration in the Cluster abruptly changed with the contact ban, as did the collaboration with international partners. From the summer semester of 2020 on, no more face-to-face meetings were held in Bayreuth. Since then, Knowledge Lab meetings have been held entirely as online Zoom events. The switch to online meetings means: no more meeting people in a real room, no more communicating through the nuances of physical expression, no more face-to-face conversations around the scheduled meetings. The participants of the digital Knowledge Lab communicated via a static screen with sometimes poor resolution, unstable connections, and shaky picture or sound, without eye contact.

The new daily routine takes its toll, and Zoom fatigue was noticeable for many participants after a while. But the change had positive consequences. The Cluster was forced to use existing technical facilities on a systematic basis, to develop suitable working formats for them, and to integrate both into the Cluster's everyday life. The online events of the Knowledge Lab were planned and prepared more intensively, moderator and discussant roles were assigned, and all steps and procedures were precisely coordinated. Above all, now all Cluster members, across all locations, met equally. In the new formats of digital sociability, Bayreuth and African Cluster Center (ACC) partners became closer, and the mutual exchange of content intensified considerably.

The switch to online and later hybrid sessions intensified the work in the Knowledge Lab for a while, and so did the gradual return to face-to-face contact. Hybrid meetings became the technical standard of Knowledge Lab meetings, Zoom fatigue disappeared. However, as the programme continued, the long-term structural characteristics of the Knowledge Lab, both positive and negative, became apparent. They are briefly summarized together with an outlook on AM 2.0.

Even if not all expectations were met, the Knowledge Lab achieved a number of important benefits for the Cluster. It established a regular place at a fixed time for the central meetings of the members of *Africa Multiple*. It successfully interlinked African Cluster Centres, Bayreuth Academy, and Research Sections as it assembled in its weekly sessions a great (although fluctuating) number of Cluster members and high profile guests to engage in top-class debates and systematic reflection. It managed to connects scholars, artists and activists to encourage venturing and thinking outside one's boxes, thus stimulating transdisciplinary synergies. To be specific: artists and activists held academic lectures or seminars in the Knowledge Lab, whereas they presented performances or artistic productions outside the Knowledge Lab at Iwalewahaus, Reichshof, Neuneinhalb, or Thurnau castle.

Who would deny that, over a couple of years, the Knowledge Lab of AMC 1.0 offered a vibrant international research environment? With the routine use of videoconferencing and hybrid sessions established during the Covid crisis, it now facilitates direct academic exchange among the five partner institutions of the Cluster and integrates international researchers across the globe.

Nevertheless, after a time, the central events had less appeal than was expected. Interest in theory and in exchange of ideas declined among the project teams after the conceptual work in the project was completed. As the Knowledge Lab did not offer conceptual debate only, but also provided a forum for subgroups of the Cluster, the programme quickly became overloaded. This led to justified complaints of "overheating". Limiting the programme to a small number of well prepared and output oriented keynote events can counter this problem in the future. However, as in AMC 1.0, the Knowledge Lab in AMC 2.0 will continue to provide *the* critical space to advance scholarly debates and insights concerning the major Cluster themes, theories, and methodologies. As the central venue for plenary events, the AMC 2.0 Knowledge Lab will, in particular, advance the joint theoretical work on world(s) and world-making, in line with the *Cluster Trinity* (i.e. the core concepts *Multiplicity-Relationality-Reflexivity*), to create synergies between the newly founded six Research Sections, namely "Accumulation," "Ecologies", "Digital Materialities," "In:Securities," "Re:Membering" and "Translation."

Apart from Knowledge Lab sessions, Cluster members may hold decentralized events that respond to the interests and needs of smaller groups. These include the BIGSAS Colloquium, the ICDL lecture and roundtable series, and sessions convened by the Research Sections.

In AM 1.0, the Knowledge Lab has not been the place for discussing concepts, methods, and outcomes of individual research projects, as the number of projects was too big to be brought together at this level. In AM 2.0, research retreats will be organized as an additional format to fill this important gap.

Similarly, formats to support early career researchers in developing research skills, clarifying project-related issues, or training in academic writing and publishing did not find a suitable place in the Knowledge Lab. They were more suitably organized by the BIGSAS in the past, and similar events will also be offered by the BIGSAS or the Cluster International Career Centre (ClICC) in AM 2.0.

Despite attempts to involve the African Cluster Centers (ACCs) in the programme making, the Knowledge Lab of AM 1.0 still had a focus in Bayreuth based physical rooms, for conceptual and practical reasons. In parallel, the ACCs held their own colloquia and discussion panels. While this resulted in an extremely rich range of events and topics, it reinforced the overheating of the programme, whose parts run parallel and unconnected to each other. In AM 2.0, the Cluster will not only reduce the centrally organised events and leave the Research Sections more space for interdisciplinary work. Each Research Section and each Cluster location will also be represented in the planning committee for the annual programme. This will involve the African Hubs, now called Africa Multiple Research Centres (AMRC), to convene and mould the Knowledge Lab programme even more evenly, while the overlap of events organised at the five AMRCs can be avoided.

Final and key question: Which Cluster member has attended the most KL events? No formal proof, but there is a clear trend: the Vice-Dean of Research is in first place, followed by the Cluster Dean. However, as the Vice-Dean of Research is split between three people, Rüdiger Seesemann may have the edge here, and he may have asked the most questions. He therefore deserves the golden AM 1.0 Knowledge Lab pin.

L

Lagos, Owó-Rudiger (Rüdiger's Money)

UNILAG ACC

"*Owó-Rüdiger*" literally translates as "Rüdiger's money," though in context, it refers more accurately to research grant funding associated with Professor Rüdiger Seesemann. To spend *owó-Rüdiger* is, for many, to embody the ideal academic life, one marked by rigorous research, access to travel support, and consistent scholarly productivity. This has been the experience of researchers at the University of Lagos African Cluster Centre (Unilag-ACC), who are often recognized for their commitment and achievements. When colleagues commend them, the light-hearted response is often: *owó-Rüdiger ni à ńńó*—"we are spending Rüdiger's money." This way of life represents the aspirations of numerous African scholars who dream of conducting research under such supportive conditions.

It is important, however, to clarify a common misconception. Many assume that *owó-Rüdiger* is easily accessed and freely spent. In reality, it demands a rigorous process: first, one must undergo a thorough application and approval stage; second, one must design a clearly defined fieldwork schedule; and third, there must be a transparent reporting plan—both financial and academic—guided by the principle of "no loss, no gain." Despite these challenges and the apparent rigidity of the "no gain, no loss" framework, owó-Rüdiger remains highly sought after. It symbolizes opportunity, academic growth, and institutional trust. It is, therefore, fitting that we at Unilag-ACC celebrate the vision and tenacity of Professor Rüdiger Seesemann, who has remained steadfast in his mission to reshape the field of African Studies.

On the occasion of his 60th birthday, we extend our warmest wishes to Professor Rüdiger Seesemann. We wish him continued good health, long life, and many more achievements, so that future generations of researchers may continue to benefit from *owó-Rüdiger*. Remain the determined visionary and the calm, principled advocate of the "no gain, no loss" ethos. We admire and deeply appreciate your contributions.

Warm regards,
From all of us at Unilag-ACC

Lettre de remerciement au Professeur Rüdiger Seeseman, Université de Bayreuth

Fatou Sow

> Cher Professeur Rüdiger Seeseman
>
> C'est un temps pour vous célébrer ! Cette initiative de votre communauté d'enseignants et de chercheurs et de l'ensemble de vos relations de l'Université de Bayreuth et d'ailleurs est significative d'un attachement profond à votre personne et vise à reconnaître vos compétences académiques et vos qualités humaines.
>
> J'éprouve une très grande joie et de la fierté d'avoir été invitée à y participer. Je prends moi aussi la plume sur ces quelques pages, hélas trop courtes, pour vous témoigner de ma profonde reconnaissance et de mon amitié.
>
> Je me permettrai d'évoquer notre rencontre à l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar. Cette rencontre m'a amenée du campus de l'université de Dakar à celui de l'université de Bayreuth, où vous m'avez fait honorer par une communauté universitaire dédiée.

En décembre 2019, j'ai participé à cette conférence "Knowledge Production in and about Africa: Intersections of Moralities and Higher Education : Intersections and Tensions in the Sphere of Education", organisée par les professeurs Franz Kogelmann, Eva Spies et vous-même de l'Université de Bayreuth, ainsi que le professeur Abdourahmane Seck de l'Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis. L'évènement s'est déroulé à la Faculté des Sciences et Technologies de l'Éducation et de la Formation (FASTEF) de l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop. À cette occasion, j'ai eu l'opportunité de rencontrer plusieurs collègues et partenaires africains, parmi lesquels la professeure Ousseina Alidou de Rutgers University. J'ai pris beaucoup de plaisir à animer, avec les professeures

Penda Mbow et Jacqueline Solway, la table-ronde “Development, Gender and Moralities: Intersections and Tensions in the Sphere of Education.” Le débat a été riche, dynamique, instructif sur les liens entre religion, culture et politique sur la position des femmes et les relations de genre dans les sociétés africaines contemporaines. Ces liens portent sur des enjeux culturels et politiques de taille et ont été au cœur de mes préoccupations de recherche académique et militante.

À la suite de cet évènement, avec un collectif de vos collègues, vous m'avez fait l'insigne honneur de me proposer au Doctorat Honoris Causa de votre prestigieuse institution. J'ai reçu cette proposition avec une très vive émotion et en ai éprouvé une immense fierté. En m'honorant de ce doctorat, après l'avoir attribué à ces géants de la littérature africaine et mondiale que sont le Nigérian Wole Soyinka (Prix Nobel de Littérature, 1986) et le Kényan Ngugi wa Thiongo plusieurs fois nominé pour ce prix, vous avez fait de moi, ce 18 mai 2022, la première lauréate africaine du Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), et l'une des premières femmes africaines à recevoir une telle distinction de la part d'une université allemande. Cette cérémonie a revêtu un symbolisme puissant dont le souvenir m'émeut encore.

J'ai été très chaleureusement accueillie par l'université, par vos collègues et par vos étudiants aussi bien allemands qu'étrangers, dont des Africains inscrits au Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), à travers l'Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, et d'autres invités de plusieurs pays. L'accueil, la table ronde internationale sur le féminisme décolonial et la cérémonie de remise du doctorat se sont déroulés dans une atmosphère bienveillante. Les discussions sur le féminisme décolonial à partir de perspectives féministes africaines francophones et anglophones ont été intenses. L'objectif en était d'explorer ces thèmes, selon des approches intersectionnelles et décoloniales, en lien avec le programme du Cluster de reconfiguration des études africaines.

Les membres du corps professoral de l'université m'ont accordé leur bienveillante et amicale attention et le corps estudiantin a volontiers engagé des conversations avec moi. J'ai eu le bonheur de retrouver des collègues et amies d'Afrique et d'ailleurs, telles que les professeures Ousseina Alidou, Akosua Adomako Ampofo et Françoise Vergès qui m'ont fait l'immense honneur de leur présence active. Vous avez permis à ma fille Penda-Farimata de m'accompagner ; elle garde de cet évènement et de votre attention, affectueuse à son égard un souvenir joyeux et émouvant.

Merci de tout cœur pour votre accueil et pour votre introduction à la communauté de votre prestigieuse université. Cette visite a été, pour moi, une expérience parmi les plus inspirantes et généreuses que j'ai vécues. Je tiens à le redire avec toute l'estime que je vous porte.

Notre rencontre a été avant tout académique. Vous reconnaissez les défis qu'ont eu à relever les femmes universitaires pour briser cet épais plafond de verre et se faire une place dans toutes les disciplines qu'elles soient littéraires ou scientifiques. Malgré quelques percées, il est encore difficile de fixer les questions féministes dans nos curricula et nos travaux. Cette distinction de l'Université de Bayreuth m'apporte une reconnaissance morale et intellectuelle supplémentaire qui, je l'espère, encouragera les générations futures à s'en approprier. Je suis convaincue que l'ensemble de nos contributions variées, des plus riches aux plus modestes, permettront de continuer à construire une Afrique intellectuelle et scientifique debout dans l'histoire, forte des expériences des femmes.

Je ne saurais clore cet hommage, Professeur Rüdiger, sans revenir aux sujets qui vous ont fait m'inviter à ce séminaire scientifique de Dakar, en 2018.

Le thème de ce séminaire était complexe, car il est à la fois scientifique et politique. Puis-je aborder le sujet en termes d' "Intersections of Moralities and Higher Education" dans ces quelques pages? Il est important de donner quelque contexte.

La note conceptuelle du séminaire évoquait les mutations profondes des structures d'enseignement supérieur sur le continent africain. Le secteur privé occupe de plus en plus de place dans l'offre d'enseignement face aux importantes demandes de la jeune africaine que les États ne peuvent satisfaire. On note, dans cette offre, une part significative d'institutions (collèges et universités) confessionnelles, islamiques et chrétiennes.

Si l'école et l'université publiques restent laïques, signifiant que la religion ne joue de rôle, ni dans le contenu, ni dans l'organisation des enseignements, la morale est positionnée comme un cours d'éducation civique et de formation du citoyen. C'est devenu progressivement un point critique lorsque les premiers états-généraux et d'autres assises de l'éducation ont avancé l'idée jugée "normale" d'introduire une enseignement coranique dans les cursus des écoles publiques. Autour des années 2000, avec la montée des fondamentalismes en Afrique et dans le monde, toutes les structures confessionnelles ont commencé à poser de manière plus ouverte des questions de valeurs morales, de valeurs dites traditionnelles donc opposées à la culture occidentale, de morale et d'éthique fondées sur des systèmes religieux locaux. Un constat est évident.

Leurs débats sont chargés de conservatisme, quelle que soit la foi. Enseignante à l'UCAD, j'ai fait le constat, que les étudiants des deux sexes devenaient de plus en plus des t*alibés* soumis aux ordres des confréries, recommandations ou diktat) ou des adeptes chrétiens pris entre ceux des églises catholiques et évangéliques. Une telle situation rend plusieurs débats, notamment d'ordre philosophique, culturel ou religieux complexes. La progression du fondamentalisme mondial est la question celui qui m'interpelle le plus. Le port du voile a été un phénomène fulgurant de la pénétration de la religion dans les espaces académiques, avec ses moralités, ses contraintes et idéologies d'assujettissement des femmes; il est le plus difficile à déconstruire au nom d'un rejet des valeurs occidentales attribuées à la laïcité.

On note effectivement des tensions entre l'universalité de l'éducation, des connaissances et de la morale et la diversité culturelle ou religieuse des principes. Les lois des codes juridiques actuels peuvent contredire les principes de l'éducation religieuse et porter atteinte aux droits et libertés des femmes. La Sharia, pou une large partie des fidèles, est jugée supérieure aux lois nationales et conventions des Nations Unies. "Que dit la Sharia" entend-on dire, lorsque sont discutés des droits spécifiques des femmes, concernant notamment leurs santés et leurs droits sexuels et reproductifs. Le Sénégal a tenu des assises de la justice en 2024. Les mouvements de femmes ont eu l'espoir que le droit à l'avortement serait entériné, comme promu par le Protocole de Maputo. Le Coran, comme ce protocole, autorise l'avortement, lorsque la santé de la mère est en danger. Pourquoi les hommes notamment des professionnels de la santé, se réfugient-ils derrière la Sharia pour en maintenir l'interdiction? La ré-arabisation d'un Islam africain, pourtant construit au fil du temps pour s'adapter aux valeurs locales, est un défi pour l'identité musulmane.

Ce n'est pas le lieu ici de poursuivre cet échange. Nos réflexions académiques nous portent sur le même terrain sur lequel j'espère que nous retrouverons un jour.

Dr. Fatou Sow
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M

Matter and Meaning

Aleo Susan Arndt

Everything matters. And matters are complex. In a way, matter is chaos that withdraws from being known. And yet, meaning tries exactly this: to tame to name and know matter. Most humans favor order over chaos and rely on language as a model of ordering matter into meaning. When transferring matter into meaning via wording, some elements of matter are prioritized at the cost of others being neglected, silenced, or overwritten. While doing so, meaning offers a wording that allows to know the world, knowing that the cost thereof is a simplification or even violation of matter and knowing that matter can yet never be known.

Let's look at a most harmless example for this. Apples. They do exist. At times, they explain matter. Like when falling in newton's head. And when they are eaten, they are matter, too. Yet when using the word "apple," we do not talk about matter in its purest form. Rather, we are already right in the midst of meaning. Figure an apple! Do you think about taste, odour, shape, color? Think of an apple's color! Is your apple red, yellow, or green? Even though we figure apples are red, green OR yellow, actually no apple would ever look alike—and this is also because none would ever be a single-colored one. Any red apple, for example, may have greenish or yellowish parts or spots. Nevertheless, when wishing to buy an apple at a grocery store, I would either call it by its name, like Boskoop or Elstar, or ask for a pound of the red apples. For sure, I would not bother the grocery seller by describing specific color complexities. As a result, I would be getting an apple from the box of apples that are largely red, without minding that they also feature other colors. Maybe because I know that it does not matter—neither in terms of price nor taste (cf. Arndt 2025).

To focus on matter's major traits is pillared on respective societal communication agreements. As for an apple, the consequences are rather harmless. But there are many instances where meaning-making is not harmless at all. After all, the so-called "common sense" does not exist in any vacuum. Rather, it is embedded deeply in given power constellations and respective needs and notions of normality. Power and those privileged by it have an immense say in how to name a place, a person, a desire.

The language community can either conserve or transform both situated wordings (Haraway 1988), their mode of world-making and thus the respective situating contexts. Just as words do not simply exist, but are made, on purpose, with a focused agenda of meaning-making and with respective consequences, words do not simply change. They are changed, mostly in given power constellations and the transformation thereof. Obviously, this matters less with respect to whether or not we address an apple's being fully red or not. But as for words that name peoples and their territories, or people and their social positions, wording has served those who control institutions of power; and thus, consequentially, discriminating against those they have Othered. In deciding for or against them, for or against using racist terms or strategies of gender inclusive language, we strengthen or weaken racism's or sexism's modes of meaning making. We are what we say to generate meaning, and the meaning we choose to favor will determine who we become.

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N

Narratives and Narratologies*

Vera Nünning and Ansgar Nünning

Prologue, or: Narratives Matter!

One might as well begin with the observation that narratives matter because they do very important cultural and political work. Narratives have always played a key role not only in politics but also in such different domains as the economy, education, law, and society at large. Therefore, the title of this essay should actually be "Narratives Matter," but since the format of the glossary suggests that it is more appropriate to add another word beginning with the letter "n" we decided to choose either the term narratology, i.e. the logic of narratives, or "narratologies" as the umbrella term for the great variety of approaches that have been developed for the study of narratives.

We would like to hasten to add that cultures and narratives are closely intertwined, although the complex ways in which narratives shape cultures, just as much as cultures shape narratives, have not yet received as much attention as they deserve. While the developments of "narratology in the age of cross-disciplinary narrative research" (Heinen and Sommer 2009) include debates about the uses and abuses of contextualist approaches like historical, intercultural, and "postcolonial narratologies" as well as programmatic outlines of "cultural narratologies" (Nünning 2009), such approaches have neither been fully developed nor have they had much impact in the field of the study of culture.

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* In this essay, we have adapted ideas and passages from some of our earlier articles on narratives and the worldmaking work that they do. The articles in question are listed in the references for anyone who might be interested in more detailed and elaborate versions of the ten hypotheses presented in this essay. We woud very much like to thank our colleague and friend Susan Arndt for her kind invitation to contribute an essay on this topic to this glossary, for her contagious enthusiasm and generous feedback, which provided the necessary inspiration and motivation to write this essay.

Within narratology, there has been an ongoing diversification of approaches, concepts, and models. This has resulted in both the development of fully-fledged theories of e.g. cognitive and feminist narratologies and an increasing interest in studying narratives within cultures (see e.g. the articles in Erll and Sommer 2019). While classical (i.e. structuralist) narratology used to shy away from the study of cultural, ethical, historical, or ideological concerns, dismissing the notion of contextualist or intercultural narratology outright, more recent developments include such approaches as cultural, ethical, historical, and intercultural narratologies. Although there has been a narrativist turn in the humanities and even in the social sciences, neither has the impact of narratives on cultures and mentalities been fully explored, nor has there been comprehensive and sustained research on how cultures and ethics shape narratives and vice versa.

The broad and all too general title of this text might lead readers to expect an encyclopaedic survey of the two concepts of narratives and narratologies, but limitations of space preclude the possibility of providing such an overview here. Moreover, several handbooks and volumes on what have been dubbed "postclassical narratologies" have done an excellent job at charting and mapping a blossoming inter- and transdisciplinary field (see e.g. Heinen and Sommer 2009; Alber and Fludernik 2010) that even experts find increasingly difficult to get their heads around.

Instead, the focus of our contribution will be on two questions that promise to shed light on the ways in which narratives and cultures mutually shape each other: Why do narratives matter? Why are postclassical narratologies important and useful for understanding the cultural work that narratives do? We have decided to couch our reflections in the somewhat apodictic, but hopefully clear, form of ten theses. We are painfully aware that we are making rather sweeping claims that would have to be discussed, explored, and substantiated in greater detail and depth for which we unfortunately do not have the space here. Therefore, we have taken the liberty of referring interested readers to some of our earlier articles and books on the topics at hand, from which we have adapted some ideas and formulations. We have modelled our hypotheses on two brilliant books, viz. Jaron Lanier's *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now* (2018) and Timothy Snyder's masterwork *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (2017/2021), two thought-provoking essay-pamphlets that everyone living in the twenty-first century should read.

As the repeated use of the word "make" in the ten theses below already serves to show, we should particularly like to draw attention to the performative power of narratives and storytelling. That is, we should like to emphasize that narratives generate or produce phenomena that would not exist without them. As Susan Arndt (2024, 11) poignantly observes, in the human realm "nothing happens, everything is made." John L. Austin's and John Searle's work on speech-act theory and Austin's seminal book *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) have taught us to critically examine what people do with words. In this digital age of "alternative facts," "fake news," and "post-truth" we would be well-advised to ask the same question with regard to the stories that people tell. What do people like journalists, politicians, spin-doctors, and writers of fiction do with the words they use when they tell their stories? So, let us take a closer look at the cultural work that narratives do.

1. Narratives Make Worlds

Although it may sound counter-intuitive, the first thing we should notice is that narratives make the worlds that many people believe to be "the real world." Anyone who might be inclined to think that talking about the world-building or world-making power of narratives might be a mere metaphor would be well-advised to pause and ponder the issue for a moment. What would the world look like if George W. Bush and his cronies had not concocted and disseminated their ideological narratives of "weapons of mass destruction" that they used as an ideological pseudo-legitimation for what they decided to call "war against terror," which were in fact wars of aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq? What would the state of the United Kingdom and the European Union look like if the reductive mini-narratives issued by the Leave-Campaign that led to Brexit had not prevailed over the Remain-narrative? What if the backward-looking and megalomaniac MAGA-narrative had not prevailed in 2016 and, tragically again, in 2024? These three random examples show that pseudo-factual narratives can turn even "convenient untruths" (Al Gore 2008, 104) and "bullshit" (Harry G. Frankfurt) into widely accepted (pseudo-)facts which have an enormous impact on the making of future worlds, while many inconvenient, but true narratives are either not acknowledged as "facts" or, all too often, go largely unnoticed.

It therefore seems important to acknowledge that narratives or stories are indeed one of the most important "cultural ways of worldmaking" (cf. Nünning, Nünning, and Neumann 2010). The renowned cultural psychologist Jerome Bruner was particularly interested in the role of narrative as a cognitive tool that constructs reality and shapes cultural models, concisely summing up the constructivist idea of narratives as means of worldmaking: "narrative, including fictional narrative, gives shape to things in the real world and often bestows on them a title to reality" (Bruner 2002, 8). The Austrian cultural theorist Wolfgang Müller-Funk goes so far as to argue that narratives are "a very powerful – maybe even the most powerful – symbolic 'weapon' in structuring a world that is always, in the end, a cultural one" (Müller-Funk 2012, VIII). While the worldmaking force of narratives resides in their capacity to shape cognitive processes and to construct cultural and mental models of the world, the performative power of storytelling includes the capacity to make events, facts, and indeed worlds (cf. A. Nünning 2010, 2022).

Narratology can help us to come to terms with the forms and functions of cultural ways of worldmaking in this age of cross-disciplinary research surrounding narratives and cultures (cf. Heinen and Sommer 2009; V. Nünning 2010). Narratological concepts like point of view, focalization, and plot, to name but three, shed a great deal of light on how narratives make events, facts, stories, and the worlds they present (cf. A. Nünning 2010, 2022). If we want to know more about the cultural work that narratives do, however, we must move beyond structuralist narratology and avail ourselves of approaches that are better equipped to tease out the ethical and ideological implications that narratives in general and narratives of superiority in particular entail. By doing so, narratology, itself, is not just an attempt to describe and analyse the structure of narratives. It becomes a partner in narration's modes of word- and world-making.

2. Narratives of Superiority Make Colonialist, Imperialist, and Racist Mentalities, Poison People's Minds, and Can Turn Them into Asshole

As we have elsewhere argued, the factual and fictional narratives associated with the rise of European colonialism and imperialism not only reshaped the world, resulting in e.g. the British Empire, they were also instrumental in the making of colonial worldviews and imperialist mentalities (see Nünning and Nünning 1996). The discursive practices of colonialism and the fictions of British and European imperialism did not objectively reflect preexisting geographical or political facts. On the contrary, the narrative fictions of empire and Rudyard Kipling's ideological notion of "the white man's burden" constituted the very reality they purported merely to record.

The world-making performative power of the narratives of imperialism is particularly obvious in that they really created their own cultural, geographical, and mental worlds, while also giving meaning to the imperialist project which the fictions served to legitimate. The ideological fictions that the narratives of empire entailed generated what the English poet William Blake famously called "mind-forged manacles," i.e. psychological self-limitations and denigrations of the human imagination. In doing so, they served as a shield and a sword, acting like cheerleaders that did not mind the call for political domination or the use of violence. As Blake famously stated on the relationship between art and the empire: "The foundation of empire is art and science. Remove them or degrade them, and the empire is no more. Empire follows art and not vice versa as Englishmen suppose" (Blake 1966, 645).

Moreover, narratives of empire disseminated imperialist ways of thinking, structures of feeling, and hierarchies of values that fostered the erroneous belief in the ingrained superiority of the British colonizers and the concomitant assumption of an alleged inferiority of the colonized peoples. On the one hand, narratives of empire served to emphasize one's own superiority and enhance Britain's self-pride in its colonialist expansions and alleged achievements. On the other hand, such narratives were instrumental in denigrating the colonized nations as the foreign "Other." These narratives stereotyped Africans, Arabs, and Asians, who were generalized as "Orientals." As opposed to the civilized Occident, the colonial term describing "Orientals" was intended to convey a sense of backward exoticism, intellectual inferiority, and infantilism in the colonized nations.

Stories of colonialism and imperialism are thus not only fictions in that they do not correspond to facts or reality, but they are also paradigm examples of "narratives of superiority," to adopt a felicitous term coined by Susan Arndt (2024, 12, 20ff.), albeit in a very different context. As she manages to demonstrate, it was the highly contradictory narratives of superiority that were disseminated in the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR, respectively, that constructed the prevailing notions of West and East Germany as well as West (Wessis) and East Germans (Ossis). This is not just another case in point supporting Benedict Anderson's famous observation that nations are basically "imagined communities." It demonstrates that they are also "'narrative communities,' i.e. communities forged and held together by the stories the members tell about themselves and their cultures as well as by conventionalized forms of storytelling and cultural plots" (Nünning 2012, 163).

Although the political party in question eminently deserves to be ignored or given short shrift, the nationalist and populist narratives of superiority that the notorious AfD has disseminated, and which it continues to propagate, provide case-studies in how ideologically charged stories can poison people's minds and turn them into assholes. Like the apodictic format of our ten theses, this particular thesis is indebted and inspired by Lanier's essay, particularly by his third argument, which claims: "Social Media is Making You Into an Asshole" (Lanier 2018, 39). Being one of the celebrated pioneers of digital innovation, Lanier is especially well equipped to throw light on what he calls "The Mysterious Nature of Asshole Amplification Technology" that so reliably brings out all too many people's "inner asshole" (Lanier 2018, 44).

3. Narratives Foster Polarization: Pitting 'Us' Against 'Them' and Intensifying Conflict

As we have already seen in the previous thesis, narratives of superiority always foster polarization by establishing alleged opposition between random groups, pitting "us" against "them" and usually turning the latter into scapegoats for anything that is believed to have gone wrong. This strategy is usually not an end in itself, but part of a cultural and political process of transformation. Anyone who seriously doubts that narratives transform the world should just take a brief look at either the overarching MAGA-narrative that has flooded the media and American minds with shit for ten years, or at almost any of the executive orders that the current POTUS has issued since January 2025. The MAGA-narrative fulfils an important legitimizing function in that it provides pseudo-justifications and alleged rationalizations of drastic measures against anything, or anyone, considered "leftist" or "woke." Moreover, many of the executive orders are framed in terms of being alleged means of "restoring reason and sanity," thus implying that everything done by the Biden and Obama administrations was, by definition, unreasonable or insane.

Moreover, narratives make conflicts and crises, which do not merely exist or happen but are rather created by politicians and other human beings telling stories. The dissemination of the powerful political narrative that has come to be known under the shorthand of "America's War on Terror" provides a case-study in both truth-bending, a.k.a. "lying," and in how narratives can produce the conflicts and crises that they purport merely to describe or reflect. As we tried to show through a narratological analysis of selected speeches of former President George W. Bush (cf. Nünning and Nünning 2016), the performative quality of the narratives disseminated by him and his administration consisted in literally creating or inventing the cultural, geographical, and political conflicts that resulted in the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan. Although the dissemination of patriotism and xenophobia has a long and obnoxious history, especially in what used to be called "Great Britain," hardly anyone ever managed to pit "us" against "them" quite as bluntly as Bush did when he described the choice that every nation allegedly had to make in 2001: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime" (Bush 2001, 69; qtd. from Nünning and Nünning 2016).

Bush's narrative and rhetorical inventions of an "axis of evil" and of "America's War on Terror" provide paradigm examples of the ways in which narrative constructions can be endowed with performative power, actively constructing or even creating the cultural and ideological conflicts that they seemingly aim merely to describe or represent. In an article published in *The Guardian*, Julian Borger observed that the phrase "axis of evil" "has not only defined the battlelines of the 21st century, it has helped shape the world we now inhabit" (Borger 2002). Bush even went as far as to call the conflict that the narratives of his administration had made "the decisive ideological struggle of the 21st century."

With the benefit of hindsight, one can observe that such a statement is a performative speech-act if ever there was one, in that it creates a conflict that it claims only to describe. The invention of "America's War on Terror" not only served to promote a highly biased and partisan political agenda, but it also forged a collective we-narrative that pitted the American "us" against an ill-defined group dubbed "the terrorists." Instead of merely referring to actual conflicts, such metaphors and narratives as those disseminated by the Bush administration arguably play an active role in generating these conflicts and in producing a hegemonic discourse that serves to interpret events in a patriotic and propagandistic way, thereby shaping a shared cultural understanding of the world as projected in the official narrative of "America's War on Terror" (cf. Nünning and Nünning 2016). A recent unspeakable example includes the German Chancellor's use of the metaphor and mini-narrative of "Drecksarbeit for all of us" as a despicable euphemism for throwing bombs not just on nuclear processing plants in Iran, but also on civilians in Teheran, which the author Navid Kermani sharply criticized.

4. Narratives Can Be Weapons of Mass Destruction

As the preceding thesis has hopefully shown, anyone who doubts that narratives can indeed have performative power and worldmaking potential only needs to recall the ideologically charged stories that the former American President George W. Bush or the current Russian President disseminated in order to provide pseudo-legitimizations of their wars of aggression against Iraq and Ukraine, respectively. The Bush administration couched their narrative in the form of what has come to be called a mininarration, i.e. the story encapsulated in the metaphorically loaded concept of "weapons of mass destruction." Although George W. Bush or the current POTUS are unlikely ever to be ranked among America's great, greater, or the greatest storytellers, one cannot help admitting that Bush and his comrades-in-arms displayed a certain degree of creativity, ingenuity, and success in conjuring up and disseminating a number of stories that turned out to be both conflict- and worldmaking in a very literal sense, despite being largely fictions or lies.

As we have tried to demonstrate in detail in a fully-fledged article (see Nünning and Nünning 2016): Although the weapons of mass destruction which Bush and Colin Powell claimed to be in Iraq's possession were never found, the stories generated by the Bush administration turned out to be not just propagandistic mass deception, but weapons of mass destruction themselves in that they provided the rhetorical justification for wars in which hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians lost their lives. Like the narratives of superiority disseminated by British imperialism, the political narratives that the Bush administration concocted about the weapons of mass destruction that Iraq allegedly possessed turned out to be rhetorical weapons of mass destruction in their own right. Another case in point is the historical narrative that the current Russian President concocted and disseminated to provide a pseudo-justification for the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and for waging a brutal war of aggression against a democratic and independence-loving country. In addition, the plethora of conspiracy stories or conspiracy theories also show that narratives can be weapons of mass destruction in that they destroy people's mental sanity, reason, and sense of what is right or wrong. As the leading authority and expert on the topic, Michael Butter (2023 [2018]), has shown, conspiracy theories are both a symptom of a deep crisis of democratic societies and a means of disseminating anxiety, doubt, and paranoia, thus poisoning people's minds and worldviews.

Narratives can thus be weapons of mass destruction because they provide false forms of justification and legitimatization for acts which can never be legitimized, i.e. the killing of people. Furthermore, they can also poison people's minds and destroy their mental sanity. In short, narratives can indeed be one of the most powerful ways of making conflicts and crises as well as weapons of mass deception designed to foster crises and provide mental preparation for invasions and wars. Perceiving imaginary weapons of mass destruction seems to consist in producing not only weapons in the mind but also stories that can change reality, having far-reaching consequences for a potentially great number of people.

Whenever narratives are used as a means of conjuring up an epic conflict or a crisis in Iraq, Ukraine, Iran, or any other country, for that matter, what we are witnessing can be very much a matter of inventing the conflict or crisis in question. Once the diagnosis that there "is" a conflict or a crisis comes to be regarded as a political or economic reality, culturally available crises-plots are activated, assigning not only roles to the participants involved but also a particular meaning to the events thus designated (see A. Nünning 2010, 2012; Nünning and Nünning 2020). The activity of narrative conflict- or worldmaking, including the choice of a particular kind of metaphor and story, is not so much a matter of recognizing actual conflicts, crises or historical changes "out there," but of imposing order and meaning on a sequence of happenings that could also be emplotted in quite different ways. All of this should give anyone interested in narrative reasons to pause, and to take a fresh look at the ways in which events, conflicts, and crises are created or made through the complex processes involved in narrative worldmaking—and the critical narratological observation thereof.

5. Narratives Make Identities, Selves, Communities and Cultures

Let us now turn our attention from the dangerous power and perils of narratives to their positive affordances and qualities. By pitting "us" against "them," narratives also construct both a sense of collective or national identity and an advantageous self-image, while unfortunately denigrating foreign "others" at the same time. The factual and fictional narratives of empire, for instance, were closely bound up with the forging of 'Great' Britain's cultural identity. Narratives thus play an important role in the making of identities, selves, and communities. There is general agreement, for instance, in autobiography studies, that narratives and storytelling are key to making selves, as the felicitous subtitle of Paul John Eakin's seminal monograph *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (1999) has it. By forging selves, life narratives serve as a compass that gives us a sense of orientation: "Telling ourselves stories helps us navigate our way through life because they provide structure and direction" (Loehr 2007, 4).

However, narratives not only make personal identities and selves, but also larger communities and cultural identities of collectives on various scales, ranging all the way from families and clans to nations and peoples. Many anthropologists, historians, sociologists, cultural and narrative psychologists, as well as researchers in literary studies and cultural memory studies, tend to agree that storytelling plays an important role in the creation of cultural communities and that collectively shared narratives serve to shape cultural identities. This seems to confirm an observation made by the Austrian cultural theorist Wolfgang Müller-Funk:

> That which seems to be obvious often runs the risk of being overlooked. It would be obvious to consider the constitutive relevance of narratives for cultures and to possibly understand cultures as more or less (hierarchically) organized clusters of explicit and also implicit, of expressed, but also of concealed narratives. For it is undoubtedly narratives that are central for the representation of identity, for individual remembering, for the collective mental state of groups, regions, nations, for ethnic and gendered identity. (Müller-Funk 2002/2008, 17; translation AN)

Although it is well known by now that a people's collective identity, just like personal identity, is neither natural nor stable, but discursively constructed, the functions that narratives can fulfil as a cultural way of self-and community-making have only recently received the attention they deserve. Nations can thus be conceived not just as "imagined communities" in the sense of Benedict Anderson, but also as narrative or narrated communities. Similarly, narratives create or make cultures (cf. Nünning 2013) and cultural communities in that they disseminate the stories and values that people live by.

6. Narratives Disseminate Norms and Values, and They Can Undermine Decency and Truth

Narratives and values are not only closely intertwined, but they arguably shape each other. On the one hand, norms and values affect and influence the ways in which we tell stories (cf. Loehr 2007, 107) as well as the kinds of stories we prefer. On the other hand, narratives are an important medium not only for representing cultural norms and values, but also for disseminating and constructing them (cf. Erll, Grabes and Nünning 2008). In addition to being an important means of identity-, self- and worldmaking and of making sense of our lives, narratives also play a key role in constructing, mediating, and reinforcing the norms and values we live by (cf. Baumbach, Grabes and Nünning 2009). Moreover, in the context of cultural learning, narratives that make it into the canon not only shape what people read and will have read, but also the norms and values transmitted by what are considered to be the great works of literature.

The approach most closely related to the study of values in fiction is arguably rhetorical narratology, developed and championed by such luminaries in the field as Wayne C. Booth and James Phelan, who have always acknowledged the close link between narratives and ethics. Phelan has shown how narrative techniques influence reader's aesthetic, interpretative, and ethical judgments. However, rhetorical narratology has been less concerned with the ways in which factual and political narratives construct and disseminate norms and values, and with the cultural work that they do.

As we have tried to show above, narratives have been instrumental in shaping collective worldviews and making colonialist and imperialist mentalities. On the other hand, narratives have also played an enormously important role in the establishment of all the positive norms and values we associate with e.g. the Enlightenment, science, social movements, and human rights.

Acknowledging that narratives always—either explicitly or implicitly—disseminate norms and values implies that we would be well-advised to critically explore which social norms and more values and ethics particular narratives endorse and propagate. What we have recently witnessed in e.g. Russia and the USA can safely be described as an assault on what used to be regarded as human decency and "normal" moral standards. In his thought-provoking book *What We Owe the Future*, the philosopher William MacAskill makes an observation that should give anyone reason to pause in that it reminds us what is at stake in the present conjuncture: "We are currently in a period where the values that guide civilisation are still malleable, but I'll argue in Chapter 4 that those values could ossify, constraining the course of all future civilisation. If so, changes we make to today's moral values could have indefinitely long-lasting impacts. (MacAskill 2022, 43)" The wide-ranging assault that the new POTUS has already made, and continues to make, on hitherto widely accepted ethical and moral values may well be a case in point in that his executive orders and policy could indeed "have indefinitely long-lasting impacts."

If we want to come to terms with the present conjuncture where conflicting narratives, irreconcilable ways of sense- and worldmaking, and diametrically opposed sets of norms and values seem to be at loggerheads, it might be helpful to conceive of what is going on in terms of a narrative dynamics perspective. Being one of the chief proponents of this concept, the narratologist Roy Sommer defines the term as follows:

> Narrative dynamics is here understood as an umbrella term for all kinds of relationships, hostile or symbiotic, competitive or complementary, local or global, between narrative phenomena. A narrative dynamics perspective views the public sphere as an environment, ecosystem, or market place where ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, worldviews, and norms are circulated, modified, negotiated, and exchanged in complex transactions that can't be reduced to a binary logic of narrative and counter-narrative or to the simple antagonism of 'story wars' (Sachs 2012). (Sommer 2023, 498)

Even though such a binary logic of narrative and counter-narrative often prevails in today's politics, the concept of narrative dynamics allows for a much more nuanced understanding of the complex ways in which competing narratives are intertwined. The metaphors of the public sphere as an environment or ecosystem in which "ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, worldviews, and norms are circulated, modified, negotiated, and exchanged" captures the complex dynamics and entanglements much better than any binary model ever could. If we want to get to grips with the current complex conjunctures of narrative dynamics, we also need to take the historical dynamics of the narratives that compete for power in today's "ecology of attention" (Citton 2017) into account.

Therefore, it is high time to heed the *Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* that historian Timothy Snyder has brilliantly summed up in his book *On Tyranny*. These include defending democratic institutions and truth, listening for dangerous words, and taking responsibility for the face of the world. What we are currently witnessing could indeed be "the decisive ideological struggle of the 21st century" that George W. Bush tried to conjure up twenty-five years ago, but this time it could be for real. Everyone who cares about freedom, truth, and humane values, should dare to stand out and speak up against the ongoing attacks against human decency, science, truth, and the universities. Everyone who is worried about the rise of autocracy, hypocrisy, oligarchy, racism, sexism, and totalitarianism, should also read Snyder's brilliant book *On Freedom* (2024), which is a compelling and passionate clarion call to defend such essential values as factuality, honesty, solidarity, and truth.

7. Cultural Narratives Provide the Stories We Live By and Shape Cultural Notions of the Good Life

Narratives are arguably not just the most powerful cognitive tools we have for making sense of our lives and of cultural transformations, they also provide us with models of how to live a good life. Like metaphors, narratives not only serve to shape prevailing cultural models, but are also shaped by the cultural contexts from which they originate. On the one hand, narratives project forms and structures onto cultural phenomena and processes. On the other hand, they are also shaped by cultural models and prevailing cultural notions of identity and the good life. Either way, narratives provide a form for coping with personal experience as well as for making sense of cultural phenomena and cultural transformations.

By disseminating social norms and ethical values, narratives provide the stories we live by. In what is arguably one of the best books on the topic at hand, the renowned cultural psychologist Dan P. McAdams observes that we know surprisingly little about the cultural models and narrative templates that shape our notions of how to live a good life: "Beyond making vague references to things like 'my religious heritage' or 'the American Dream,' we tend to have remarkably little insight into the ways our lives are framed by cultural categories, values, and norms" (McAdams 2013, 271). We should like to add that we know even less about the hegemonic master-narratives that shape prevailing cultural models of the good life, although "we draw some of our best material from master cultural narratives" (McAdams 2013, 84). Life stories also show that cultures and narratives are closely intertwined, with narratives shaping cultures just as much as cultures shape their hegemonic narratives:

> I would submit that life stories are more reflective of and shaped by culture than any other aspect of personality. Stories are at the centre of culture.

> More than favored goals and values, I believe, stories differentiate one culture from the next. I have argued throughout this book that the stories people live by say as much about culture as they do about the people who live and tell them. Our own life stories draw on the stories we learn as active participants in culture – stories about childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and aging. Stories capture and elaborate metaphors and images that are especially resonant in a given culture. Stories distinguish between what culture glorifies as good characters and vilifies as bad characters. (McAdams 2013, 284)

Although it is common knowledge that narratives are subject to both cultural variation and historical change, the degree to which they vary across and within cultures is just one of the many fascinating research questions that narratology and cultural studies have thus far failed to address, let alone answer. Although we know quite a lot about e.g. the "Stories Americans Live By," to quote the subtitle of Dan P. McAdams' pioneering monograph, we know relatively little about the dominant master-narratives that other cultures, nations, or narrative communities live by. Similarly, we need to learn more about the interdependence between cultural changes and the preference for certain cultural master narratives.

Literary narratives not only provide an invaluable archive of models of how to live a fulfilling and good life, but they also serve as important means of critique of hegemonic master-narratives, e.g. those associated with late capitalism and neoliberalism. In its capacity as a rich repository of cultural memory, literature has provided humanity with an ethical and moral compass in that for "thousands of years stories have served to pass down lessons in how to live from one generation to another" (Storr 2019, 211). Moreover, literature can metaphorically be seen as a laboratory of forms of the good life in that literary narratives explore alternative forms of life (A. Nünning 2021). Last but certainly not least, literary narratives can function as "valorization laboratories" (Citton 2017, 150), which can entail revalorizations of prevailing notions of the good life. In short, narratives, like literature in general, can function as a mind changer, valorization laboratory, and cultural resource of resilience (cf. Nünning and Nünning 2021).

8. Narratives can Foster Happiness, Health, and Wellbeing, but Can Also Perpetuate Oppressions

As we have tried to show in an essay on the topic of "Where Narratology and Salutogenesis Can Meet" (cf. Nünning and Nünning 2018), narratives can foster wellbeing, help us to stay healthy, and lead happy and long lives. One of the main reasons for this is that narratives foster our sense of coherence. Another reason for the beneficial effects that narratives have for our happiness and health is that they are wonderful ways of meaning-making, endowing our lives with purpose and sense. As Susan Magsamen and Ivy Ross observe in their brilliant book *Your Brain on Art: How the Arts Transform Us* (2025, 205), the "ability to completely fabricate stories out of the human mind in order to convey important feelings, ideas, emotions, and shared knowledge is but one of the capacities we developed in order to make sense of the world in a shared and aesthetic way."

One might as well add, however, that even narratives which purport to promote happiness and liberty can also endanger people's physical and mental health. The cultural master-narrative that many people in the USA have lived by, commonly dubbed "the American Dream," is a case in point. On the one hand, this idealized story promises that the United States is a land of unlimited opportunity that allows upward mobility, equality, and freedom for people of all backgrounds and social classes who work hard enough. On the other hand, all too many people have been denied the "unalienable Rights" promised by the Declaration of Independence, i.e. "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." In two brilliant essays on the topic, the American activist and writer Mia Birdsong (2020, 1) has done an excellent job at delineating what she poignantly calls "The Trap of the American Dream," exposing its "narrowly defined paths to happiness" (Birdsong 2020, 2) and its inherent "toxic individualism" (Birdsong 2020, 3). Demonstrating that this hegemonic American master-narrative "remains defined by whiteness and masculinity" (Birdsong 2020, 2), Birdsong argues that the "work of recognizing and excavating the toxicity of the American Dream each of us has inside us is lifelong work" (Birdsong 2020, 26). She certainly does not mince words, exposing this master-narrative for what it is: "The American Dream is white supremacy culture bound with capitalism and patriarchy" (Birdsong 2020, 30). Drawing on the invaluable insights from intersectional theory, Birdsong elaborates on what is implied in the concept by definition:

> The American Dream is a clusterfuck of intersecting oppressions that function systemically and infect us individually. Capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy (all of which create offshoots like ableism, transphobia, ageism, and others) are embedded in the systems and institutions we all interact with – everything from housing to health care to media to jobs to education. But they are also embedded in each of us. (Birdsong 2020, 26)

Since the normative cultural master-narrative of the American Dream has turned into a nightmare for many minority groups, including immigrants, people of color, women, and queer people by perpetuating intersecting oppressions, it needs to be completely reconfigured and reimagined. Instead of making America great again, Birdsong (2020, 20) argues that "many of us have to make America better than intended, to improve upon what those who came before us did, planned, or even imagined – that is what we should recognize as the American Dream."

Other narratives that are less culture-specific and psychologically peculiar than the American Dream are arguably much better equipped to foster happiness, health, and wellbeing by giving us food for thought and hope for the future. A case in point is the South African concept of Ubuntu, which Desmond Tutu explained as follows: "It is to say, my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. We belong in a bundle of life. We say a person is a person through other persons. It is not I think therefore I am. It says rather: I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share" (Tutu 2009, 31). Although many people in the West will probably think that the word 'ubuntu' refers to Linux's open-source operating system, it is the ethical concept and philosophy of life that can inspire new narratives and give us hope for a better future. Other narratives that can foster happiness, health, and wellbeing include e.g. the Ghanaian notion of "Biakoye", which can be translated as "all together" or "unity" and the social philosophy of "buen vivir," a holistic and indigenous notion of the good life from South America which emphasizes ecological balance, consuming less, harmony with nature, and developing a sense of the collective and community (see Acosta 2015).

9. Narratives can Foster the Imagination and Give us Hope

Although the power of storytelling for cultural evolution has occasionally been acknowledged (cf. e.g. Krznaric 2020, 219ff.), the power of especially fictional narratives to extend and foster our imagination arguably deserves much more attention than it has hitherto received. Outlining the premise of their thought-provoking book *Imagination first: Unlocking the Power of Possibility*, Eric Liu and Scott Noppe-Brandon make an interesting observation about the importance of the imagination for creativity and conceptual innovation: "Any conceptual breakthrough requires imagination first" (Liu and Noppe-Brandon 2009, 12). They also provide several examples that show how epochal cultural innovations like democracy, equality and a multiracial society presuppose to "have the emotional and intellectual capacity to conceive of *what does not yet exist*" (Liu and Noppe-Brandon 2009, 8). Liu and Noppe-Brandon even go so far as to argue "that a developed imagination matters profoundly to the health and promise of our society" (Liu and Noppe-Brandon 2009, 13).

The imagination is so important because it is not only involved in the creation of novels and other fictional narratives, but it is also the central cognitive capacity that shapes our cultures and our notions of possible futures. Fictional narratives do not pretend to delineate facts and to represent the real world as it exists but rather offer alternative scenarios and provide possible story-worlds, thus enriching our sense of what might be possible. As Aleo Susan Arndt has shown in a pioneering and thought-provoking essay, fictional narratives provide not only imaginary inventions of story-worlds that give us access to possible futures but should also be seen as "interventions" which "display, reflect, and reconfigure moralities" (Arndt 2021, 241)—and thereby shaping collective values, cognition, and cultures, one might add. By delineating possible worlds and reshaping ethics and moralities, fictional narratives equip readers "with the agency of in(ter)ventions, i.e. inventions that intervene" (ibid.), while also making futures imaginable and fostering dreams and hopes. Like social utopias, literary fictions not only offer "fresh pathways along which our imagination can travel," they can also create "beacons of hope for radically transforming the future" (Krznaric 2020, 145).

Rather than constraining the imagination and crushing people's hope through overdosing them with backward-looking and simplistic political stories like the ill-advised Leave-narrative that led to Brexit, the megalomaniac MAGA-narrative or ever more post-apocalyptic Hollywood blockbusters, we should foster the imagination and nourish hope by teaching young readers how to appreciate complex literary genres like speculative fictions. Banning books and words means constraining creativity, which is dangerous: "In a complex world, replete with contingency and uncertainty, nothing could be more dangerous than to constrain imagination, freedom and creativity"

(Heffernan 2021, 319). What we need are better narratives that enhance our imagination and our sense of possibility.

10. Narratives Make Futures, but Can Also Unmake Worlds and Enhance or Reduce Futurability

Integrating many of the concepts introduced in the preceding sections, our final thesis claims that narratives are not only ways of community-, conflict- and worldmaking which are shaped by prevailing cultural models, but that they can also make or mar futures in that they serve to enrich, or delimit, our cognitive and cultural repertoire of notions of what the future could look like. It is arguably the uniquely human capacity of the imagination that can "unlock the power of possibility," as the subtitle of Liu's and Scott Noppe-Brandon's book has it, and that can extend rather than constrain the range of possible futures.

Exploring the affordances and constraints of factual and fictional narratives as cultural ways of worldmaking, A. Nünning (2025) argues that literary fictions are much better suited to extending the range of possible futures, i.e. what Franco Berardi (2019) calls "futurability," while factual narratives often serve to curtail the horizon of possibility. Berardi defines futurability as "the multiplicity of immanent possible futures," arguing that the "future is inscribed in the present as a tendency that we can imagine" (Berardi 2019, 13). His observation that the "future is written, willy-nilly, in the present" (Berardi 2019, 234) pertains, however, just as much to political and other factual narratives as it does to literary fictions. While the latter enhance the imagination and extend futurability, factual narratives all too often propagate the TINA-principle, maintaining as they do that "There Is No Alternative." By contrast, fictional narratives provide detailed representations of possible story-worlds that do not yet exist in the realm of the real world, thus reminding readers that there is also something that we might call the TAMARA-principle, i.e. "There Are Many Attractive Roads Ahead."

If we accept the view that narratives are one of the most important cultural ways of worldmaking and of fostering the imagination, we should also acknowledge that they often do the very opposite in that they can constrain our thinking, unmake worlds. Narratives can not only create new worlds they can also severely reduce the range of possibilities. Anyone looking for an example of how a narrative can unmake worlds, turning back the clocks of civilization, history, and science, only needs to critically observe how the MAGA-narrative and the executive orders issued by the new POTUS have been dismantling the stories on which such achievements as civilization, democracy, equal rights, freedom, and scientific truth are based. The list of words that the Federal agencies in the USA are discouraged from using under the new POTUS, published by the *New York Times* on March 7, 2025, is a particularly interesting case in point in that it reads like a glossary of the narratives that are disappearing apace under the new American administration. The latter include e.g. the narratives of activism, of antiracism, of climate change or climate crisis, of disabilities, of diversity, equality, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and of discrimination, to select only some of the narratives that are currently under attack.

Abolishing words associated with these, and many other, important narratives that testify to cultural progress is a paradigm example of how erasing words serves as a means of eliminating unwelcome concepts, marginalising disfavored narratives, making invisible inconvenient truths, and thus re- and unmaking worlds. The present American POTUS does not only seek to purge the federal government of what he and his cronies regard as 'woke' words and initiatives, his wholesale assault on language, science, and truth amounts to a megalomanic way of ideological world-remaking.

Although banning such words as "clean energy," "climate crisis," and "climate science" will not stop climate change or ameliorate climate chaos, it can be an effective strategy of making the narrative of climate change and other inconvenient truths largely invisible. The same holds true for many other of the hundreds of words that have been flagged to avoid or limit. Abolishing words and collocations like "diverse," "diversity," "enhancing/increasing/promoting diversity," and "fostering inclusivity" is nothing but an attempt to reduce "diversity," marginalize "diverse communities," and stop initiatives that seek to promote "inclusivity" as much as possible. Other outrageous examples of disregarding facts and disallowing narratives by abolishing words include e.g. "discrimination," "gender-based violence," "hate speech," "health disparity," "injustice," "LGBTQ," "mental health," "non-binary," "racial inequality," and "vulnerable populations."

The removal of these and many other words from federal agencies, public websites, grant proposals, and school curricula is a radical form of policing and purging language that would make George Orwell blush and want to rewrite his dystopian novel *1984*, which pales in comparison to what has been happening in the United States since January 2025. This assault on language, facts, and reason is an unprecedented attempt at changing ways of thinking and structures of feeling, significantly reducing people's possibilities for even stating what is the case. As the authors of the *NYT* article "These Words Are Disappearing in the New Trump Administration" poignantly observe, "the office of the presidency carries with it a tremendous power to drive the discourse. But the pattern of vanishing words established here suggests Mr. Trump and his administration may be more interested in chilling the national conversation – at least when it comes to their own disfavored topics – than in expanding it" (Yourish et. al 2025, 5).

It is up to each and every one of us to challenge the elimination of words, narratives, and possible future worlds, by making best use of the power of narratives and storytelling. If we want to get from *What Is* to *What If*, to quote the title of a highly stimulating and thought-provoking book written by the political activist and founder of the Transition Town movement Rob Hopkins, we must stand up for facts, science, truth, and the stories we want to live by. Taking his cue from Liu's and Scott Noppe-Brandon's (2009, 33) observation "that we humans have a capacity to bootstrap from *What Is* to *What If*," and using a host of concrete examples, Hopkins outlines what we must do to revive our sense of possibility and to replenish our individual and collective imagination. The subtitle of his book—*Unleashing the Power of Imagination to Create the Future We Want*—puts the blueprint in a nutshell. If we want cultures and societies to transform and to get the sustainable future, we all need, then we must create new narratives that can rekindle the cognitive capacity of the imagination. Even economists and politicians who want to be able "*to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*" (Raworth 2017) would be well advised to begin by cultivating their imagination. Anyone interested in heeding Berardi's clarion-call to fight against "the reduction of the range of possibilities inscribed in the present to a pattern that acts as a formatting gestalt" (Berardi 2019, 15) would thus be well-advised to foster the unique human cognitive capacities of creativity and imagination through complex literary narratives. Therefore, we should "come to recognize that changing the story, dismantling the stories that trap us, finding stories adequate to our realities, are foundational to finding our powers and possibilities" (Solnit 2025, 2).

Epilogue, or: New Narratives for "The Weirdest People in the World"

Although this essay does not claim to provide a complete or exhaustive overview of all the reasons why narratives matter, what we hope to have shown is that narratives indeed matter a great deal because they have exceptional performative power. They can not only create the mental worlds we live in, but they also generate and disseminate the models, norms and values we live by. If we believe that we live in a world in which nothing but catastrophes, conflicts, and crises exist, this is largely due to the negativity bias of the news. In an essay tellingly entitled "Changing the Climate Story," the brilliant American author Rebecca Solnit recently reminded us that one of the many crises of what has been dubbed the present "polycrisis" is the prevailing lack of awareness of the limiting constraints of the hegemonic master-narratives and the impact of the prevailing stories that the media disseminate:

> Every crisis is in part a storytelling crisis. This is as true of climate chaos as anything else. We are hemmed in by stories that prevent us from seeing, or believing in, or acting on the possibilities for change. Some are habits of mind, some are industry propaganda. Sometimes, the situation has changed but the stories haven't, and people follow the old versions, like outdated maps, into dead ends. (Solnit 2025, 141)

If we want to avoid the danger of following outdated maps and old stories into dead ends, then we should acknowledge that the hegemonic capitalist master-narratives of unlimited growth and material progress are no longer sustainable, tenable and viable. These stories prevent us from seeing that we have already reached a dead end, and that it is high time to find a new values compass.

For North Americans and Europeans, it might be particularly helpful to realize, once and for all, that both our narratives of unlimited growth and progress, and our ways of being, feeling, and thinking are anything but normal or the norm that other peoples around the globe should emulate. As Joseph Henrich (2021) has demonstrated in one of the most fascinating books that we have had the pleasure to read in recent years, we are in fact "The Weirdest People in the World," and in more ways than one, one might add. Henrich's central idea is that people who are WEIRD, i.e. "raised in a society that is Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic" (Henrich 2021, 21), are also usually weird in the sense of psychologically peculiar, i.e. "highly individualistic, self-obsessed, control-oriented, nonconformist, and analytical" Henrich 2021, 21): "We often miss the relationships between the parts or the similarities between phenomena that don't fit nicely into our categories. That is, we know a lot about individual trees but often miss the forest" (Henrich 2021, 22).

It is arguably high time that we realize and admit just how weird we really are, both statistically and psychologically speaking, that we begin to recognize the forest and appreciate relationships more, and learn from peoples who are not WEIRD and less weird than us. If we want to meet the challenges posed by climate change, economic crises, the threats of AI, and the rise of autocracies, to name but a few of the crises we are currently faced with, we are in dire need of new stories that foster our ability of "collective reimagining of what the future could be" (Hopkins 2019, 8): "Bringing about the world we want to live in, the world we want to leave to our children is, substantially, the work of the imagination, or what educational reformer John Dewey describes as 'the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise'" (Hopkins 2019, 9; cf. 15). Just as reading fiction can change people's beliefs and minds (cf. V. Nünning 2014), so can new narratives that challenge the status quo change people, who then may change the world (cf. Storr 2019, 208).

What we arguably need now is better stories, new narratives, and cultural narratologies refined enough to tease out the ethical implications of the hegemonic stories many people live by. We not only need to challenge the master-narratives of late capitalism and neoliberalism, but we also have to change the stories that prevail in our media and invent new narratives. We should like to leave the last word to Rebecca Solnit because she strikes just the right balance between acknowledging that there are real challenges and crises that we must deal with, and emphasizing that we should take responsibility for both the stories we tell and the future we want to live in. She also reminds us of yet another very important aspect associated with narratives, i.e. they can empower us or disempower us, depending on who's telling which story and who determines how visible these stories become:

> In order to do what the climate crisis demands of us, we have to find stories of a livable future, stories of popular power, stories that motivate people to do what it takes to make the world we need. Perhaps we also need to become better critics and listeners, more careful about what we take in and who's telling it, what we believe and repeat, because stories can give power – or they can take it away. (Solnit 2025, 141)

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Ouagadougou. Reconfigurer les études africaines

Genèse et perspectives du Pôle d'excellence Africa Multiple (2019–2025)

Yacouba Banhoro

Introduction: Le pôle, un projet de renouveau intellectuel

Si le rôle des sciences est de faire reculer les limites de l'ignorance humaine et de permettre des innovations progressives, utiles et nécessaires au progrès humain, construire des ponts entre diverses formes de savoirs et de centres de production de savoirs est la chose la plus exaltante pour tout chercheur. Ce genre de confrontation des savoirs éprouve la validité des méthodes de production et des savoirs produits. Cette vision, inscrite dans la loi d'orientation de la recherche et de l'innovation du Burkina Faso a conduit, en 2018, des enseignants chercheurs de l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo à s'engager dans le projet Africa Multiple.

A la source du Projet Africa Multiple, lui-même, se trouve la fragmentation régionale et disciplinaire des études africaines. Héritage postcolonial lié aux vicissitudes de l'histoire des relations internationales et de différentes formes de subjugations culturelles, cette fragmentation disciplinaire, géographique et culturelle a conduit les chercheurs d'Africa Multiple de l'Université de Bayreuth à poser le postulat suivant: l'Afrique est transversée depuis des millénaires par des courants humains historiques d'origines diverses, mais elle est encore étudiée de manière cloisonnée, suivant, à peu près, ce que nous qualifions ici de logique de division coloniale du travail. Cela aboutit nécessairement à des résultats qui consolident des perspectives qui, malgré leurs caractères novateurs, developpent souvent des "jeux de miroirs" où chaque école dresse le portrait robot de l'autre dans un centrisme épistémologique. La mondialisation ayant signifié pour beaucoup d'auteurs la mondialisation du capitalisme et de la civilisation occidentale, alors, l'eurocentrisme a été au coeur de nombreuses critiques. De manière sélective, les ouvrages de Joseph Ki-Zerbo (*Histoire de l'Afrique noire et La Natte des autres, 1972*), d'Edward Said (*Orientalism, 1978*), de Valentin-Yves Mudimbe (*L'Invention de l'Afrique, 2021*), de Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (*Decolonising the Mind, 1986*), de Dipesh Chakrabarty (*Provincializing Europe, 2007*), ainsi que de Felwine Sarr (*Afrotopia, 2026*) constituent des références permettant de comprendre la critique de l'eurocentrisme dans la production des savoirs et les discours sur le "développement" en Afrique. Ces auteurs plaident, chacun à sa manière, pour un nécessaire décentrement épistémologique permettant de reconnaître et de valoriser d'autres formes de rationalité. Dans cette même lignée s'inscrivent les réflexions sur les savoirs dits "endogènes" et le pluriversalisme, concept central chez les théoriciens de la "colonialité du pouvoir" et de la "décolonisation" tels qu'Aníbal Quijano et Walter D. Mignolo.

Africa Multiple s'inscrit bien sûr dans la critique de l'eurocentrisme épistémologique, mais aussi dans une vision ou la multiplicité, la relationalité et la reflexivité sont des outils conceptuels pour dépasser les centrismes. Ce cadre théorique vise à dépasser les dualismes hérités de la modernité coloniale, en favorisant une interconnexion des savoirs fondée sur la pluralité des épistémologies et des visions du monde. Il s'agit dès lors de promouvoir une approche véritablement transdisciplinaire et transculturelle de la recherche scientifique.

L'interdisciplinarité devient alors un outil très efficace pour creuser plusieurs formes de savoirs et aboutir à des interprétations pluri-sens permettant davantage de mieux expliquer la diversité et les points de convergence des différents traits de l'existence humaine au-delà des divisions disciplinaires. Africa Multiple est ainsi devenue une communauté scientifique à la conquête de ces différents sens à travers des travaux de groupes de recherche interdisciplinaires et internationaux ayant pour mission la reconfiguration des études dites africaines.

Positionnée au coeur de l'Afrique occidentale en constante mutation, l'Université Jseoph Ki-Zerbo a réformé ses structures et programmes depuis sa création, pour aller dans le sens de l'interdisciplinairité et de l'ouverture scientifique tout en mettant un accent important sur les connaissances endogènes. C'est dans ce contexte que naît, en 2019, le Pôle d'excellence Africa Multiple (ACC) à l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo (UJKZ) de Ouagadougou. Intégré dans un réseau international initié par l'Université de Bayreuth (Allemagne), ce Pôle s'inscrit dans une dynamique de coopération Nord-Sud et Sud-Sud ambitieuse, avec pour mission de contribuer à redéfinir, à travers des travaux nterdisciplinaires, les savoirs en Afrique et sur l'Afrique.

Genèse et ancrage institutionnel du Pôle Africa Multiple de l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo (UJKZ)

Dans le cadre du projet du gouvernement Allemand sur "L'initiative d'excellence," un groupe de chercheurs de l'Université de Bayreuth sur l'Afrique a élaboré et déposé, auprès de la Fondation allemande pour la Recherche (DFG), un projet de recherche sur les études africaines, avec la promesse de collaborer avec des chercheurs Africains dans le cadre de la mise en place d'un Centre d'excellence à l'Université de Bayreuth et de plusieurs Pôles d'excellence dans les Universités africaines.

Dans un processus compétitif, le projet des chercheurs de l'Université de Bayreuth a été sélectionné par la DFG et ceux-ci ont commencé à mettre le projet en œuvre. Dans ce cadre, en 2018, l'Université de Bayreuth a lancé un appel à projets pour sélectionner 4 universités partenaires africaines.

L'équipe de Ouagadougou ayant participé à cette compétition s'est inspirée des textes d'orientation de la recherche et de l'innovation du ministère de la Recherche de l'époque, en 2018, ainsi que de ceux de l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo. Ces différents textes encouragent fortement la coopération interuniversitaire. En substance, on peut ainsi résumer leurs contenus: La coopération scientifique internationale est considérée comme nécessaire avec les établissements de recherches des pays étrangers et des organisations internationales, l'accroissement du financement de la recherche passera par l'élaboration de projets et programmes pertinents capables de bénéficier de financements extérieurs, les chercheur(e)s doivent être encouragés par leurs institutions à initier des projets de recherche communs avec des partenaires étrangers. La recherche doit permettre d'accroître le nombre des approches, des outils et des méthodes de recherche et de créer et opérationnaliser des pôles d'excellence. Il n'y a pas de doute, pour l'équipe du projet, que la recherche d'une multiplicité d'approches et la recherche de l'innovation unissent le projet de Bayreuth et les objectifs stratégiques de la recherche au Burkina Faso. A l'appel à coopération en tant que Pôle de l'Université de Bayreuth, 55 institutions universitaires ont répondu. 10 ont été présélectionnées et 4 ont été finalement sélectionnées à travers une équipe d'évaluateurs externes internationaux. L'Université de Lagos au Nigéria, l'Université Rhodes à Makhanda en Afrique du Sud, l'Université Moi à Eldoret au Kenya et l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo de Ouagadougou au Burkina Faso. Des antécédents solides en matière de recherche internationale et interdisciplinaire ont été les principaux critères de sélection.

Lors d'une première réunion à Bayreuth en juillet 2019, la coopération entre les cinq centres (Bayreuth y compris) a été discutée. Des protocoles d'accord basés sur l'appel ont été signés. Les 4 Pôles avait 2 années de test. En cas de bilan positif, leurs accords devaient être renouvelés pour une durée de 5 années. En 2022, les différents Pôles ont soumis leurs rapports sur leurs activités dans le cadre de l'évaluation du parcours au bout des 2 ans. Les rapports ont montré que les quatre Pôles de Ouagadougou, Lagos, Makhanda, Eldoret, ont plus que rempli les conditions des contrats de coopération : l'organisation d'au moins une conférence internationale, des ateliers, des séries de conférences, la gestion de projets de recherche, des programmes de bourses et le soutien aux chercheurs en début de carrière (doctorants et postdoctorants) et aux publications. Sur cette base solide, les protocoles d'accord ont été prolongés jusqu'à la fin de la première période de financement (décembre 2025).

Ainsi, le Pôle d'excellence Africa Multiple (ACC) de l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo de Ouagadougou a été créé en tant qu'unité de recherche au sein de l'Université. A l'origine, des enseignants chercheurs de l'UFR/SH et de l'UFR/LAC se sont mis ensemble, avec l'autorisation et l'encouragement de la présidence de l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo de l'époque, pour écrire un projet et participer à l'appel d'offre lancé par l'Université de Bayreuth. Ils ont fait appel à leurs collègues d'autres institutions de recherche pour les appuyer. Le pôle dispose d'un organe administratif qui gère les activités quotidiennes des programmes de recherche. Il est placé administrativement et financièrement sous l'autorité des services centraux financiers et administratifs de l'Université. Ses programmes sont financés par une contribution annuelle de l'Université de Bayreuth, particulièrement le Centre d'excellence Africa Multiple, à travers les financements de la Fondation Allemande pour la Recherche (DFG). 18 enseignants et chercheurs issus de trois des principales institutions de recherche du Burkina Faso (l'Université Joseph KI-ZERBO (Université d'accueil), l'Université Thomas SANKARA et le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technologique (CNRST) conduisent des activités de recherche pluridisciplinaire au sein du Pôle.

Rayonnement intellectuel en Afrique de l'Ouest

Le Pôle s'est imposé comme un acteur dynamique de la reconfiguration des savoirs. De nombreux projets de recherche mis en oeuvre en collaraboration avec l'Université de Bayreuth qui donnent lieu à des publications de différents ouvrages et d'articles. Ainsi, des dizaines d'ouvrages et articles ont été publiés par les membres du Pôle dans une dynamique de collaboration. Depuis sa création en octobre 2019, dans le cadre de la formation des jeunes chercheurs, des dizaines de bourses doctorales sont attribuées à des doctorants et postdoctorants pour les soutenir dans la réalisation de leurs projets doctoraux et postdoctoraux.

La collaboration internationale ne s'est pas manifestée uniquement dans la mise en œuvre des projets et des publications d'articles, mais également dans le cadre d'un programme de mobilité scientifique. Ainsi, le Pôle de Ouagadougou a accueilli des chercheurs des autres centres (Université de Lagos, de Nairobi, d'Eldoret et de Bayreuth) pour de courts séjours de recherche allant de 1 à 3 mois. De même, plusieurs chercheurs du Pôle—de l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo et des membres du Pôle venant de l'Université Thomas Sankara et du CNRST—ont reçu des bourses de mobilité leur permettant de passer des périodes de recherche dans les autres Centres. Les bourses de mobilité ont fortement soutenu les activités inter-clusters telles que les conférences et les ateliers. Elles ont également permis des participations à des colloques sur les Études africaines en dehors du Réseau Africa Multiple.

Le Pôle de Ouagadougou a aussi organisé et coorganisé de nombreuses conférences internationales et interdisciplinaires sur des thèmes variés dont: "Réagir à la pandémie de la covid-19 au Burkina Faso : contributions croisées de trois réseaux d'enseignants-chercheurs: Mathématiques, Sciences Médicales et Biologiques, et Sciences Humaines et Sociales" (Ouagadougou 2020, en collaboration avec ARES), "Terrorisme au Burkina Faso: négocier ou pas?" (2021); "Systèmes de santé alternatifs" (Ouagadougou 2022); "Perspectives multiples sur les spatialités et innovations en Afrique de l'Ouest francophone" (Ouagadougou 2023); "Reconfigurer les études africaines dans le partenariat nord-sud et sud-sud : quelles perspectives?" (Parakou 2024); "Systèmes de santé alternatifs" (Abidjan 2024), etc. Le Pôle a, par ailleurs, organisé de nombreux ateliers d'échanges sur des résultats de la recherche.

Après les résultats très encourageants obtenus dans le domaine des études africaines, le Pôle de Ouagadougou envisage de nouvelles perspectives. Comme impact sur le dispositif institutionnel de reconfiguration des études africaines, ses membres ont fortement exprimé leur souhait de pouvoir contribuer à la création d'un "Centre d'études africaines et de la diaspora", à l'instar de ceux de Lagos, d'Accra, de Makhanda (Afrique du Sud), de Bayreuth, et de bien d'autres universités africaines et mondiales. Cela aura pour objectif de créer davantage de synergies interdisciplinaires sur les études concernant l'Afrique, mieux institutionnaliser les études africaines et de la diaspora au Burkina Faso et de coopérer davantage avec les centres d'études africaines à travers le monde dans le cadre de la reconfiguration des études africaines.

Vers un Centre d'études africaines et de la diaspora à l'UJKZ africaine à l'UJKZ

La création d'un Centre ou Institut d'Etudes Africaines et de la diaspora aura pour objectif de créer davantage de synergies interdisciplinaires sur les études concernant l'Afrique, mieux institutionnaliser les études africaines et de la diaspora au Burkina Faso et coopérer davantage avec les centres d'études africaines à travers le monde dans le cadre de la reconfiguration des études africaines. Donc, objectif premier, la recherche scientifique.

Mais, dans les centres universitaires, la recherche et la formation sont liées et le Centre ou l'Institut ne pourront pas se dérober de cette tâche. Il s'agira alors de consolider le cadre du programme de formation des doctorants et postdoctorants qui a été créé dans le cadre de Africa Multiple, mais également, dans la mesure du possible, à court ou à long terme, de travailler à créer un programme de master en études africaines dans le cadre de l'innovation dans les programmes de formation de l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo. Le programme d'un tel master, bien que provenant de synergies créées par les profils de formations et de recherche d'instituts d'enseignement supérieurs du Burkina Faso, aura une vocation internationale, étant donner la vocation internationale du Centre ou de l'Institut. Il sera alors animé par des équipes nationales, internationales, y compris d'enseignants-chercheurs et spécialistes venant de la diaspora africaine. C'est par ce biais que la coopération internationale dans la recherche et la formation permettront de soutenir l'existence du Centre de manière durable.

Créer un Centre d'études africaines et de la Diaspora à l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo est aussi une manière de s'intégrer pleinement dans l'esprit de cette Université portant le nom du premier Historien du Burkina Faso dont le chemin a croisé ceux d'autres spécialistes de l'Afrique et panafricanistes, tels Cheikh Anta Diop dont l'Université de Dakar porte aujourd'hui le nom, et Kouamé Nkrumah, un acteur ayant créé un Centre d'études africaines depuis 1961 qui fait aujourd'hui la fierté de l'Université du Ghana. Tous, par leurs œuvres, ont théorisé sur l'Afrique, “Berceau de l'Humanité”, dans sa diversité et son unicité. Ce fondement était à la base du projet d'histoire générale de l'Afrique qui a abouti à *l'Histoire de l'Afrique noire d'hier à demain*, ouvrage paru en 1972 sous la plume de Joseph Ki-Zerbo, suivi par *l'Histoire générale de l'Afrique* de l'UNESCO dont il co-dirigea le premier volume. Son ouvrage, la "Natte des autres", paru en 1992, est restée dans la même lignée. Théorisant sur le "développement endogène" et la "recherche endogène", Ki-Zerbo reprend le mythe d'Osiris en suggérant qu'il faut "remembrer l'Osiris africain" en d'autres termes, ressusciter et faire revivre d'idée de l'Afrique. En 2002, dans un ouvrage issu d'un entretien avec René Holenstein, l'historien s'interrogeait encore : "A quand l'Afrique?"

Dans le volet recherche de ce vaste projet politique qui devient de plus en plus utopique, réfléchir et réaliser l'Afrique dans sa multiplicité et son unité est un projet partagé par de nombreuses personnalités politiques, de nombreux chercheurs et centres de recherche. Contrairement au Ghana et au Nigéria où des instituts d'études africaines sont fondées par les pères de l'indépendance, au Burkina Faso, il n'y a pas encore eu d'institut ou de centre d'études africaines à proprement parler. L'Institut des peuples noirs créé pendant la révolution sankariste, qui a fonctionné à peine, aurait pu répondre à une telle vocation. De même, l'Institut National des Sciences des Sociétés de Ouagadougou auraient pu y répondre. Ce qui est constatable est davantage un cloisonnement disciplinaire focalisé sur l'étude du Burkina Faso. Un centre d'études africaines irait au-delà de cette pratique pour essayer, à travers la recherche et les travaux scientifiques produits à travers les disciplines dans le monde, de "remembrer l'Osiris africain". La production du savoir dans le centre d'études africaines et de la diaspora se focalisera sur l'Afrique et sa diaspora comme étant une entité. Cela permettra de créer une synergie entre toutes les autres disciplines qui seront, chacune, considérée, d'un point de vue épistémologie, comme un angle particulier permettant de découvrir un des puzzles de "l'Afrique dans le monde" dont la mise en commun permettra de comprendre davantage le Continent en tant qu'entité constituée d'un enchevêtrement d'une pluralité d'autres entités. Le Centre d'études africaines Africa Multiple de l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo aura ainsi pour ambition de penser l'Afrique dans toute ses dimensions et ses diversités aussi bien internes qu'internationales.

Le Projet Africa Multiple de l'Université de Bayreuth, dans sa collaboration avec l'Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo, a créé les conditions favorables à l'entreprise des Études africaines et de la diaspora. En effet, il a permis à des chercheurs des deux universités, en collaboration avec les Universités de Lagos, Makhanda, Eldoret, ainsi que leurs partenaires constitués de centres et instituts d'études africaines en Asie, en Amérique et en Europe, de se côtoyer dans les études africaines, de mener des recherches collaboratives, des conférences, des activités de diffusion des savoirs. Ces activités ont été financés par l'Université de Bayreuth, notre partenaire stratégique avec lequel nous avons travaillé à renouveler le financement de nos activités à partir de 2026. Depuis le 22 mai 2025, la DFG a délibéré sur les demandes de projet. Le projet Africa Multiple a été évalué très positivement par un jury international qui a fortement encouragé la poursuite et l'approfondissement du travail que nous avons commencé. Cela est le symbole que les conditions de création d'un centre d'études africaines et de la diaspora à l'UJKZ ne sont plus une gageure intellectuelle et financière. Il revient désormais aux forces capables de créer les conditions administratives et politiques qui permettront l'éclosion d'un tel centre.

Conclusion

Le Pôle d'excellence Africa Multiple de l'UJKZ est plus qu'un centre de recherche : c'est un lieu de renaissance intellectuelle. Par son activité soutenue, ses publications, sa vision d'avenir, il incarne la possibilité non seulement d'une production du savoir africain par et pour l'Afrique, mais aussi d'une collaboration internationale dans la diversité culturelle et disciplinaire. Le meilleur gage de sa pérennisation sera sans doute la création d'un centre ou d'un institut d'études africaines qui assurera un pas décisif vers l'institutionnalisation durable des savoirs endogènes et transnationaux sur l'Afrique contemporaine.

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P

Postdoc Working Groups

Mario Faust-Scalisi

Working as a postdoc in the humanities, in university structures, often is far from easy and can be a very solitary task being between different status groups or burdened with a variety of jobs, depending on the concrete position and the amount of administrative work to be shouldered. Getting beyond ones own topics, and even more beyond disciplinary boundaries, can be a challenge. This is where Postdoc Working Groups come into play.

I, myself, was just starting to design and plan a postdoctoral research project, when I encountered this very format. It allowed me to dive into research debates far away from my topics before and at the same time to do postdoctoral work par excellence. Being a postdoctoral researcher in the humanities at a university can feel like a version 2.0 of being a PhD student with half a position— there is some research to be done, in a very specific field, writing, reading and, or presenting. Next to it, there are administrative tasks, jobs as research for others, or teaching assignments. Getting out of boxes and silos, while getting deeper and deeper into a topic, is no automatism. At the same time, seeing being a postdoctoral researcher as an episode and step, it does not suffice to just connect narrowly with other researchers and get deeper into a specific field of research. This can be reached with attending conferences or via specific publications. What is lost on this way are often the looser ends of research topics, the connections not at the centre of one's very own work, but nonetheless highly important and defining for one's own research. And this is what can be approached with others on similar positions and of similar status, being more into a concrete topic or similarly approaching a loose end, within the format of Postdoc Working Groups.

This is what the Postdoc Working Groups are for and have been for me. Following the one's conceptualization of these groups within the Cluster of Excellence "Africa Multiple," their outline is to be both interdisciplinary and international. They are "designed to create space for the joint discussion of research results emerging from ongoing or starting projects" (Africa Multiple 2025). To this, it should be added again that results and topics can be more centre pieces or more new questions rising in one's own research, making such a format even more enriching for all who participate—allowing for different perspectives, open questions, and high-profile discussions based on years of expertise.

To make this point more concrete, a reference to the Working Group I participated in helps: I was part of the Postdoc Working Group "Afr(io)futurism: Debates, Contestations, Interventions," starting in Winter Term 2021/2022 (Africa Multiple 2021). My expertise was neither in Afrofuturism nor Africanfuturism, but I worked with the ideas of futures and alternative futures. Furthermore, I worked with and about African diasporas. Others highly active in the Postdoc Working Group were much closer to the topic, like Xin Li or Gilbert Ndi Shang, others had different approaches to the topic than me but much more a focus on Africa, as, for example, Britta Frede. However, coming together in one working group, all in all, this followed the idea of enriching each other, and it worked just this way. Next to this very goal to have an interdisciplinary exchange between postdoctoral researchers on a broad, but not too broad topic, the main win was to get in contact with fellows and guests. On the one hand, this was based on regular meetings as a Working Group—in our case most of the time online, it was pandemic times still—, on the other, we had events with a public impact, as a conference with international guests in our case. This allowed to enlarge the range of topics, expertise, but academics or activists connected to the overreaching topic, too. In my personal case, this allowed to open my perspective to activist's and multimedia approaches, approaches now much more in focus of my work than before.

While much postdoctoral work can be organizing for others or administrating in a wider sense, the work as part of a Postdoc Working Groups allows, and allowed me personally, a very specific kind of 'learning-on-the-job'—to organize events, to do the calculations of costs, to invite guests and handle the necessary administration, or to plan and advertise events. This, at the same time, is shared work, not an obligation of just one person, but part of the internal management of tasks and duties. For those in such a position already, this can be the gain: to organize own events, administer one's own project; for others, as me, it prepares or prepared for future tasks, by learning from each other, not only content-wise, but in terms of organization, too. Yes, Working Groups "revolve around a specific topic suggested in the context of a call for working groups," (Africa Multiple 2025) as it is described by the Cluster of Excellence "Africa Multiple," but more to take this as a starting point to allow to "promote innovative debates across disciplines and areas," especially by organizing meetings across disciplinary boundaries and get others involved, too. This is a learning about other disciplines in a self-organized setting. While PhD projects allow to get deeper into one or some disciplines, get to know their structures, modes or debates, for interdisciplinary postdoctoral work, as it is fostered within the very interdisciplinary Cluster of Excellence "Africa Multiple," exchange beyond these boundaries is key. Personally again, I learned by participating in my Postdoc Working Group how other disciplines work, how they debate, which questions arise within them, and how inter-, and in the end building on this, transdisciplinary approaches and connections are possible. Being a trained historian and political scientist, my approaches were clearly different from the other participants who were, e.g., Islamic studies scholars or literary scientists—but it was exactly this that allowed for new questions within my group, the disciplinary approaches, and questions of the others allowed new perspectives and questions for me.

It can be written and said that I would not be where I am right now in my research without the chances of the Postdoc Working Group. Indeed, the Postdoc Working Groups are not only "expected to promote innovative debates across disciplines and areas," they truly did and do. Being a formalized but self-organized setting outside the ordinary university structures, outside established disciplinary or faculty structures, they can bring together some researchers otherwise not coming together. And part of this is an international exchange, too. Here again the inter- and transdisciplinary approaches are of major importance—as for most postdoctoral researchers I have expertise in and connections to certain regions and countries, mainly along certain disciplinary or expertise lines, but all else remains rather loose. And this proves to be a real gain; to be allowed to connect beyond these boundaries, within a structure and a mode. As within the Cluster of Excellence "Africa Multiple" itself, the emphasis is only partly limited, focusing on diasporic links, too, and by this including countries of the Americas, Europe or Asia, just this can be a benefit within the setting of a working format as the Postdoc Working Group. I myself could bring in a more America-centered perspective within our Postdoc Working Group, the others had different approaches and foci. But only together it proved fruitful and as gain for all.

And even looking beyond the actual academic gain, a valuable entry on the CV or new connections and networks, such a format allows to think outside the box, give new approaches a trial and allows to raise questions otherwise not asked due to disciplinary boundaries, expectations or alike. Such a format can be testing ground for new ideas, for interdisciplinary approaches that do not have to pay out in the end necessarily. And maybe this is at least as much a gain as all new academic insights or connections. To understand and see which perspectives will prove fruitful for oneself, but in inter- and transdisciplinary connection, too, is highly important being a postdoctoral researcher. And this is important when starting a new project, just sorting the many ideas and paths that could be followed, but in the further stages, too. There is not always a field – and the financial means, too! – to test ideas, to question approaches and paths. To do it safely but within academic structures. But this is just what such Postdoc Working Groups can be. For me, they are allowed to question what new research questions to follow, how to position diasporic perspectives and think about futures, but also to include arts and activism in my research, by getting new inter- and transdisciplinary links. And at the same time, they showed limits, topics and approaches less fitting for my research or plainly not to be integrated into my postdoctoral research project. To ask this and test it, the format of Postdoc Working Groups proofed highly fruitful.

In this sense, many thanks for establishing such a format and making the establishment of support and networking structures on postdoctoral level such an integral part of the Cluster of Excellence "Africa Multiple."

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9

Quinine—Mixing a Drink
The Bitter Taste of Colonization*

Christine Krischan Hanke

> Nach Abschluss der Krankengeschichten erhalten sämmtliche Fieberkranke noch ein ungefähr 200 grammes fassendes Glas Cocktail, eine der Stokes'schen Mixtur nicht unähnliche Mischung aus Milch, Ei und Cognac oder Genever unter Zusatz von Zucker; auch diese Ordination hat coram medico zu erfolgen, weil die Kranken ohne Zusicht den heilsamen Trank einfach verweigern […] Jene Kranken, welche nicht im Stande waren, auf eigenen Füssen zur Temperaturmessung zu kommen, werden nun noch an ihren Betten besucht und erhalten dort Chinin und Cocktail. […] Sofort auf den Verbandwechsel folgt die zweite, tägliche Temperaturaufnahme mit abermaliger Verordnung von Chininlösung und Cocktail. (Martin 1897, 118)[1]

This excerpt from a German-language colonial publication from the late 19th century presents the medical prescription of *quinine* as a remedy for *malaria*

* This paper has been funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) under Germany's Excellence Strategy—EXC 2052/1 – 390713894. It is an outcome from the Cluster's research project "Colonial Commodities" (https://medienwissenschaft.uni-bayreuth.de/wissenschaft/colonial-commodities/).

1 Nicolai Duken, who worked as a student researcher for our project on colonial commodities, has drew my attention to this passage.
"After completing their medical histories, all patients with fever receive a glass of cocktail containing approximately 200 grams, a mixture not unsimilar to Stokes' mixture of milk, egg and cognac or gin with added sugar; this prescription must also be administered coram medico, because the patients simply refuse the healing drink without supervision […] Those patients who were unable to stand on their own feet to have their temperature taken are now visited at their bedsides and given quinine and cocktail there. […] Immediately after the bandage is changed, the second daily temperature reading is taken, with quinine solution and cocktail prescribed again." (Martin 1897, 118, transl. CH)

in combination with a cocktail containing milk, egg, sugar, and alcohol in the form of cognac or gin.

In this text, "Hofrath Dr. Ludwig Martin" reports on his practice as a senior colonial doctor in hospitals at the north-east coast of Sumatra, where he treated Chinese forced plantation laborers on behalf of the private Dutch tobacco plantation companies, *Tabakmaatschappij Arendsburg* and *Deli-Maatschappij*. In addition to his activities as a physician, Martin left his traces on the butterflies of Sumatra: He made numerous taxonomic determinations (some of which were later corrected), published 42 lepidopterological texts, and donated (at least) one "very valuable large collection of local insects [from Sumatra] of all groups" ["eine sehr werthvolle grosse Sammlung dortiger Insecten aller Gruppen"] to the *Königliche Museum für Naturkunde* [Royal Museum of Natural History] Berlin (Karsch 1891, 207).

Martin's quoted text appears in the first volume of the newly founded *Archiv für Schiffs- und Tropenhygiene* [Archive for Ship and Tropical Hygiene] in 1897, a journal that would become central to the institutionalization of so-called "tropical hygiene" and "tropical medicine" in the German colonial Empire.[2]

In the footsteps of Robert Koch's medical research and practices (some of which were published in the *Archiv* and received extensive coverage there), this field of knowledge went hand in hand with the emergence of public health as a new discipline at the intersection of medical science and social policy. As Manuela Bauche shows in her seminal volume on the relational practices of Koch's malaria research and control in Cameroon, East Africa, and East Frisia (Lower Saxonia, Germany), the practices surrounding *malaria* have been constitutive for the new field of public health emerging around 1900. Tropical hygiene and medicine can be considered its fundamental components. Carl Anton Mense's introduction formulates the objectives of the *Archiv für Schiffs- und Tropenhygiene* and reveals this new formation of knowledge, conceived as adventure and thriller, as a field deeply entangled with colonialism:

2 The European imagination of the "tropics" is deeply entangled in exoticism, racism, and colonialism. However, the term is still used in relation to medicine, see for example the *German Society for Tropical Medicine, Travel Medicine and Global Health (DTG)* and numerous medical departments, and clinics for "Tropenmedizin" [tropical medicine] in Germany and beyond. In the wake of German National Socialism, the word combination "tropical hygiene" is avoided nowadays—nevertheless, "hygiene" remains a central component of the field.

> Noch manches Rätsel aber muss aufgeklärt, noch manche wichtige Streitfrage entschieden werden, ehe das Ziel, welches Hygiene und Medizin gemeinsam erstreben, der weissen Rasse auch in den Tropen ein Heim zu bereiten, erreicht ist, ehe das Schiff, welches die unternehmenden Reisenden hinausträgt in die Ferne und die von klimatischen Krankheiten Geschwächten auf den Ozean und in das Vaterland zurückbringt, ein gesundes schwimmendes Haus und nie mehr ein Träger gegenseitiger Ansteckung von Erdteil zu Erdteil sein wird. (Mense 1897, 4)[3]

This conflation of ship and "fatherland" as a "healthy floating home" stands in bitter contrast to "the wake" of thousands of ships that abducted and deported millions of enslaved people from Africa to the Americas (Sharpe 2016; Hartman 2007). The exclusivity of Mense's focus on the care for the German *white* "Volkskörper" and the vision to build a home in "the tropics" stands clearly out here, while its relationality to "Black life and death" in colonialism is deliberately ignored.

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Thus, the substance *quinine*,[4] which in the initial quotation is joined by a cocktail, is closely related to colonialism. Martin's paper is one of hundreds of colonial publications that speak of *quinine* as a cure and prophylaxis against *malaria*. As *malaria* is identified as the main reason for high death rates among European military personnel during colonization, *quinine* can be understood as cure and prophylaxis against the "white man's grave," as colonialists have often titled the African continent irrespective of white colonizers being the harbingers of death to Indigenous people (Curtin 1961, 1990). Daniel R. Headrick (1981) names the substance alongside the steamboat as a condition

3 "However, many mysteries still need to be solved and many important issues resolved before the goal that hygiene and medicine are striving for together – to make the tropics a home for the white race – can be achieved, before the ship that carries the adventurous travellers out into the distance and brings those weakened by climatic diseases back to the ocean and to their homeland will be a healthy floating home and no longer a carrier of mutual infection from one continent to another." (Mense 1897, 4; transl. CH)

4 I use the term "quinine" here, and in the following, as a generic term for all substances (mainly alkaloids extracted through quite complex processes) obtained from the bark of the *cinchona* tree (and its many species) that were used preventively and curatively against *malaria*. The differences between the alkaloid variants are irrelevant to my argument here.

enabling the colonial "penetration" of African land— accordingly, *quinine* has served as a crucial "tool of empire."

Quinine is an alkaloid, that since 1820 can be extracted from the bark of a genus of trees named *Cinchona* by Carl von Linné in 1724. In current botany, *cinchona* is assigned to the *Rubiaceae* family and consists of more than 20 species. The tree is endemic to the Andes region in South America (Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia). A couple of stories surround its name: Linné had linked the plant's name to a Spanish Countess of Chinchón,[5] but by slightly misspelling her name. Legend has it that the countess had been healed from a fever with powder from the grinded bark in the 1630s, but then died on a ship back to Spain, on which allegedly the first barks had been transported to Europe. Another designation, however—*Jesuit bark*—credits European monks with bringing the bark to Europe for the first time. In the 19th century the terms *Chinatree* or *China bark trees*, probably due to another typo, relate the plant vaguely to China—where it had only been planted in the 1930s (Shen 2019). German *Wikipedia* still uses the term *Chinarinden*-Bäume [*China bark trees*] in 2025. In some archival texts, the plant is also called *Peruvian bark* or *fever tree*—the latter name being reactivated in the early 2000s by a brand of tonic water. The name *cinchona*, however, might also be linked to an indigenous name of the bark, as Woodland / Chibale (2022, 112) state:

> Its name is derived from quina-quina, as Native South Americans called the woody material they used to alleviate shivering, fever and pain; it can be roughly translated as 'bark of barks' or 'medicine of medicines'.

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In the 19th century, in the course of colonial political, medical, botanical, and geographical debates, substances derived from *cinchona* bark came into close relationality with the epidemiologically new disease *malaria*. *Quinine* was used as a drug and at the same time as a test substance for the subsequent diagnosis of *malaria* as a "disease in the making." *Malaria* and *quinine* co-constitute each other, as Rohan Deb Roy shows in his seminal book *Malarial Subjects*, taking

5 Ana Countess of Chinchón is not the person with the same name as in the famous painting of Francisco Goya.

British India as an example. Such relationalities can also be observed throughout discussions in the above-mentioned *Archiv für Schiffs- und Tropenhygiene*. Papers not only debate which derivates of *quinine*, which doses and in which companionship the substance should be used as a remedy—but symptom-improving reactions to *quinine* in human bodies are at the same time regarded as respective evidence for the newly constituted epidemic of *malaria*. In extensive and distributed experiments, the disease's elements—its "symptoms"—have been listed, "itemized," thus formed into objects of medical knowledge that appear "as predictable, manageable and curable categories" (Deb Roy 2017, 124).

Both *quinine* as well as *malaria* operate furthermore as material-semiotic actors in the sense of Donna Haraway:

> [B]odies as objects of knowledge are material-semiotic nodes. Their boundaries materialize in social interaction. Boundaries are drawn by mapping practices; "objects" do not pre-exist as such. Objects are boundary projects. But boundaries shift from within; boundaries are very tricky. What boundaries provisionally contain remains generative, productive of meanings and bodies. (Haraway 1988, 595)

Drawing on a concept of science historian Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (1992, 1997), one could say that *quinine* and *malaria* are, alternately, *epistemic* and *technical objects* for each other: While *quinine* is used as a test substance (*technical object*) in order to stabilize the *epistemic object malaria*, the disease at the same time serves as a *technical object* to gain knowledge around the *epistemic object quinine* (e.g. "does it work as a remedy?").

Deb Roy—referencing Haraway's *When Species Meet* (2008)—demonstrates at hand of the two objects *quinine* and *malaria* how imperialism, racism, colonial power relations, economic, infrastructural, and media history have been articulated in close relationality:

> Nonhuman objects and organisms (like cinchonas, quinine, mosquitoes, malarial objects), medical knowledge about them and Empire were not only entangled, but to quote Donna Haraway, were also 'becoming with' one another. (Deb Roy 2017, 12)

> Empire itself, following an expression of Donna Haraway, was 'becoming with' cinchonas. It is possible to suggest that various organisms, materials and institutions which shaped the history of cinchonas in the late 1850s and 1860s (for example, plants, barks, trees, bottles, photographs, sketches,

> bureaucratic correspondence, travel narratives, wardian cases, steamers, herbariums, nurseries or plantations) were as much tools of a preordained Empire as they were ingredients of an imperial apparatus in the making. (Deb Roy 2017, 67)

In this becoming-with, *cinchona* bark and *quinine* become colonial commodities in demand and enter into the capitalist production and circulation processes of European colonialism and industrialism, as can be discussed in a relatable way as colonial histories of sugar, cotton, cocoa, drugs, and other "fruits of empire" (Walvin 1997; Mintz 1986; Schiebinger 2004; Moss and Badenoch 2009; Bergermann 2020; Klein 2023). After *cinchona* bark as raw material was first imported from the Spanish colonies to Europe, colonial administrations see their access to the resource threatened by anti-colonial liberation movements. After the independence from Spanish colonialism, the postcolonial states in South America regulated the export of plants and seedling. By circumventing the export prohibition, European botanists and "adventurers," commissioned by Dutch and British colonial administrations organized to steal *cinchona* plants, seeds, and smuggled them out of the country. Such practices of plant extraction have often been legitimized with humanitarian claims as well as to ensure "the *survival* of the plant species"—barely concealing colonial and imperial economic interests. *Cinchona* thus became extracted, transferred, and re-implanted from South America into other parts of the world—as part of the *Columbian exchange* (Crosby [1972]), the plant became the "New World's 'Gift' to Europe's Old World Colonies" (Nunn and Qian 2010, 179).

Diverse German actors were involved in British and mainly in Dutch botanical expeditions as well as in plantations dealing with *cinchona*: Justus Karl Haßkarl (1811–1894) smuggled *cinchona* plants and seeds from South America to Java and took over the supervision of the Dutch *cinchona* plantations from another German scientist. Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn (1809–1864), "the Humboldt of Java" (Goss 2014, 10), started the plantation of the tree but had to leave the Dutch colony in the 1850s. Gustav Mann (1836–1916) had been a botanist and gardener at the influential Kew Gardens in London. And last but not least, Philipp Phoebus (1804–1880), Professor at University of Gießen since 1843, founded the first German Institute of Pharmacology and was in close contact with the Dutch empire with respect to botanical research on *cinchona*.[6]

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In the second half of the 19th century, the Dutch and the British Empire experimented with illegally extracted specimen and tried to transplant *cinchona* seedlings that had survived the passage or to sow new seedlings into environments under their colonial rule. While some regions in British India were also quite successful in growing *cinchonas*, the Dutch plantations in Indonesia—where the botanical garden of Buitenzorg had been established already in 1817 (Headrick 1988, 212)—overtook for almost a century the role of the worldwide biggest provider of *cinchona* bark:

> By the early 1860s over a million cinchona trees grew in Java. (Headrick 1988, 232)

> [T]he amount of cinchona bark being shipped to Europe from Java increased from 124.000 kg in 1880 to 2.901.000 kg in 1890. (Goss 2014, 11)

> In den 1930er Jahren war der Chinarindenanbau auf Java so weit optimiert, dass 97 % des weltweit verwendeten Chinins aus den ca. 10 Millionen Kilogramm der dort gewonnenen Chinarinde stammten. (Streller and Roth 2012, 235)[7]

Between 1890 and 1940, the *cinchona* bark market was dominated by the Dutch colonial state that introduced the *Quinine Agreement* in 1913, which led to the worldwide first pharmaceutical cartel that regulated the prices of *cinchona* bark as well as those of *quinine* (Goss 2014).

With respect to *cinchona* plantations, botanists and botanical gardens, colonial officials and administrators, physicians, geographers, but also private individuals were involved in distributed networks proliferating the *plantationoscene* (Haraway et al. 2016)—where scientific, colonial-administrative, and

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6 Elian Schure drew my attention to a publication on Phoebus and his botanical identifications of *cinchona* bark for the Dutch empire (cf. Lambers 2019).

7 "In the 1930s, cinchona cultivation on Java had been optimized to such an extent that 97% of the quinine used worldwide came from the approximately 10 million kilograms of cinchona bark harvested there." (Streller and Roth 2012, 235; transl. CH)

economic interests and practices were closely interwoven. The role of botany in colonialism has already been discussed by diverse authors: Headrick (1988) shows that botany is more than just a scientific discipline, but a highly relevant *technology of empire*. He presents "Economic Botany and Tropical Plantations" (ch. 7) as one of the "tentacles of progress" that characterize imperialism and colonialism—besides infrastructures of shipping, railways, telecommunications, mining, and others.[8] Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan's collected volume, *Colonial Botany*, presents seminal insights into colonial governance, appropriation, and translation of indigenous knowledges, as well as into 'cash crops' and technologies of accumulation with respect to botany. Andrew Goss (2011) coins the term "floracrats" and points to the state relationalities of colonial botany. Katja Kaiser's comprehensive research (2021) writes the history of the *Botanische Zentralstelle für die deutschen Kolonien* [Botanical Research Centre for the German Colonies] that was established and funded in 1891 by the Foreign Office together with the Prussian Ministry of Education of the German Reich and affiliated to the Botanical Garden and Museum in Berlin. The volume discusses meticulously the conceptual debates and the practices of collecting and sowing, of plant transfers from and towards the colonies as well as the activities of knowledge generation, education, and dissemination. It clearly demonstrates the colonial involvement of these centralized German botanical institutions.

Extensive research precedes and accompanies *cinchona* plantations: Experiments are carried out with respect to planting, breeding, hybridization, grafting (with the aim to increase the bark's *quinine* content), as well as to bark harvesting, extracting *quinine* and other alkaloids, and evaluating *quinine* concentration of different *cinchona* species. Environmental discussions and scientific speculations revolve around living conditions of this plant by addressing questions of climate, geology, soils, temperature, rainfall, altitude, etc. Besides botanical questions in the narrow sense, other environmental dimensions play a role in the decision where to start a *cinchona* plantation. As further co-operation partners, we have to count in technologies and infrastructures like the steam machine, the steam ship, trains, and railway systems: The location of plantations is interrelated to infrastructures that enable to reach the plantations and to transport the barks—sometimes the *cinchonas* follow the infrastructures, sometimes new railways are built to

8 With respect to "Africa as a Living Laboratory" for scientific disciplines beyond botany, their colonial genealogies and legacies, see Tilley 2011 as well as Hanke 2024.

follow and to reach *cinchona* plantations. *Cinchona* plants, barks, and bark extracts are circulated in a heterogenous network with very different actors, as e.g. colonial administrations, industry, and private sponsors; we meet scientific actors from botany, chemistry, pharmacy, medicine, public health, and tropical hygiene. While listing different scientific fields, we have to take into account that these scientific branches are not yet clearly differentiated from each other, as they evolve in collaboration-with, in co-production: They are becoming-together with new substances as *quinine* among others. More actors are to be named: We could meet gardeners, as well as forced laborers on plantations and "doubly free wage laborers" in the beginnings of the chemical-pharmaceutical industries (although it is quite difficult to meet these workers as they are visible in the colonial material only through the lens of the archival power grain (Stoler 2009; Foucault [1979]; Hartmann 2007)). Colonial botany is furthermore an inter-imperial network of collaboration and exchange: Besides acting in national interest, botanical institutions exchange plants and seedlings internationally, send specimen to institutions of other Empires to identify their genus or—as in our case—the *quinine* content of the barks of different *cinchona* species, they send out and receive publications, they visit plantations of different colonial regimes, taking example, learning from each other, etc.

Although the knowledge alone will not make a successful plantation—because all this also depends on whether the *cinchonas* can be 'interested', 'enrolled,' and 'mobilized' to grow and to build up as much *quinine* as possible in its bark in the conditions where they are planted (Callon 1984).

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In its phase of formal colonialism from 1884 to 1919, the German Reich enacted its imperial aspirations also through the installation of plantations of different plants including *cinchonas*.[9] Inspired by other colonial plantations and within nationalist and capitalist competition dynamics, German colonial actors aimed at cultivating their 'own' *quinine* source and began experimenting with plantations of *cinchona* trees in Africa. The above-mentioned newly established *Botanische Zentralstelle* acts as intermediary in this context by sending

9 The German Empire's involvement with colonial plantations did neither start 1884, nor end with WWI. However, a full discussion of this would go beyond the scope of this article and must be postponed.

out seeds, seedlings as well as gardeners for these endeavors. Adolfo Frederico Moller reported in 1898 in the journal *Der Tropenpflanzer. Zeitschrift für Tropische Landwirtschaft* [The Tropical Planter. Journal for Tropical Agriculture] about the *cinchona* plantations on the Portuguese colony of São Thomé, where 1,6 million trees had been planted between 1880 and 1887 (150f, cf. Cabral and Pita 2015), before the focus shifted to coffee, rubber trees, and cacao because of the falling prizes for *cinchona* barks. Walter Busse, Member of the *Kaiserlich Biologische Anstalt für Land- und Forstwirtschaft* [Imperial Biological Institute for Agriculture and Forestry] in Berlin, visited Java in 1902/1903 to examine the practices of the botanical garden Buitenzorg and of the *cinchona* plantations of the Dutch Empire. He published an extended paper (1906) in the same journal with explicit recommendations for planting *cinchona* in colonial Cameroon and East-Afrika. The Dutch plantations on Java serve him as models for such plantation.

With respect to this, some smaller experimental efforts have been made around Mount Cameroon supported by the *Botanische Garten und Versuchsanstalt Landeskultur* [Botanical Garden] Victoria and experimental station] since 1902, but bigger and more successful *cinchona* plantations were realized in the Amani region in today's Tanzania, where the *Kaiserliche Biologisch-Landwirtschaftliche Institut* [Imperial Biological-Agricultural Institute] Amani, a comprehensive research station on botanical and agricultural questions, was established in 1902 (Chachage et al. 2025; cf. Geißler et al. 2020):

> The Imperial Biological-Agricultural Institute Amani (*Kaiserlich Biologisch-Landwirtschaftliches Institut Amani*) was one of the largest and most influential botanical institutes of the German Empire (*Deutsches Reich*), which promoted the research and cultivation of crops in the former colony of "German East Africa" (*"Deutsch-Ostafrika"*). In the spirit of imperial competitive thinking, the declared aim was to build up the largest botanical garden in the world, following the example of the Botanical Garden of the Netherlands Buitenzorg/Bogor on Java (today: Bogor Botanical Gardens). It was built in the eastern Usambara Mountains near strategically important trade routes, in a climate that was pleasant for Europeans and in a promising vegetation zone. Formally, it was subordinate to the Botanical Central Office for the German Colonies (*Botanische Zentralstelle für die deutschen Kolonien*). The founding of the Amani Institute can be traced back to an interplay between private economic interests and those of the German Empire (*Deutsches Reich*), as well as the initiative of the first director Franz Stuhlmann (1863–1928) – which clearly shows the close intertwining of scientific and economic objectives of the Institute. The establishment of the

> institute and the planting of experimental plantations – without taking into account the already existing traditional forms of farming and agriculture – was associated with serious interventions in the existing ecological and economic systems, landscapes, property relations as well as social structures. (Amani Institute)

Cinchonas have been planted by the institute itself as well as in the region by private plantation associations that had been supplied with plants by the institute. Compared to the plantations on Java with millions of trees, these plantations were quite small, but still productive.

Adolf Engler, director of the central Botanical Garden in Berlin, reports the planting of 2.500 trees in 1903 (65). In the following years, the director of the institute, Franz Stuhlmann, and his vice-director Albrecht Zimmermann, regularly report results of the breeding and farming of *cinchonas* in the *Berichte über Land- und Forstwirtschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika*. *Cinchona* quickly becomes recognized as the most important medicinal plant that is cultivated in Amani (Zimmermann 1904, 218). Stuhlmann (1906, 483f) reports the planting of 2.700 *Cinchona robusta* and the existence of "Cinchona Ledgeriana (6587 Pfl.), Cinchona succirubra (9049 Pfl.) und Hybriden (3658 Pfl.)" for the year 1905/06.[10] For the year 1909/10, he states:

> Die ältesten Hybriden wurden zum erstenmal ganz durchgelichtet; die hierbei geerntete Rinde (403 kg) wurde von der Firma Zimmer & Co. in Frankfurt verarbeitet. Der Chiningehalt derselben betrug 5,5 %, war also durchaus befriedigend. (Stuhlmann 1911, 270)[11]

The bark amount—according to Willy Dethloff's book *Chinin* [Quinine], that has been published during German fascism in 1944—rises up to 3.566 *kilogram* of bark in 1913 (Dethloff 1944, 107–108). The situation with colonial *cinchona* plantations of the German Reich and the *quinine* supply significantly changes during WWI, which has to be discussed in another paper. Compared with the

10 The exactness of counting hints to the Prussian meticulous bureaucracy, that can be observed in all the administrative archival material within the German colonies – it performs the specific bureaucratic dimensions in German colonial rule, which has to be discussed elsewhere.

11 "The oldest hybrids were thoroughly thinned out for the first time; the bark harvested (403 kg) was processed by Zimmer & Co. in Frankfurt. Its quinine content was 5.5%, which was quite satisfactory." (Stuhlmann 1911 270, transl. CH)

amounts of bark on the world market (2.901 *tons* of bark had been exported from Java to Europe already in 1890, according to Goss 2014, 11), the amount of bark of German colonial plantations are just a very small part of the world's bark production.

Stuhlmann's quotation reveals the transport of 403 kg of *cinchona* bark from Amani to *Firma Zimmer & Co.* in Frankfurt for processing, which is one of the influental *quinine* fabrications in the German Reich. Since the 1820s, manufacturing respectively extracting *quinine* and other alkaloids from *cinchona* bark became more and more industrialized. History of industrialization can be told through the production of *quinine*: New technologies and energy suppliers as steam machines are used in grinding the bark, new factories are founded that solely focus on the production of *quinine*, and the substance becomes an industrial mass commodity. Processing *cinchona barks* in order to extract *quinine* becomes an important factor in the genealogy of chemical and pharmaceutical industry in the Global North. *Quinine* extracting factories have been built in the Netherlands, in Italy, in Portugal, in the US, in the UK, and in Germany and: "The Dutch consolidation over the Cinchona supply was furthered by the creation of the first successful quinine factory outside of Europe or North America" (Goss 2014, 13), namely in Bandung, West Java in 1896.

Several German *quinine* fabrications can be identified: *Friedrich Koch*, as a pharmacist in Oppenheim, started to produce *quinine* in the 1820s but sold his production to *Materialwarenhandel* [material trade] *Jobst*, who then established an own *quinine* production as *Chininfabrik Jobst* (Ziegler 2003). Involving a steam machine to grind the barks in the 1850s, the company later became *Zimmer & Co*, and was then bought by *Boehringer* in 1926. *Hermann Buchlers Chininfabrik Braunschweig* (since 1858), *C.F. Boehringer & Söhne* (Christian Friedrich Boehringer & Sons, since 1859), as well as *Chininfabrik Auerbach* (founded by August Seyferth in 1892) have been other *quinine* production facilities in the German Reich. The synthetical production of *quinine* was only possible from 1944 (Goss 2014, 18).

It is not least against this backdrop that the close relationality between colonialism and the chemical and pharmaceutical industries in the Global North, especially for Germany, becomes apparent.

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Cinchonas, their bark, and *quinine* thus become colonial commodities in which plantation economy and industrialization are closely related. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the plantations are run by enforced and enslaved labor and the *quinine* obtained became a significant economic factor that drove European colonization and industrialization and, in both cases, "nfrastructuralization."

More brutal measures against malaria than *quinine* prescription have been taken by the German imperial government in Cameroon: Hans Ziemann, colonial physician in Cameroon recommended to create a "cordon sanitaire" more than 1 km wide in Douala—to spatially separate the *white* colonists from the Black city residents—referring to the ubiquitous racist narrative of "*malaria* carriers" (Eckart 1988, 364).

The imperial infrastructure plan was envisioned by the German colonial administration as a reconstruction of Douala into a "moderne Stadt [...], als Aushängeschild deutschen kolonialen Unterfangens, zudem als Großhafen und damit Angelpunkt wilhelminischer Weltpolitik" ["modern city [...], as a flagship of German colonial endeavors, as well as a major port and thus a hub of Wilhelminian [German imperial] world politics"] (Wirz 1980, 227). Anti-colonial resistance rises against the violent resettlements by the imperial administration. The uprisings against the dispossessions and evictions and their brutal suppression, as well as the execution of the resistance leaders Rudolf Manga Bell and Adolpho Ngoso Din by the German colonial authorities, have received some media attention in Germany only since some years (Weber 2019; Dziedzic 2022). Manga Bell has a German-language Wikipedia entry since November 2019, but none has been published for Adolpho Ngoso Din so far. From April 2021 to April 2024, the *Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt* (MARKK)'s exhibition "Hey Hamburg, do you know Duala Manga Bell?" brought the brutality of German colonial history back to public memory. And the *German National Archive* (Bundesarchiv 2024, 64–95) published documents from their collection concerning Duala Bell's anti-colonial resistance. A full rehabilitation of the two by the state of Germany as a successor state of the German Empire has not been implemented to date and is still pending.

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We nowadays know *quinine* primarily as the bitter ingredient in tonic water and its favorite use in *Gin & Tonic*. The substance is, as I have shown, closely related to colonialism. Not only has *quinine* been used as a tool of empire in constituting as well as fighting *malaria* in order to empower imperial soldiers, farmers, administrators, etc., in their colonization efforts. Moreover, have these imperial powers strived to grow *cinchona* trees as a resource for their *quinine* production—thereby installing colonial plantations with enforced labor and enforced plant growth—mostly taking more care for the plants than for the workers (cf. Rudge 2022).

The medical prescription of *quinine* had, among many other variants, included mixing the very bitter substance with sugar as well as with alcohol–often the at that time popular spirit Gin was used„ as the opening quotation proposes. Against this background and the botanical, pharmaceutical, and public health practices discussed in this paper, the contemporary popular drink *Gin & Tonic* has bitter relationalities to colonialism (cf. Sourial 2019).

Despite the deep colonial history of *quinine* and *malaria*, it is unabashedly and with pride, that its colonial genealogy of tonic water and the drink *Gin & Tonic* is celebrated to this day. Pop culture and food chemistry often recount the story with a sense of delight. The *Bayerische Landesamt für Gesundheit und Lebensmittelsicherheit* (LGL) [Bavarian Office for Health and Food Safety] for example, articulates a remarkably pro-colonial euphoria about *quinine* on their website:

> Chinin wird heutzutage wegen seines stark bitteren Geschmacks Bitterspirituosen und einigen alkoholfreien Erfrischungsgetränken wie Tonic Water und den fruchtsafthaltigen Limonaden Bitter-Orange und Bitter-Lemon als Aromakomponente zugesetzt. Zu Kolonialzeiten spielten die letztgenannten Getränke eine viel wichtigere Rolle als heutzutage, denn die Entwicklung von Indian Tonic Water stellte eine geniale Idee dar, die zur Malariaprophylaxe notwendige – aber lästige – Chinindosis in Form von Limonade aufzunehmen. Die in den Malariagebieten stationierten Kolonialoffiziere des British Empire nahmen das Getränk wohlwollend an und verhalfen damit zu seinem weltweiten Siegeszug. (Lassek and Klasna o.J.)[12]

12 "Nowadays, quinine is added as a flavoring component to bitter spirits and some non-alcoholic soft drinks such as tonic water and the fruit juice-containing lemonades bitter orange and bitter lemon because of its strongly bitter taste. In colonial times, the latter drinks played a much more important role than they do today, because the development of Indian tonic water represented an ingenious idea for taking the – but troublesome – dose of quinine needed for malaria prophylaxis in the form of lemonade. The British Empire's colonial officers stationed in malaria-endemic areas embraced the drink, helping to launch its global triumph." (Lassek and Klasna, transl. CH)

"Apart form the point that tonic water is unlikely to contain enough *quinine* to prevent *malaria*, to put it as an "ingenious idea" to mix *quinine* with lemonade, is a rather questionable celebration of the colonial legacy of tonic water. So, not only has *quinine* proliferated colonialism by being promoted and distributed as an anti-malarial medical drug, but also the other way around: colonialism has popularized *Gin & Tonic* as a long drink cocktail.

Local "micro-breweries" of tonic water as well as industrially produced tonic water in different aromas, containing the bitter substance from *cinchona* trees, became popular in Germany in the last years. I myself have fallen for the bitter-sweet taste of tonic water and *Gin & Tonic*, and have even started brewing tonic syrup myself with *cinchona* bark that I purchased from a specialized pharmacy.[13] Thus, a new taste trend of tonic water is emerging—or is this a re-enactment of a colonial legacy? The relationality of *Gin & Tonic* to other racialized, gendered, and classist "taste tanks," as for example cocoa (Bergermann 2025), needs to be analyzed in more detail.

With this bitter taste of *quinine* mixed with soda and Gin on my tongue: To your health!

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13 A shout-out to Nanna Heidenreich, who introduced me to this practice of micro-brewing.

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R

Racism

Aleo Susan Arndt

Racism has invented 'human races'. To be more precise: White people have invented 'races' to implement racism as a sword and shield of colonialism, global economic exploitation, and *white* supremacist nationalism. This dates back to antiquity, while still affecting every single pore of glocal societal dynamics till date.

Throughout the centuries, the *white* architects of racism held different opinions about how to map 'races' and, somewhat consequentially, how many thereof do exist. Yet, there was one agreement that was always reproduced and never detested by them, because this claim is the sole goal of racism: to claim white superiority. Designed to grant power and privileges to *white* people, racism and its theories of "race" always boil down to holding that there are several "races" and that only one of them represents fully fledged humanity, hence being superior to all others—and this was the 'white race'. In other words, racism does not just violate People of Color, *white* people also want to feel right about this.

The claim that all other 'races' would lack full humanity is constructed by racism as a permission, and even obligation, that the 'white race' has to tame, civilise, erase those they construct as their "Other"—even by means that would not be accepted when brought upon white people (somewhat arguing: those, who are not fully human, would not be eligible to be treated in a human way). This narrative turned the actual motivation of conquering other continents and stealing respective territories, resources, and human lives, i.e. the economic greed and greed for power, and therefore committing major crimes like murder, torture, rape, and genocide in the process, upside down. Europe kept disguising its economic interests and the blunt violence to feed that greed, by claiming that white people are superior and hence "obliged" to missionize, civilize or erase other "races," because these were not fully human. In fact, however, *white* people, driven by their greed for accumulation and power, were the ones who violated and lost what it means to be human.

This is why racism is 'white supremacy'. Because racism is a *white* power structure that makes sure that *white* people stay in power by keeping *white* spaces *white* and while pampering *white* people with privileges—like a privileged access to economic resources, belonging or rights (eben of violating others). Those who cannot access *white* power structures and privileges and who, even worse, are the ones to pay the price (even literally, in as much as *white* supremacists forced them into unpaid labor, for example), experience this as oppression, exploitation, and discrimination. This is neither an opinion nor about sensitivity that feeds into identity. This is about structural racism that positions each and everyone on this planet, granting power and access to privileges or not. While those who are discriminated against by racism cannot but know this, one of the many *white* privileges is to even not be aware thereof and to even declare racism to be People of Color's problem only. While any belief in the existence of 'human races' is a racist one, racism has been shaping the world radically and lastingly. Therefore, a "racial turn" is needed that denies the existence of 'race' as a biological category, while denominating *race* (in italics) as major pillar for structural racism. This is addressed, for example, when speaking of *white(ness)* (in italics), Blackness, or People of Color.

Since antiquity, European conceptions of freedom and democracy have been deeply intertwined with exclusivity—reserved primarily for financially privileged men. Initially idealized through the figures of Greek and Roman citizens, this notion later evolved into a framework centered on *white* Christian cis-men. At its core, the underlying argument—though logically flawed—was starkly consistent: only Greek, Roman, and subsequently *white* Christian men were deemed capable of reason and thus the only ones to represent culture. All other human beings were rather close to "nature" and hence destined to be ruled. Yet, the more culture, the more superior; and the more nature, the more inferior and hence to be tamed. All constructed as nature—including all women, non-Christians, People of Color, and non-heteronormative subjects—were systematically associated with emotion and irrationality and thus the absence of reason and progress. Consequently, they were positioned as inherently unfit for autonomy and as being in need of male (*white* Christian) governance. This formula was meant to entitle *white* Greek/Christian man to being morally obligated to govern the world according to their own interests. And it was projected onto human bodies. The effects were far-reaching: women were denied political participation, queerness was pathologized and criminalized, while racism was made, ordered by European, North American and colonialist law, a structuring principle of both domestic orders and attitudes of globalization. These implementations of injustice were not just mere accidents of Western democracy. Rather, they were foundational to its inauguration. This hierarchical model was inscribed into global and local social orders and institutionalized through institutions of dominations. European laws did not only not criminalize racism. They allowed and ordered racist violation of People of Color's rights.

To make this work ideologically and to translate this world-making into word-making, 'races' were narrated. To do so, bodily differences were invented by constructing 'skin color', mapping skeletons and skulls, categorising blood and gens, while locating thus constructed collective bodies in certain spaces and religions. Thus, 'race‘ has always been closely intertwined with body, religion and geographical place. This evolved in a total of six phases to date, while spreading out into the overlapping and yet distinct modes of antisemitism, anti-Black racism, orientalist and anti-Muslim racism, anticiganism and anti-Indigenous racism. Any of such strands of racism was affecting different spaces and times differently, again in given dis*continuities of the following six phases.

Phase I: Theological Foundations of Colonialism: The Era of 'Skin Color'

The first phase of racism began in early modern Europe, very much designed as a theological theorizations of 'race‘. When colonially conquering other continents and stealing respective territories, resources and human lives; while committing major crimes like murder, torture, rape, and genocide in the process, Europe kept disguising its economic interests and the blunt violence, by claiming its superiority and the obligation of having been given the task (by the Christian God) to missionize, civilize, or erase other 'races'. This construct was simultaneously also employed for racist discrimination within Europe. 1492 is a major caesura with respect to this.

After many centuries of war and conflicts between Muslim and Catholic societies, in 1492 Queen Isabella eventually managed to win over Emir Muhammad XII of Granada – the Emir of the Emirate of Granada. Violating the peace contract, the Catholic crown started to put high taxes on the Muslim—and Jewish—population and confiscated their properties, eventually also expelling

Jewish and Muslim populations from the Iberian Peninsula. This was accompanied by racist decrees. And just as much as the wealth expropriated from these expulsions funded the conquest of the Americas and other colonial ventures, the racism informing the decrees against Jews and Muslims correlated with the emergent Indigenous racism. Of course, people do not leave their homes voluntarily or give their resources or territories to intruders. To expel Jews and Muslims and to steal resources from Indigenous Peoples, Christian Europe needed to employ blunt violence. To not just do so, but to also feel legitimated by God and law (in given intersections), Christian authorities convened councils like the Disputation of Valladolid (1550–51), designed to conclude that Indigenous peoples were not fully human but 'part of nature' and, as such, not entitled to own land and rights, but to be tamed and cultivated (just like their land) by Christian rule. And this centring of Christianity as well as the claim that Europe has to be Christian only, also was to legitimate the racism against Jews and Muslims in all across Europe.

Non-Christians were not simply excluded—they were Othered into being ontologically inferior. And this comprised the claim that they have to be baptized to become better human beings, while claiming that they can never be fully Christian, i.e. human—no matter the efforts of the 'only true', namely *white*, Christian efforts. The logic of missionary violence emerged here: to dominate others not despite Christian ethics, but because of it. Salvation became indistinguishable from conquest.

In this early phase of racism, 'race' constructions were first and foremost drawn from mapping "skin color." "Skin color" of course, does not exist like this. When racism speaks of "skin color," this is a racist abstraction (no human being is white or black), coded by the Christian colour symbolism that had already implanted the narrative of 'white' meaning good, virtue, beautiful, god-like; and 'black' meaning evil, monstrosity, evil, and devilish.

Moreover, climate theories that have been narrated ever since Antiquity played into this model, holding that an intensely hot climate burns skin just as much as hair and brains. This claim has informed the Greek term for all Africans (minus Egypt), i.e.

Aithiopier. Derived etymologically from Greek *aethio* "I burn" and [*ops*] "face," i.e. "burnt face," the Greek idea of humans being 'black' has always been about being burned and intellectually drained. This racist ideologeme also informs another Greek term for Africans, namely the term Black, i.e. "μαυρο" or "mavro." Transferring it onto Africans and African-diasporic people, the m-word—just as the later (Portugese) word for Black, i.e. the 'n-word,' was derogative and deeply embedded in ideas of "race" (Arndt 118–125).

Phase II: Enlightenment and the Codification of 'Race'

During Enlightenment, racism turned into its second phase. On the one hand, Enlightenment was into overcoming theocentrism and implementing secularization, while proclaiming equality and freedom as core goals of emergent democracy and modernism. Yet, the Maafa (European enslavement of Africans) had fuelled Europe's Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment at large did not mind this. Even though abolitionism was accelerated in Enlightenment (it started, when the first Black person was enslaved, because they did not agree), the *white* abolitionism did not question "race theories". To the contrary, the majority of protagonists of Enlightenment, especially in Germany, were in favor of the Maafa and thus invested into developing new "race theories" in a pseudoscientific way.

Enlightenment philosophers like David Hume (1748) or Immanuel Kant (1764, 1775, 1781, 1798) were key figures in the theorization of 'race'. In doing so, they still argued along the pattern of "skin-color"-constructions—now mapping four, namely "white", "black", "red", and "yellow". Yet, constructions of "skin color" were very much theologically coded and, moreover, originally designed by climate theories that would link hot climate to inferiority. With *white* people now living in the colonial space, this logics did not help to claim the superiority of whiteness. This explains why the Enlightenment's complemented "skin-color"-constructions with skeleton and skulls as new major prisms of mapping "races".

In doing so, they argued that Black people have no capacity to speak, to progress, to know, to create arts, to mould history, and hence are rightfully enslaved (Kant 4: 253). The Enlightenment's ideas of freedom, equality, and democracy were *white* supremacist brotherhood islands in a very literal sense. The Enlightenment insisted that freedom and equality, voting rights and the right to be protected by the law, were privileges of *white* Christian men only—and that these were right because all other genders and 'races' would be closer to "nature" and hence not fully human. What is more, laws explicitly allowed the violation of colonized and enslaved people. Thus tuned, Enlightenment framed its violation of the world as doing them a favor—claiming it were the duty and burden of *white* men to "civilize" those that were not capable thereof. Even though this was doomed to failure.

Phase III: Nationalism, Eugenics, and the Radicalization of "Race Theories"

In the 19th century, colonialism accelerated into imperialism and modern nation-states emerged. Imperialism adjusted racism to its needs, and so did the emergent nation-states' nationalism. This synthesis of 'race' and 'nation/alism' is absorbed by the German term for people, "Volk." Unlike the French term "les people," it does not mean "all." Rather, "Volk" is about the 'race' of the German nation.

New developments in other sciences, such as Darwinism or Genetics impacted the theorizing of 'race.' For one thing, acknowledging the impossibility to map 'race' along "skeleton" or "skulls," now blood and the "invisible" genes were added as seemingly perfect means to claim populistically (i.e. lyingly and without being easily caught for it) that gens determine and carry 'race'.

For another, Darwin's idea of the "survival of the fittest" (1874) was, amongst others by his cousin Francis Galton (1892), translated into Social Darwinism that argued that higher classes have to fight 'races', accordingly, have to fight lower 'races' so as to prevent the "white race" from degeneration. Richard Stewart Chamberlain in his "*Die Grundlagen des XIX. Jahrhunderts*" (1899) argued that most *white* nations had already been "degenerated," yet the "deutsche Volk"—the Aryans—were still most pure and hence most to be protected.

This new design of 'race theories' culminated in the rise of eugenics and racial hygiene, taking shapes in the colonies and respective racist law against Romani people in Europe. National Socialism, however, accelerated eugenics into laws ("Nürnberger Gesetze") that were to bereft Jews and Roma, as well as many other people of their civic rights and eventually ordered the sterilization and deportation of Jewish and Romani people as well as of homosexual people—accelerating into the Shoah, the Porajmos, and the mass murder of Slavic peoples.

Phase IV: Denial, Evasion, and Continuities

After the defeat of National Socialism racism was far from gone. It was still serving as sword and shield of late colonialism and its wars against the resistance movements on all continents. Moreover, nations built from *white* settler colonies kept using racism as well as tools of segregation. The Apartheid South Africa and the Jim Crow era in the US are just the tip of the iceberg thereof. After all, all European nation states kept insisting on whiteness as norm/ality—while discriminating against People of color who are most commonly called "migrants," irrespective of their state of citizenship. What is new, though, is that *white* societies—largely shocked from National Socialism's rather than colonialism's atrocities—did not feel comfortable with overt racism any more. This led to a turn towards "evasion" often also called "colour blindness." Many *white* people in the Global North opted for the seemingly "liberal" gesture to not see 'race' (Morrison 9–10). This, however, did mean first and foremost to not speak about one's own whiteness and the ways in which racism grants power and privilege to white people. It meant not to speak about racism.

But where racism is not addressed, it cannot be overcome. And it wasn't. While whiteness thus was turned into an unmarked marker of norm/ality (Frankenberg 5), it kept *white* privileges alive, while discriminating against People of Color in terms of law (e.g. racial profiling), belonging and representation—from who is holding powerful positions in all sorts of branches to who is narrated in media, school books, or the arts versus who is silenced. The idea of European or North American nation state was still heavily loaded with the claim that it was *white* and Christian only. It is true.

After many centuries of the law advocating racism, ever since the late 20th century, Europe (similar to North America, South Africa, or Australia) also issued laws that are to prevent racism. But they have not been as effective as they should be. The fortress Europe policy has been eager to prevent migrants from coming to Europe, while also treating all People of Color (irrespective of their passport) as "foreign" to the white nation states. And in the midst of evasion, structural racism was rather repudiated than addressed.

In Germany, this new trend saw, from the early 2000s onwards, the emergence of buzz-words like "bunte Republik" that celebrates "diversity" without taking ongoing power constellations seriously. Schools and universities headed to claim themselves as "Schule ohne Rassismus" or "weltoffene Hochschule" without bothering to look into the impact of structural racism.

The University of Bayreuth is not any different here. The head of the University likes to celebrate its African Studies Centre as "diversity," while being resistant to implementing the monitoring and naming of racism. For a very long time, to name racism was branded as damaging the university's reputation. It was due to the shift brought about by Rüdiger Seesemann and his team that, eventually, an Anti-Racist Committee was founded that, after some years of interventional work, will be integrated into the official universitarian structures—and thus enables to start the work from monitoring racism, offering trainings for *white* people and empowerment measurements for People of Color. Because only where racism is addressed, and white persons take their respective responsibilities seriously, can People of Color somewhat trust the institution to actually fight racism.

Phase V: Fascist Resurgence and the Crisis of the Present

After many centuries of overt racism and some tiny decades of evading to address it, we are now in racism's fifth phase. Fascism has returned to being loud and shameless. Right-wing extremist parties and intellectuals overtly demand a return to *white* supremacy's prime narrative that 'higher races' have to fight the 'lower ones' and that the 'white race' has to be prevented from being degenerated. Remigration and Ethnopluralism, both being core terms of the German fascist party AfD as founded in 2016, are propagating that each "Volk" has to stay in the territories that Europe has in mind for them, which first and foremost means that Germany and Europe belong to *white* people with Christian socialization patterns only. That such parties exist is but part of the problem. That they are elected, by up to a third of the population, is an even more severe challenge. Most devastating though is that all other parties, and particularly the CDU/CSU that has always run the Bavarian government, are openly holding and defending racist positions—while rebuilding anti-discrimination policies and laws as well as the asylum-law that Germany had signed on as a lesson learnt and responsibility taken from National Socialism.

Germany's contemporary chancellor, Friedrich Merz, has praised one of the most eugenic books after 1945, Thilo Sarrazins' "*Deutschland schafft sich ab*" (2010). It propagates late 19th century degenerational racism as landmark for Germany's future. Merz also called the killing of Iranians by the Israeli government as "Drecksarbeit." And while the AfD is using the parliamentary power to abolish anti-discrimination laws and gender-mainstreaming measurements, conservative parties hasten to undo them, too. In 2024, the newly voted CSU parliament of Bavaria (Germany) ordered universities to rewrite all their documents to annul any ways of representing the existence of more than two genders.

I have been grateful that one of the finest *white* man allies of our time, Rüdiger Seesemann, has been my colleague and friend in these hard times of backlash. His awareness is one thing. But his determination to not let things be, to feel anger about discrimination and to have a unique gift of sharing healing empathy whenever needed make all the difference in times like these. You, dear Rüdiger, are the proof to this world that those in power can share it evenly, you are the hope needed to keep on resisting. After all, and we both know it: They rule the world, until they don't.

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Rüdiger and Ole and the Untranslatable Question of Destiny

Clarissa Vierke

Ole sounds like a Swedish name. It could refer to Ole from Astrid Lindgren's "The Noisy Village" ("Die Kinder von Bullerbü"), which Rüdiger certainly used to read to his sons. It could also be the name of a friend Rüdiger watches soccer with. But, as you will see below in the poem, Ole is a friend of those who turn sixty and comes from Mombasa, where both Rüdiger and I spent time in 2006 (when I also accompanied him to his wedding).

Aliyekimbia ole ♦ mwendo wa myaka sitini
Akenda umngojele ♦ ukele mitilizini
Ukamba ndoo tukale, ♦ mwandani wangu mwandani
Aikiuuza ni nani ♦ ukamba simi weleo

He who outran destiny for sixty years
Found it waiting for him, sitting on the threshold.
"Come, sit with me, my dear friend," it said.
"And who are you?" he asked. "Your destiny, of course," it said.
(My translation modified but based on Abdulaziz 1979, 232, 233)

The verses above were composed by the Mombasan poet, Muyaka bin Haji al-Ghassany (1776–1840), famous for writing poetry in an elegant Kimvita, the Mombasa variety of Swahili, and in a poetic genre, the *shairi*, which he is supposed to have reached an unprecedented mastery of. His verses, venerated also by subsequent generations of poets, while uncompromising in prosodic virtuosity, are more secular, popular and bold in spirit—bringing "Swahili poetry out of the mosque to and into the marketplace" (Harries 1962, 2). His poetry comments on social ills, rebels with subtle metaphors against Omani rule, sings verses of love, portrays mundane life in 19th-century Mombasa, and ironically refers to human experience. In the verses above, age is put on stage in a dialogic scene: Destiny welcomes the wanderer at home, where it awaited the sixty-year old and invites him to sit down. The poem stops here, but putting ourselves into the cultural context of 19th-century Mombasa, we can further imagine the two to sit down on the veranda (*baraza*) where they have coffee or tea as well as a betel bite musing about the past sixty years as well as about the future to come.

Ole, which is here translated as destiny, an archaic Swahili word now, is derived from a verb *-oa* "to write" already considered archaic in the dictionary of 19th-century Swahili by Charles Sacleux (1939, 706).[1] The noun *ole,* 'destiny' or 'predestination', literally means 'what has been written down', referring to the notion that Allah has written down what is going to happen to us in life. This is a widespread notion recurring in many now archaic Swahili verses and aphorisms, which are hardly understandable to Swahili speakers anymore, like in the following verse, where *-oa* appears in a passive form: *Loliwelo huwa* "What is written comes true" (Sacleux 1939, 706).[2]

The notion that Allah has written down the course of human life and history into a book, called the "Preserved Tablet" (Lauh al-Mahfuz, اللوح المحفوظ) is not particular to the East African Coast but found widely in the Muslim world. In the 'Sura of the Pilgrimage' of the Quran, we can read for instance (Sura 22,70):

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۗ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ فِى كِتَـٰبٍ ۚ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ

> Do you not know that Allah has knowledge of what the heavens and the earth contain? All is recorded in a book; all this is easy for Allah. (Khanam 2009, 255)

What interests me here is less the common notion of a destiny that is written down by God in a book that provides a blue print for human history and individual biography, but more the specific Swahili semantics. I am more interested in the "untranslatable," i.e. in the nuances and web of meanings of the

1 There are two words which sound alike but have different roots, namely, *-oa* "to marry" and *-oa* or *-owa*, "to bathe." Lots of puns, including poetic ones, are made with the homonyms.

2 *–olewa* "to be determined" (in the sense of being written down by God). See also *Mkusudiwa halile, riziki nda olewao*. "He for whom (the food) was intended has not eaten of it; the provisions of Providence are for him for whom they are ordained (who has them written for him)." (Taylor 1891, 63)

Swahili terms. Swahili, for instance, does not simply borrow the Arabic wording (as it does in other contexts). It does not use the word *kitab*, "book," found in the Arabic Sura above, which is otherwise a common loanword for book (*kitabu*) in Swahili, but, in expressing a similar concept, makes use of this particular archaic Bantu form derived from *-oa* "to write" which opens up a different conceptualization.[3]

With regard to its etymology, my most important sources, William Taylor (1891, 44), the Anglican Bishop who collected aphorisms and verses in Mombasa in the 19th century in collaboration with the reputed scholar Mwalimu Sikujua, and the White Father, Charles Sacleux (1939, 706), who compiled the most comprehensive Swahili dictionary including all Swahili dialects, note "to straighten, to direct" as the original meaning of *-oa* and both record an old saying: *Lowe Mauliwa loke, k'ombo nyoa penyi tao*. "Straighten it, my God, that it may be straight; stretch straight the crooked where it is bent."[4]

For both, Sacleux and Taylor, apart from "to write" also meaning "to see," "to behold" is derived from *-oa*. "To see" or rather "to observe" implies "to direct one's gaze or one's eyes." There is an archaic Swahili word *maozi* for "eyes" an agent noun, i.e. a noun that is in control of the action or that has agency, derived from the same verb: the eyes are the ones which direct themselves 'straight' towards the thing to be seen. (How problematic the agency of the senses and in particular the eyes are, who direct their gaze towards the pleasures of the world that seduce the soul and refuse to obey the insight that the world is full of delusion, is the topic of a whole range of Sufi poetry of the time).

-oa, in the sense of "to write," is not merely used with reference to God, but as referring to writing more general and in a quite technical sense (like in the poem quoted below). The semantic connection between *-oa* in the sense of "to write" and "to direct (the pen)" seems obvious, since writing in the Swahili context in the 18th and 19th century meant, first of all, writing verses, which needed a pen that could create straight lines (see below *mistari*) on a page (see below *lahu*). In the *Utendi wa Shufaka*, "The Poem of Compassion," a parable of mercy, the unknown poet, who translated the fable from Arabic sources to

3 Nowadays, I have often heard Swahili Muslims expressing the same idea of predestination with the now commonly used verb *-andika* to "write": *imeshaandikwa* "it has already been written, i.e. predestined."

4 *-oa* is "hidden" in both inflected and derived forms *lowe* "straighten it" and *loke* "it may be straight."

reach wider Swahili audiences as it was typical of the time, calls for writing utensils, "which are a pleasure to write with" or, more literally, "a pleasure to draw straight lines with," in the first stanza.

> Akhi patia hiburi
> Na lahu ya mistari
> Na kalamu ya sifuri
> Ipendezao kwolea
>
> My brother, bring me ink
> And lined paper
> And a copper pen –
> A pleasure to write with
> (Büttner 1894, 3; translation CV)

For Sacleux (1939, 706), the profane meaning of *-oa* "to write" is merely a later extension of the divine act of writing: "En parlant de Dieu, écrire ce qui doit arriver; de là par ext. en parlant de l'homme, écrire en gén." Furthermore, as he seems to suggest, the notion of writing and seeing with regard to God can hardly be separated, since, when discussing the sense of "to see," he also mentions that *-oa* can also mean "prévoir" ("to foresee"). He gives the example: *ambapo Mola hayoa na uchendralo haliwi* "Quand Dieu n'a pas prédestiné (l'événement), ce que l'homme fait ne réussit" (If Gold has not predestined it, whatever man does, will not succeed" (Sacleux 1939, 706). The double-entendre of writing and seeing in *-oa* is hard to keep in translation: "If God has not foreseen it/written it down, . . . "

Most interestingly, and different from Arabic, the common etymology rooted in a notion of "to give something a direction," "to straighten," "to direct" semantically links the sense of vision to the act of writing. Both writing and seeing are actions of directing attention here towards the future or "straightening" the past, writing down in visual signs what has not been aligned in words yet or seeing something that has not become visible yet. In contrast to the oral and the aural, which are important ways of sharing and passing on knowledge in Swahili society, *-oa* emphasizes the visual sense. The eyes have, as discussed before, an active role not merely of perceiving an external object, but rather, as directing the attention towards it or even interacting with it—as much as the pen does.[5] And, if we go by Sacleux's interpretation, the human being's way of seeing and writing is but a (faint) echo of the divine vision and writing of history.[6]

Thus, *ole*, is the destiny or the predestination, the direction life is supposed to take, which has been foreseen and written down by Allah. It is the straight(ened) version, it could take, would we, human beings, not constantly wander about in meandering paths. It is, coming back to the initial verse, also the home, some of us go back to for dinner or a chat on the threshold after long days of meetings, emails, envisioning and forging new cooperations.

There is another aphorism involving *-oa*, which Taylor (1891, 44–45) quotes: "*Kuonana k'olewa* Meeting together is written (by God)." And he comments on it as follows: "When one meets a friend, and the occasion has turned to the profit or pleasure of the parties, on leave-taking one reminds the other that it was not *by chance* they met."

So, Rüdiger, we have not met *by chance* in Mombasa in 2006, or even before that in Bayreuth or after, before the cluster and in the cluster. *Alhamdulillah*. Ole, you and me should have an Erdinger together soon.

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De la santé internationale à la gouvernance sanitaire globale et ses perceptions au Burkina Faso

Yacouba Banhoro

Introduction

Les perceptions des interactions entre la santé globale et la santé locale peuvent varier d'un pays à l'autre. Ici, il s'agit d'une approche ethnographique et historique du cas du Burkina Faso dont la pertinence est bien montrée dans certains travaux de référence (Soubeiga 2018; Storeng 2014, 858–864). La santé globale est née dans un contexte d'accélération de la globalisation économique dite néolibérale de la fin des années 1980, avec comme évènement déclencheur, l'aggravation de la pandémie du VIH/sida dans le monde qui créa une opportunité de changement dans la gouvernance sanitaire. La gouvernance sanitaire internationale a connu des mutations pour donner naissance à la santé globale. La rationalisation de la santé globale commence également dans ce contexte (Hein 2003, 33–34). Elle se fonde souvent sur des bases morales devenues "globales" et ayant guidé la globalisation de la santé (Farmer 2013, 245–286). Le moment de l'apparition de la santé globale ainsi que sa mise en oeuvre jusqu'à nos jours indique bien qu'elle a désormais son histoire.

La question principale à répondre dans cet article est de savoir comment la santé globale et ses effets dans le système de santé local au Burkina Faso sont perçues. Pour répondre à cette question, nous adoptons des approches historique et ethnographique complémentaire qui ont l'avantage de permettre de retracer les temporalités ou moments importants des mutations dans le système sanitaire internationale et nationale et de présenter des analyses découlant de perceptions d'acteurs de terrain au niveau local. La méthodologie combine une revue documentaire et bibliographique ainsi que des enquêtes ethnographiques tendant à décrire et à expliquer les perceptions des actions relatives à la santé globale. Ces travaux se sont déroulés dans le cadre du projet "santé globale et globalisation de la santé" financé par le Centre d'excellence Africa Multiple de l'Université de Bayreuth.

Cet article se propose d'explorer comment la santé globale et la gouvernance sanitaire mondiale sont perçues, comprises et appropriées par les acteurs de terrain au Burkina Faso. Il s'agit d'interroger les représentations, les tensions, mais aussi les formes d'ajustement et de négociation entre normes globales et pratiques locales. Il s'agit, d'abord, de mener une approche conceptuelle de la santé globale, de décrire l'implication du Burkina Faso dans la gouvernance sanitaire globale avant de présenter notre analyse des perceptions de la santé globale.

La santé globale: une approche conceptuelle

Si la nécessité de la santé globale face aux pandémies a déjà été évoquée dans l'introduction, il convient maintenant d'approfondir le concept, d'autant plus que certains titres de travaux scientifiques peuvent créer des confusions (Packard, Pearson).

Nous adoptons ici les définitions de Kelley Lee et de Théodore Brown qui correspondent à notre utilisation du concept. Pour Kelley Lee, en effet, la santé globale est un ensemble de "mouvements transfrontaliers de personnes, de biens, de services, de technologies et d'idées qui ont des impacts sur les déterminants de la santé" (Lee 2001, 77). Pour Théodore Brown *et al.*, la santé globale implique "généralement la prise en compte des besoins de santé des gens de toute la planète, au-delà des inquiétudes de nations spécifiques" (Brown 2006, 62), et le terme *global* est aussi à associer à "l'importance grandissante des acteurs n'étant pas des organisations et agences gouvernementales ou intergouvernementales – par exemple : les médias, les fondations ayant une influence internationale, des ONG et des entreprises transnationales" (Brown 2006). Les concepts de globalisation et de santé globale laissent transparaître, clairement, leurs aspects transnationaux. Ainsi, le sida et d'autres maladies à caractère transnational motivent la mise en place de mouvements sanitaires et de stratégies transnationales pour les combattre, car ces maladies ne menacent pas uniquement la santé de populations locales, mais elles franchissent également les frontières nationales, exposant d'autres régions du monde à un danger vital. Une telle vision globale de la santé n'est pas nouvelle, car elle a conduit à la création de l'OMS. Ce qui paraît nouveau, c'est bien sûr la pandémie du VIH/SIDA. Mais plus encore, c'est la manière dont la lutte contre la maladie est organisée, c'est-à-dire la gouvernance sanitaire globale, qui prend le pas sur la gouvernance sanitaire internationale, laquelle s'appliquait à la période précédant l'explosion du VIH/SIDA.

De nombreuses raisons connexes à la santé soutiennent cette mutation dans la conception de la santé internationale. En effet, le VIH/SIDA est apparu comme un des problèmes de santé publique menaçant directement (infection) ou indirectement (perpétuation de la pauvreté) la santé globale. La santé étant la condition fondamentale de la vie humaine, la base de tout développement social, elle est, alors, la condition *sine qua non* de la croissance économique. Par ailleurs, la mobilisation du soutien international pour contrôler l'expansion de la pandémie est apparue indispensable et considérée comme un investissement utile pour les nations de la planète, dans la mesure où la protection de la santé internationale peut signifier, pour les pays hautement industrialisés, la protection de la santé de leurs propres populations, comme cela fut le cas à la fin du XIXe siècle et au cours de la première moitié du XXe siècle. Elle signifie, également, la sécurisation et le développement de leur économie, la défense de leurs intérêts internationaux, etc. De même, la coopération internationale peut bénéficier aux pays pauvres confrontés à des défis profonds et permanents pour leur développement, à cause de l'impact du SIDA et d'autres problèmes de santé qui aggravent la pauvreté. Partant, de nombreux arguments légitiment la globalisation de la santé. La nouvelle conception de la santé globale constitue un changement paradigmatique par rapport à l'ancien ordre sanitaire, plutôt qualifié d'international. Pour autant qu'elle ait des aspects positifs, la globalisation sanitaire peut aussi avoir des aspects négatifs si des dispositions intelligentes ne sont pas prises, comme le fait remarquer Derek Yach (Yach 1998, 755).

Ainsi, plutôt que d'être dirigé par une seule organisation intergouvernementale, comme l'est la santé internationale avec l'OMS, la gouvernance sanitaire globale est enrichie de nouveaux acteurs autonomes intervenant directement dans plusieurs pays du monde (Banque mondiale, ONUSIDA, GAVI, Fonds mondial, nouvelles organisations internationales), de nouvelles modalités d'intervention dans les États (transnationalité), de nouvelles méthodes de levée de fonds (partenariats public-privé ou PPP), et elle favorise une nouvelle organisation des systèmes de santé dans les pays (décentralisation), etc.

La santé internationale, qui traite les questions de santé entre les États-nations de manière bilatérale ou multilatérale, souvent à travers une organisation intergouvernementale telle que l'OMS, continue de fonctionner, mais elle est devenue une partie de la santé globale.

Comment ces caractéristiques de la nouvelle gouvernance sanitaire se retrouvent au Burkina Faso, pays de l'Afrique occidentale?

La globalisation de la santé au Burkina Faso à partir de 1987

La lutte contre le VIH/SIDA se passe d'abord dans le cadre de la santé internationale, entre 1986 et 1987 sous la direction de l'OMS, seule instance internationale reconnue par les Nations Unies comme ayant la charge de l'organisation mondiale de la lutte. Dans ce cadre, avec l'apparition du VIH/sida en 1981, l'OMS envoie, en 1986, dans le cadre de son premier "Programme Sida", au Burkina Faso, ses Directives OMS pour la prévention du sida et de l'infection par le virus LAV/HTLV-III "qui expliquaient les caractéristiques du virus et les moyens de prévention de la maladie."

C'est surtout dans la mise en œuvre du Programme global sur le sida ou *Global Programme on AIDS* (GPA) adopté en 1987 par l'OMS, que la gouvernance sanitaire globale transparaît. Contrairement au premier programme né avec la vision de l'intégrer dans les structures des soins de santé primaires issues de la déclaration d'Alma Ata, l'équipe du second programme amène les États membres de l'OMS à créer des comités nationaux autonomes de lutte contre le sida. Elle tente de contourner les États, jugés inefficaces, en tissant des relations transnationales avec les ONG et les associations qui, après la conférence de Paris de 1986, devraient être considérées comme des acteurs importants sur le terrain de la lutte. Cette stratégie verticale, transnationale et avec des acteurs privés, a eu pour objectif d'apporter plus directement et rapidement les messages de sensibilisation et l'aide à la lutte.

Au Burkina Faso, cette nouvelle gouvernance sanitaire s'est manifestée en 1987 par l'élaboration d'un plan à court terme (PCT) avec l'appui du GPA (Médah 3). En 1990, le Gouvernement du Burkina Faso crée un Comité National de lutte anti-Sida (CNL-SIDA) telque suggéré par le GPA (Journal officiel du Burkina Faso 197). La présidence du CNL-SIDA est attribuée au ministre de la Santé et de l'action sociale qui est désormais assisté d'autres ministres et d'autres techniciens. Cela a marque la fin du monopole du ministère de la santé dans cette lutte au profit d'une vision de santé publique globale impliquant plusieurs acteurs différents du ministère de la santé. Le CNL-SIDA a donné les orientations nécessaires à l'élaboration des plans à moyen terme (PMT). Mais, entre 1990 et

1994, le Programme global de l'OMS est en difficulté à cause du choix fait par le Directeur général de l'OMS de mettre fin à son caractère vertical au sein de l'OMS et de l'intégrer dans les structures des soins de santé primaires (OMS 119, Mann and Kathleen). Cela est fait en 1992 et les principaux bailleurs de fonds rejettent cette stratégie et arrêtent progressivement d'allouer des fonds à l'OMS dans sa lutte contre le SIDA. Ces difficultés de financement de l'OMS ne permettent pas la mise en œuvre efficace des PMT du Burkina Faso et dont les financements, en dehors de ceux de l'OMS, s'arrêtent en 1995 (Guiard-Schmid 138). Toutefois, à partir des années 1990, des organisations internationales telles que la Banque mondiale (BM), l'UNICEF, le PNUD et l'Union européenne avaient commencé à établir leurs propres programmes de lutte contre le sida en dehors de l'OMS, ce qui permet à l'Etat d'obtenir quelques financements pour certaines activités de lutte contre le sida. Celle-ci commencent ainsi à intervenir directement dans le pays sans passer par l'OMS. Ainsi, grâce à un plan de cinq ans appelé "Plan population et lutte contre le sida" (PPLS) financé par la Banque mondiale, la Norvège et le Burkina Faso, à partir de 1995, l'État obtient un soutien financier inégalé depuis le début de la pandémie pour son programme de lutte.

Avec ce plan commence la troisième phase de la lutte contre le VIH/sida qui correspond à la fin de la toute-puissance de l'OMS dans la santé internationale et l'accélération de la santé globale avec la création, en 1995, de l'ONUSIDA à qui sont transférées, de fait, des fonctions auparavant jouées par le GPA au sein de l'OMS. Le PPLS a permis le financement de nombreux volets de la lutte : les structures institutionnelles de la politique nationale, les actions de prévention, de traitement et de la prise en charge des personnes vivant ou affectées par le VIH/sida et les infections sexuellement transmissibles, la gestion de l'information stratégique. La création du PPLS, puis de l'ONUSIDA, marque le début d'une multiplication et d'une intensification des actions des organisations à caractère global dans la lutte contre le VIH/SIDA et ensuite dans la santé au Burkina Faso.

Nos enquêtes montrent la mise en place de 41 organisations internationales (O.I.) durant la période allant de 1960 à 1995 et 90 O.I. pour celle de 1996 à 2019. Le total de ces O.I. est de 131 en 2019. Ces O.I. n'étaient pas toutes spécialisées dans la santé, mais elles ont, toutes, intégré un volet "santé" dans leurs programmes au fil du temps et en fonction de leurs priorités du moment. Certaines O.I. sont très généralistes et interviennent uniquement dans le financement de la santé (Banque Mondiale et de l'Union Européenne). D'autres O.I. sont spécialisés sur certaines maladies ou des domaines spécifiques de la santé: l'ONUSIDA, le Fonds mondial, GAVI. Il y a aussi des organisations étatiques (PEPFAR des USA), ainsi que des Associations et des ONG internationales privées. L'évolution de la fréquence de l'implantation de ces organisations montre qu'elle s'accéléra entre les années 1995 et 2017. La conversion des O.I. dans le domaine de la santé correspond à la période d'incitation de l'action des ONG et des Associations par le GPA à s'engager dans la lutte contre le VIH/sida et la période de l'accélération de leurs nombres correspond à la mise en œuvre du PPLS, au début de l'accroissement des financements et des activités de lutte contre le VIH/SIDA. Elle correspond aussi à la mise en œuvre des programmes de l'ONUSIDA et de ses organisations coparrainés: OMS, UNESCO, PNUD, FNUAP, UNICEF, Banque mondiale, ONUDC, OIT, PAM, HCR, ONU-femmes). Chacune d'elles a élaboré un programme de lutte contre le VIH/SIDA et est intervenue directement dans le pays avec des financements et la contractualisation de ses activités avec des Associations, des ONG privées, mais, aussi et surtout, avec l'Etat. C'est bien au cours de ces actions et de cette période que la santé globale s'institutionalise au Burkina à travers la multiplication des acteurs globaux, des financements, des activités, et leurs influences sur les processus d'innovation institutionnelle dans le système de santé.

Par-delà tout, le déploiement des OI au Burkina Faso, en multipliant les acteurs, les fonds et les domaines d'interventions, a engagé les organisations à base communautaire telles que les associations et les ONG locales à jouer des fonctions subsidiaires à celles de l'Etat.

Santé globale et perceptions d'acteurs locaux

Après avoir passé en revue le processus de globalisation de la santé, il paraît pertinent de tenter de comprendre comment la santé globale est comprise et appréciée. Un guide d'entretien semi-structuré de collecte de données primaires sur les perceptions de la santé globale a permis d'élaborer ce chapitre. A cet effet, entre décembre 2020 et octobre 2022, une équipe d'agents de collecte d'informations a été constituée pour effectuer des enquêtes qualitatives auprès d'acteurs de trois (3) régions sanitaires du pays que sont : les Hauts-Bassins (Bobo-Dioulasso), le Centre-Nord (Kaya et Kongoussi) et du Centre (Ouagadougou). L'échantillonnage raisonné a privilégié l'expertise de personnes ressources à interroger à des échelles différentes du système de santé national. Cette opération a ciblé, d'une part, des agents des directions sanitaires, des districts sanitaires et des institutions de recherche en sciences de la santé (IRSS/Centre Muraz). D'autre part, elle s'est intéressée à des agents des organisations et programmes de santé internationale et des associations à base communautaire (OBC) ainsi que des responsables de syndicats. En outre, une recherche dans les archives du quotidien burkinabè *Sidwaya* fut menée sur la période de 1996 à 2020 et les débats autour de la notion de santé globale, de la gouvernance sanitaire globale, des acteurs de la santé globale, des appréciations de la santé globale. Contrairement aux enquêtes orales, les archives ont montré une quasi-absence de débat national ou de réflexion autour de ces concepts. Nous analysons les perceptions afin de permettre au lecteur de comprendre les interprétations découlant du terrain d'enquêtes ainsi que les hiatus pouvant exister entre les définitions académiques et les perceptions de la réalité sur le terrain par les personnes interrogées. Ces réponses permettent aussi de lire les interactions entre les principes et valeurs apportés par les acteurs de la santé globale et ceux défendus par les personnes interrogées, pour, *in fine*, mettre en exergue les champs de négociations possibles entre les principes globaux et locaux.

Connaissances de la santé globale et de ses acteurs

Les connaissances sur la santé internationale et la santé globale ne sont pas perçues de manière homogène par les acteurs interrogés. Certains acteurs du système de santé rencontrent des difficultés à trouver ou définir le concept de santé globale. Cependant, les enquêtés spécialisés dans la santé publique en ont une très bonne connaissance et parviennent à construire des définitions qui convergent. Pour un interlocuteur: "*c'est un nouveau concept qui consiste à assurer la santé pour tout le monde, à favoriser la solidarité des uns et des autres, la gratuité des vaccins.*" Pour un autre, *"Elle se manifeste à travers une solidarité internationale, par le partage d´information des expériences à l'échelle mondiale, la prise en compte de toutes les dimensions de la santé aussi bien humaine, environnementale qu'animale."* Pour un troisième, *"c'est l'intégration des différents facteurs individuels, collectifs, nationaux et internationaux aux prises de décisions avec pour objectif l'amélioration de la santé physique et mentale."* Pour un agent public de santé *"La santé globale est, par exemple, la politique déclinée par l'OMS et qui s'applique à tous pays membres des Nations Unies (Médecin de santé publique, 2020)." "La santé globale fait référence au concept de "One Heath." "Elle est aussi perçue comme l'ensemble des programmes et actions de lutte contre pandémies."*

Pour des acteurs associatifs communautaires, le concept de santé globale a émergé dans le contexte sanitaire du Burkina Faso au début des années 2000 et renferme l'ensemble des dimensions de la santé de l'homme. Toutefois, ses objectifs, de même que ses origines restent assez méconnues. Par exemple, pour le représentant de l'Office des transporteurs du Faso (OTRAF), le concept de santé globale et ses interventions sont perçues comme "*une vision donnée du monde de la santé mais sans grand rôle de son contenu en faveur des plus démunis…. pour nous, ce concept ne nous intéresse pas parce que les ficelles sont tirées par des groupes de pression au niveau international dans leur intérêt. Cette situation expliqué aujourd'hui le rôle contesté de l'OMS, personne ne respecte l'OMS, l'OMS n'est pas sérieuse.*" Ici, la santé globale a une connotation assez négative avec des gens tirant les ficelles. Aussi percoit-on que, pour lui, la santé globale dérive des actions de l'OMS et le concept prend peu les intérêts des pauvres en compte.

Quant à la connaissance des acteurs de la santé globale, une large majorité des enquêtés en ont une bonne connaissance. Certains interviewés situent l'émergence des acteurs de la santé globale au Burkina Faso au début de l'année 1990, notamment, avec les projets et programmes de lutte contre le VIH/sida dont le Programme d'Appui au Monde Associatif et Communautaire (PAMAC) et le Programme de marketing social et de communication pour la santé (PROMACO) qui, pour eux, ont été soutenus et financés par la coopération Française. Parmi les acteurs de la santé globale identifiés: les ONGs telles que Save The Children, OXFAM, Solidarité SIDA, Médecin Sans Frontières (MSF) Médecin du Monde (MdM), Hélène Keller International (HKI), Action Contre la Faim (ACF), Conseil Norvégien pour les Réfugiés (NRC), et Plan International, etc., ainsi que des acteurs multilatéraux et bilatéraux tels que l'Ordre de Malte, l'Agence Américaine d'Aide au Développement (USAID), le Fonds Monétaire International (FMI), GAVI, Proggetomondo, etc., et les organismes internationaux tels que l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé (OMS), l'Organisation des Nations-Unies pour l'Enfance (Unicef), le Fonds des Nations-Unies pour la Population (UNFPA), le Fonds Mondial de Lutte contre le SIDA, le Paludisme et la tuberculose (FM).

En général, dans les districts sanitaires où les interviews ont eu lieu, différents acteurs de la santé globale y sont présents et nos résultats montrent que la santé globale et ses acteurs sont *grosso modo* connus.

Modes d'intervention des acteurs de la santé globale perçues par les personnes interrogées

Les informations recueillies montrent que les acteurs de la santé globale ne mènent pas directement des activités au niveau local ou auprès des communautés et bénéficiaires. Selon un interlocuteur "*la plupart de nos partenaires passent par le P.A.D.S ou la Direction des affaires administratives et financières. D'autres administrent directement (USAID)*."

Des dires d'enquêtés, les acteurs internationaux de la santé globale n'agissent pas toujours de la même façon et l'essentiel des discussions se fait au plus "haut niveau." Ils ne consultent pas toujours les agents de santé afin de détecter leurs besoins prioritaires, certains agissent en fonction de leurs domaines d'activités. Selon des représentants des OBC et ONGs, ces acteurs prédéfinissent leurs axes d'intervention et leurs plans d'actions au niveau global. Leurs actions ne reposent pas toujours sur les besoins prioritaires de "santé globale" parce qu'il y a une multitude de besoins prioritaires dont les priorités sont relatives aux communautés et aux personnes. Selon un des enquêtés "*la méthode contraceptive est gratuite au BF, pourtant, elle ne constitue pas une priorité des populations, contrairement au paludisme qui est toujours sans vaccins.*" Contrairement aux premiers enquêtés, certains acteurs du système de santé publique estiment que les interventions des acteurs de la santé globale se passent sur la base des besoins exprimés, ce qui montre que la planification des activités de la nouvelle gouvernance n'est pas toujours inclusive.

Les enquêtés pensent en général que leurs axes stratégiques d'intervention sont généralement focalisés sur la lutte contre le VIH/sida, la santé maternelle et reproductive, le paludisme, la santé des personnes-clés ou groupes vulnérables (Homosexuels, les travailleurs et travailleuses de sexe, etc.), les programmes élargis de vaccination (PEV), la distribution communautaire des médicaments sur la santé de la reproduction et le paiement de certaines charges des ONG/OBC locales (Salaires et bail locatif), etc.

Le mode d'intervention de ces acteurs internationaux de la santé se fait généralement à travers le financement de projets et programmes, l'accompagnement, le partage d'expériences, l'appui financier, technique, matériel et humain, les formations, les dotations, les subventions, les élaborations de plan, les accords de partenariats, le renforcement des plateaux techniques de beaucoup de centres de santé, la construction des centres de santé, la disponibilité des conseillers techniques et consultants, l'aide à la recherche, le financement des campagnes de vaccination chaque année. Les acteurs interviennent par le financement des plans d'action des organisations à base communautaire (OBC), dans les districts sanitaires qui prennent en compte leurs priorités. L'ONG Proggetomondo accorde des financements à des OBC pour réaliser des activités sur le terrain. En général, la grande part des activités des ONG/OBC locales sont la déclinaison des programmes et plans d'action des acteurs globaux de la santé.

Si certaines ONG locales (Save the Children, Diakonia), de renommée internationale, disposent de plans d'actions propres et parviennent à les mettre en œuvre, les OBC, même si elles en disposent, voient rarement leurs plans financés. Le plus souvent, les OBC mettent leurs plans ou programmes d'activités propres de côté pour se soumettre aux axes et critères des acteurs internationaux de la santé afin de bénéficier des appuis, surtout financiers, pour la prise en charge du personnel.

Ainsi, ces différentes activités ci-dessous sont réalisées par les OBC/ONG locales: les dotations en gels, préservatifs et lubrifiants pour les homosexuels et leur prise en charge sanitaire (Bobo-Dioulasso); les causeries éducatives sur l'hygiène, la santé et la nutrition; la projection de films sur la santé maternelle et reproductive; les émissions radiophoniques; les théâtres fora; les visites à domicile ou les portes à portes notamment dans le cas du paludisme et de la Covid-19; la formation par le renforcement de capacités animatrices communautaires; le don des équipements et la distribution des produits et médicaments; la formation des femmes leaders ou des pères éducateurs ; la prise en charge de la construction des bâtiments abritant le siège de l'Association (ADT), son équipement; le paiement des salaires des agents des associations, des motos, projecteurs; la prise en charge de l'alimentation et de la scolarisation d'enfants ; la construction et la réhabilitation des toilettes dans certains écoles et lycées (Lycée Privé Alpha, etc.) ; des dons de médicaments; des formations; les dons d'équipements (matériels informatiques, mobiliers de bureau); l'assistance ou la participation aux frais de fonctionnement de l'Association. Les activités phares des OBC et ONG locales sont: la prise en charge des personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida, le paludisme (distribution gratuite des Antirétroviraux (ARV), la gratuité des tests de dépistage, distribution gratuite des moustiquaires imprégnées); l'intervention dans les zones à risque pour sensibiliser les populations sur l'hygiène; la distribution des moustiquaires imprégnées, la gratuité des tests de dépistage ; les visites à domicile "*les gens posent plus de questions lorsque vous partez chez eux que lorsque vous les regroupez.*" L'incitation à fréquenter les centres de santé est aussi une des activités de sensibilisation confiée aux Organisations et Associations à base communautaire

(O/ABC). Relèvent également de leurs domaines d'intervention, la réalisation des infrastructures socio-sanitaires telles que la construction des centres de récupération et des toilettes adaptées à la femme, le paiement de la scolarité des enfants et la fourniture du matériel et des médicaments.

Tous les enquêtés affirment que les actions des acteurs sont marquantes aussi bien sur le plan financier que technique.

Coopération sanitaire locale: repères éthiques et moraux

Selon des personnes enquêtées, un des impacts très visible de la santé globale est l'accessibilité des populations aux soins de santé, l'amélioration des conditions de vie des personnes vivant avec le VIH à travers la prise en charge des examens biologiques, des frais de cantine. En plus, il ressort que les tabous sur la sexualité qui existaient avant ont disparu avec les actions de la santé globale. Par ailleurs, on assisterait à un changement de comportement à travers la fréquentation des centres de santé, la réduction du nombre de grossesses non-désirées. Il y a également un changement des comportements des populations en ce qui concerne l'hygiène et cela entraine une réduction des cas graves de maladies et de la prise "des médicaments par terre," pour parler de l'automédication à travers des médicaments non contrôlés par les autorités sanitaires. Les actions de la santé globale permettent aussi de combler le manque d'accessibilité à l'information des déplacés internes, la réduction de la mortalité infantile par la prise en charge des enfants de moins de cinq ans. Toujours en termes d'efficacité des actions de la santé globale, on note que les acteurs internationaux et les associations ont engrangé beaucoup de résultats en ce qui concerne le changement des comportements des populations à travers les sensibilisations pour la prévention de certaines maladies et ainsi que le dépistage le VIH/sida et de l'hépatite. On a aussi la formation des jeunes sur la santé de la reproduction. Dans ce dernier cas, des clubs de jeunes dans les établissements scolaires et des grains de thé dans certaines villes ont été créés. Les campagnes de vaccination, l'intervention des volontaires en santé, la pratique de la stratégie avancée en soins, la prise en charge communautaire et l'utilisation des TIC. Aussi, la réalisation de centres de santé mobiles et le recrutement des agents de santé au profit de certains centres de santé.

Selon un agent public de santé, les actions des acteurs internationaux de santé visant les enfants ne prennent pas en compte la question du genre, mais celles concernant les adultes sont plus dirigées vers la femme. Ils ne tiennent pas compte de l'orientation sexuelle, compte tenu des valeurs défendues par la société burkinabè. Selon des responsables d'Associations, ces acteurs tiennent compte de la question du genre dans la mesure où certains bailleurs mettent l'accent sur la lutte contre la violence faite aux femmes et la sensibilisation de la femme sur les voies à suivre en cas de violence, les soutiens aux structures féminines, les handicapés et l'invitation des différentes couches sociales lors des activités. Par exemple, le FM est très regardant sur la question du genre féminin, des enfants de moins de cinq ans. D'autres mettent l'accent sur l'égalité des sexes et des actions sont menées pour l'implication du genre féminin afin d'équilibrer les bénéficiaires. Certains acteurs insistent sur l'orientation sexuelle afin d'éviter de stigmatiser d'autres personnes et leurs orientations sexuelles.

Pour plusieurs spécialistes de la santé enquêtés, les groupes vulnérables sont les cibles des politiques de santé à travers la gratuité de certains vaccins, la gratuité de certains médicaments comme les ARV, la gratuité de certains soins, la prise en charge des femmes enceintes et des enfants de moins de 5 ans, l'aide alimentaire. Aussi, les personnes handicapées sont prises en compte dans la construction des centres de santé grâce aux rampes d'accès. Partant, les actions de la santé globale sont dirigées vers toutes les couches sociales avec une priorité pour les couches vulnérables dont les femmes, celles enceintes, les enfants, les personnes âgées, les pauvres, les prisonniers, les déplacés. Pour un interlocuteur, une nuance existe néanmoins, car les populations rurales n'ont pas toujours accès aux meilleurs équipements, les gagnants sont surtout les populations urbaines. Tous sont unanimes que les pays africains tirent profit de ces politiques sanitaires en matière de santé globale car c'est la population qui gagne.

Pour bon nombres d'interviewés, les repères en matière de valeurs éthiques et morales à prendre en compte dans le travail des acteurs de la santé globale—lorsqu'on mène des actions de développement dans le secteur de la santé—sont de travailler à garder la confidentialité de l'identité des patients, à préserver leur dignité, à tenir compte de la culture et des coutumes des différents patients, de respecter les patients et de tenir compte des besoins des bénéficiaires des actions avant toute intervention. Le respect mutuel, l'équité, l'honnêteté, la sociabilité, la confidentialité, la neutralité, l'impartialité, la non-discrimination, la compétence sont des valeurs défendues par les acteurs de la santé globale. S'y ajoutent le respect du droit à l'image des patients, le consentement des patients avant toute intervention. Les agents publics ainsi que les responsables des Associations sont unanimes qu'ils sont consultés par les acteurs internationaux pour connaître leurs besoins prioritaires avant toute intervention.

La santé mondiale se traduit dans une gouvernance sanitaire efficace. Ces actions sont positivement appréciées par les enquêtés. Toutefois, on enregistre que les aspects négatifs de la santé globale concernent principalement l'approche unilatérale des problèmes de santé et leur financement. Ils définissent souvent, *a priori*, leurs axes d'intervention et ne financent que des aspects contenus dans de plans stratégiques à la base, donc ne prennent pas suffisamment en compte des préoccupations sanitaires locales. Ensuite, les financements de ces acteurs parviennent tardivement aux associations au cours de l'année, les procédures de financement et de décaissement étant très longues.

Financement extérieur et moralité

Le financement de la santé par l'extérieur, c'est l'intervention des acteurs internationaux de la santé pour améliorer les conditions sanitaires des populations au Burkina. C'est la part donnée par les bailleurs étrangers pour assister le système de santé. Les acteurs du financement extérieurs identifiés au niveau des régions du Centre-Nord et des Hauts-Bassins sont entre autres: l'USAID, M.S.F, Médecins du Monde, la coopération Japonaise, le Fonds mondial, l'Unicef, Terres des hommes, Plan Burkina, Save the Children, l'Organisation Catholique pour le Développement et la Solidarité (OCADES), OXFAM, etc. Aussi, il ressort que la quasi-totalité des associations locales (OBC) cesseront de fonctionner en l'absence du financement des acteurs extérieurs, ce qui explique leur conformité aux plans et axes d'intervention des partenaires financiers extérieurs. Les acteurs comme la Banque mondiale, le Fonds mondial, GAVI, l'OMS, l'ONUSIDA, Bill et Melinda Gate n'apparaissent pas directement dans le discours des acteurs locaux, notamment ceux des représentants d'OBC.

Les formes de financement évoqués sont celles en espèce, en appui technique et en matériel. Pour les personnes interrogées, les financements des partenaires extérieurs sont parfois conditionnés, exigeant, par exemple, un engagement à protéger et à défendre la cause des homosexuels dans le cadre des activités. Il ressort des enquêtes que les financements extérieurs de la santé permettent au système de santé de se porter un peu mieux, si on se réfère, par exemple, à la fourniture des vaccins. Pour les personnes enquêtées, l'Etat doit mobiliser des ressources pour financer son système de santé, car s'il est avéré que les financements extérieurs comblent le manque à gagner en matière de formation, d'équipements, il apparaît clairement qu'ils portent atteinte à "notre autonomie » et si les partenaires extérieurs" claquent la porte aujourd'hui, c'est de la catastrophe ». Pour améliorer la coopération internationale, les associations suggèrent une intégration de tous les acteurs de la chaîne dans le système sanitaire en prenant, par exemple, en compte, l'avis des bénéficiaires et elles invitent les bailleurs à prendre en compte toutes les localités dans leurs interventions, car certains financements ne concernent que des localités précises.

Conclusion

L'étude menée sur la gouvernance sanitaire globale et ses perceptions au Burkina Faso révèle une dynamique complexe entre normes internationales et réalités locales. Si la santé globale s'est institutionnalisée à travers des dispositifs et des acteurs multiples—ONG, bailleurs, programmes multilatéraux—, sa compréhension et son appropriation varient fortement selon les profils des acteurs interrogés.

Les résultats des enquêtes sur la gouvernance sanitaire globale ont révélé qu'il y a peu de critiques sur le modèle. Globalement, la santé globale et ses acteurs sont bien connus et bien appréciés aussi bien au niveau des professionnels de la santé que des responsables des OBC. Cela, surtout en raison des financements, des activités, des impacts sur les déterminants de la santé. La gouvernance sanitaire arrive à affirmer son caractère fonctionnaliste auprès des personnes enquêtées. Pareilles réactions n'ont pas été découvertes dans le journal d'État *Sidwaya* sur la période concernée par les recherches menées. En effet, il y a de nombreux articles sur le SIDA, d'autres maladies, et de certains acteurs de la santé globale. Particulièrement, au moment des querelles sur l'origine du VIH/sida, entre 1985 et 1987, il y a eu une profusion de textes et de discours d'officiels burkinabè dans les archives du quotidien *Sidwaya*. Cependant, la naissance de la santé globale et de la gouvernance sanitaire globale néolibérale, après 1987, n'y a pas fait l'objet de discours officiels ou de débats. Quelques fois, certains acteurs de la santé globale sont notifiés en train de mener des activités qui ne sont pas liées par les auteurs et acteurs à la santé globale, si bien qu'il n'y a pas de connaissance spécifique sur le concept de santé globale dans le journal *Sidwaya*, unique quotition d'État. Le vide du débat dans le journal d'Etat *Sidwaya* ainsi que les appréciations quasiment positives des personnes enquêtées sur les acteurs et actions de la gouvernance sanitaire globale nous amènent à émettre les hypothèses selon lesquelles : 1) les débats sur la santé globale restent du domaine des universitaires, 2) la maitrise de ces concepts, des tenants et des aboutissants de la santé globale détermine peu les politiques sanitaires nationales en dehors de la présence des acteurs globaux. Tout cela réduit les capacités réflexives des acteurs de politiques sanitaires nationaux et locaux ainsi que leurs capacités à négocier et à influencer les programmes internationaux mis en œuvre. Pourtant, la santé globale a complexifié les rapports entre l'État et les organisations internationales et sa compréhension et celle de ses actions peuvent permettre de mieux en tirer profit et, surtout, de mieux planifier et se préparer aux manques de financement des organisations internationales. Cela est d'autant plus important que les théories sous-tendant la santé globale et la globalisation sont les mêmes qui sous-tendent le libéralisme comme théorie des relations internationales (Mearsheimer 120–151), avec des rapports de pouvoirs manifestes aussi bien entre les Nations, qu'à l'intérieur de ceux-ci.

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T

The Transdisciplinary Cluster Quest

A Research Poem

Melina C. Kalfelis

In a land of deep thought and empirical grind,
Where theory and praxis are tightly entwined,
A cluster of scholars, with visions quite grand,
Set off to the worlds of "Africa" at hand.

First came AM 1—so new and bold,
A place where concepts like "relationality" unfold.
"We're grounded!" they cried, "Yet abstract as well!"
Though some simply nodded, too dazed to tell.

Multiplicity danced with a foot in each camp,
As heuristic angles lit up every lamp.
With whiteboards and coffee, debates would ignite—
"What is a relation?" (They argued all night.)

Next, in a corner more critical still,
sat ACC scholars, with epistemic will.
"Wanna study Africa?" they asked with a frown,
"Let's unthink the map, epistemics upside-down!"

Fellows questioned their methods, their pay, and their shoes,
Their funding, their data, their peer-reviewed blues.
"Let's decenter ourselves!" they declared with great vigor.
Then centered that thought on a panel with Rüdiger.

Then came AM 2, messy but keen,
A program of wonders, both nimble and green.
"Compare your approaches! Now stir in some flair!"
"Do we code with our hands, or theorize air?"
From fieldnotes to footnotes, from mud to machine,

They mixed up their methods and struggled for caffeine.
“Transdisciplinary!” they cheered in a huddle,
Then argued for weeks on the term’s subtle muddle.

So here stands the cluster, reflexive and wise,
With theoretical stars on postcolonial skies.
They will publish and ponder, will struggle and strive,
African Studies—you're more than alive.

U

Universalismus versus Partikularismus, oder warum der Begriff Kulturkampf strukturelle Diskriminierung verteidigt

Ein Plädoyer für geschlechtergerechte Sprache

Aleo Susan Arndt

Der Cluster of Excellence "Africa Multiple. Reconfiguring African Studies" hat sich dezidiert einer Intervention gegen strukturelle Diskriminierung im akademischen Raum sowie gesellschaftlicher Prozesse verpflichtet. Das ist ebenso politisch, wie nicht gegen den aufstrebenden Faschismus dieser Zeit einzustehen. Auch ist politisch, wer Anti-Diskriminierungsarbeit diffamiert und zu verhindern strebt. Zu diesen Personen gehört die emeritierte Ethnologie-Professorin und Leiterin des Frankfurter Forschungszentrums Globaler Islam an der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Susanne Schröter. Wiederholt hat sie den Bayreuther Exzellenzcluster als woke Institution des Kulturkampfes beschimpft und mit haltlosen Unterstellungen überzogen, so auch in ihrem Buch *Der neue Kulturkampf* (Schröter 2024, 56, 80, 132–133, 237). Auch Kritik an strukturellem Sexismus oder anti-muslimischen Rassismus allgemein tut sie als Kulturkampf ab.

Der Begriff "Kulturkampf" lässt sich bis in die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts zurückverfolgen. Populär geworden ist er in der Bismarck-Ära. Damals beschrieb er Interventionen des Liberalismus in die Dominanz der Katholischen Kirche. Wenn Schröter ihn heute verwendet, so um die Dominanz *weißer* heterornormativer Dogmen zu verteidigen. Aus genau diesem Grund sieht sie sich als Universalistin an und Anti-Diskriminierungsarbeit als Partikularismus. Entsprechend safte sie im Laufe eines Streitgespräches mit mir:

> Das ist unsere tatsächliche Differenz, die wir beide haben. Dass ich eine Universalistin bin, zutiefst überzeugt davon, obwohl ich Ethnologin bin und Sie eher eine Partikularistin." („Weimarer Kontroversen" 2022)

Universalistin sei sie, weil sie die Interessen der "Mehrheit". Bei ihrer "Mehrheit" versus "Minderheit"-Setzung geht es aber nicht um Quantitäten, sondern um Machtverhältnisse.

Zunächst einmal sind *weiße* Männer bzw. *angry white wo*men* die eigentliche Minderheit auf diesem Planeten. Von den 8.2 Milliarden Menschen, die auf Planet Erde derzeit leben, sind nur ca. 410 Millionen *weiße* Männer. Das sind also 4–6 Prozent der Weltbevölkerung. Ca. genauso viele Personen sind *weiße* Frauen. Zusammen also machen sie 10% der Weltbevölkerung aus, was sie zu einer "Minderheit" macht.

Doch wenn Susanne Schröter von "Minderheiten" versus "Mehrheiten" spricht, dann meint sie mit "Mehrheit" jene, welche die Macht innehaben und diese nutzen, um Machtstrukturen und deren Erzählungen zum eigenen Vorteil zu gestalten. Von diesen Privilegien ausgeschlossene, benachteiligte oder diskriminierte Gruppen sind das, was Schröter mit "Minderheiten" meint. Sich zur Fürsprecherin der "Mehrheit" zu machen, heißt für Susanne Schröter also bestehende Machtverhältnisse zu verteidigen, welche Diskriminierung ermöglichen. Und wenn sie von "Partikularisten" spricht, die sich für "Minderheiten" einsetzen, spricht sie vom Kampf gegen strukturelle Diskriminierung. Die eigenen Werte als universell zu setzen ist das eine. Dadurch dann auch die Dominanzkultur als Norm und Maß aller Dinge zu setzen, aber befürwortet, dass die Privilegierten, die aus Machtverhältnissen heraus Norm/alität definieren, unerschüttert in dieser Machtposition und Komfortzone bleiben können, während sie genau das anderen verwehrt.
Genau das hält Schröter für Konservatismus:

> Konservativ heißt für mich, angesichts dieser Zustände einer aus dem Ruder gelaufenen partikularen Einzelinteressenorientierung eine Rückbesinnung auf universelle Werte und individuelle Freiheitsrechte unabhängig von Hautfarbe, Alter, Geschlecht, Religion und anderen sekundären Zuschreibungen. ("Weimarer Kontroversen")

Doch, was sie sekundäre Zuschreibungen nennt, sind durch machtgesättigte Diskriminierungsstrukturen erzeugte soziale Positionen.

Bei Schröters Universalismus-Partikularismus-Modell wie auch bei ihrem Gerede vom "Kulturkampf" geht es also um nichts Geringeres als den Erhalt diskriminierender Strukturen und sozialer Ungleichheit. Das aber ist nicht konservativ, sondern ein Angriff auf das Grundgesetz und ein Versuch, die sich seit den 1980er Jahren etablierende Anti-Diskriminierungsgesetzgebung und -politik rückzubauen. Dem zu widersprechen ist kein "Partikularismus," sondern ein Kampf für die im Grundgesetz verbürgten Rechte. Und wer das abwertet oder gar verhindern will, ist nicht "universalistisch," sondern antifreiheitlich. Umgekehrt machen Menschen, die sich gegen Diskriminierung und für eine gerechtere Rechtsprechung einsetzen, keinen Kulturkampf. Sie sind die Stimmen des Grundgesetzes, der Demokratie. Denn am Ende müssen sich Gerechtigkeit und Freiheit einer Gesellschaft daran messen lassen, wie es so genannten "Minderheiten" – also auch tatsächlich kleineren demographischen Gruppen wie transgeschlechtlichen Personen – in dieser geht, wie die gesellschaftliche Ordnung und deren Moralvorstellungen jede einzelne Person vor Diskriminierung schützt. Dazu sind Personen wie Susanne Schröter nicht bereit. Das sei knapp am Beispiel des Streitgespächs zu geschlechtergerechter Sprache zwischen Schröter und mir im Rahmen der "Weimarer Kontroversen" betrachtet.

Sprache geschieht nicht einfach. Wenn wir sprechen, treffen wir Entscheidungen und handeln entsprechend. Zwar gibt uns Sprache einen Rahmen vor. Doch während Grammatik kaum Optionen für individuelle Veränderungen lässt, bieten Wortwahl und der Gebrauch von Wörtern Handlungsräume. Wir können entscheiden, was wir wie sagen wollen und welche Wörter wir dafür für angemessen halten. In einem Streit etwa, können wir gewaltfrei kommunizieren oder aber Du-Sätze sagen; und wir können beleidigende Wort wählen oder meiden.

So verhält es sich auch bei der Frage von Sprache und Gerechtigkeit, bei Sprechen und Diskriminierung. Nicht die Sprache gestaltet uns, als Gesellschaft oder individuell. Wir sind es, die Sprache gestalten und aus dieser heraus Einfluss auf gesellschaftliche Norm/alitäten und Umgangsweisen nehmen. Wir sind, was wir uns sagen und werden sein, was wir uns gesagt werden haben. Worte können Arsendosen sein, die Menschen vergiften. Sprache gerechter zu formen, ist daher wichtig. Allein wird dies zwar Diskriminierung nicht beenden. Aber immer dann, wenn Sprache etwas inklusiver und weniger diskriminierend gestaltet wird, ist das ein wichtiger Beitrag dazu. Und wenn wir unsere Gesellschaft geschlechtergerechter gestalten wollen, ist geschlechtergerechtes Sprechen eine unerlässliche Baustelle und ein entscheidender Motor.

Meiner Sicht, dass die Bedeutung von Sprache nicht groß genug eingeschätzt werden könne, widersprach Susanne Schröter im Podium vehement: "Messen Sie Sprache nicht eine zu große Bedeutung bei? … Ich würde das ein bisschen nüchterner fassen." Sprache habe was mit Bildung zu tun und mit kultureller

Positionierung. Sprache habe vor allem die Aufgabe, Kommunikation zu ermöglichen. Das aber solle nicht durch Political Correctness zerstört werden. Denn diese mache Sprache unnötig schwer, gäbe ihr eine Schwere. "Dann fängt Sprache an, etwas Erdrückendes zu werden." Sie habe Angst, dass Sprache als "pädagogisches Projekt" bewirke, dass "viele Leute verstummen" werden.

Zudem sei es so, laut Schröter, dass es ja äußerst umstritten sein, ob das bisherige Sprechen in deutscher Sprache überhaupt diskriminierend sei. Immerhin gäbe es ja, so Schröter, "eine ganz große Gruppe von Sprachwissenschaftlern, und auch Sprachwissenschaftlerinnen," die das anders sieht. Dass es sich bei dieser Gruppe um Personen handelt, die sich 2022 extra mit dem Ziel versammelt hatten, den gemeinsamen Aufruf "Wissenschaftler kritisieren Gender-Praxis des ÖPR" zu veröffentlichen, ließ sie dabei aus. Das ist eine bewährte populistische Strategie, um Andersdenkende nicht erwähnen zu müssen, Denn natürlich gibt es in der Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft (Arndt 2020: 184–203) und auch Rechtswissenschaft (Lembke 2023) eben auch starke Bewegungen, nach Strategien zu suchen, die Gerechtigkeit in der Sprache befördere.

Um ihre These zu untermauern, dass die deutsche Sprache gar nicht geschlechterungerecht sei, gebrauchte Schröter ein abenteuerliches Beispiel: In der deutschen Sprache werden doch feminine, maskuline und neutrale Formen chaotisch zugeordnet. Es gäbe da keine Regel. Der Tisch, das Tuch. Der Baum, die Blume. Zur Erheiterung vieler ergänzte der Moderator Helmut Heit. "Morgens: der Weizen, das Korn; abends: das Weizen, der Korn." Ich begriff, was sie meinte. Artikel! Diese aber haben nur minimal was mit geschlechtergerechter Sprache zu tun. Im Kern geht es Schröter darum, zu behaupten, dass es ein generisches Maskulinum gäbe und dass dieses nicht diskriminierend sei. Zwei Mal falsch.

Zum einen gibt es in der deutschen Sprache deswegen kein genersiches Maskulinum, weil die deutsche Sprache die Möglichkeit bietet, die männliche oder die weibliche Form eines Substantives oder Adjektivs zu verwenden. In einem Vortrag im Rahmen der Tagung "Zensur der Vielfalt" gab Ulrike Lembke dafür folgendes Beispiel: "Im Kindergarten fehlen Erzieher" kann entweder meinen, dass es zu wenige Männer oder insgesamt zu wenig Personal gibt. Wir können und müssen also zwischen männlich und weiblich unterscheiden. Und dass die männliche Form eines Substantivs zugleich auch Frauen meinen soll, ist kein generisches Maskulinum, sondern hat einen patriarchalischen Bart, der Männer insgesamt zum Besitzer, Bestimmer und Repräsentanten von Frauen macht. Das pseudogenerische Maskulinum spiegelt also, dass bestimmte Berufe Frauen unzugänglich gemacht wurden. Dieses Argument konterte Susanne Schröter mit: "Selbstverständlich waren in der Vergangenheit Lehrer Männer." Das sei heute anders. Dass Sprache sich dem anpassen solle, halte sie aber für überflüssig. Mehr noch. Der Genderstern verletze ihr Sprachgefühl und stelle "[e]ine zusätzliche Verkomplizierung" und Überforderung dar. Der ganze Satzbau würde darunter leiden.

Doch warum sollte "Die Professor*innen sitzen in einem Raum" komplizierter sein als "Die Professoren sitzen in einem Raum"? Der Genderstern ändert gar nichts am Satzbau, nur etwas an den Substantiven und deren Artikeln. An deren Aussprache. Aber schon mal Spiegel*Ei gesagt? Zudem müssten nur Pronomen neugestaltet werden.

Mittlerweile aber geht die Debatte um Sprache und Gerechtigkeit weit über die Benennung von Frauen hinaus. Das deutsche Personenstandsregister regelt, dass es vier Geschlechter gibt: "Frau, Mann, keinen Eintrag, Divers." Zusammen mit Artikel 3 des Grundgesetzes, das verfügt, das niemand aufgrund von Geschlecht diskriminiert werden darf, heißt das also, dass die deutsche Sprache immer alle Geschlechter repräsentieren muss. Genau das vermag der Genderstern mit seiner "in alle Richtungen offen"-Symbolik. Das macht ihn so schön für mich.

Dass ich das sagte, empörte Susanne Schröter. Denn sie besteht darauf, dass es nur zwei biologische Geschlechter gäbe. Zwar gäbe es durchaus Menschen, die "im falschen Körper geboren" seien. "In einer doch relativ liberalen Gesellschaft wie der unseren" sei das aber "nicht mehr das große Problem". Sie werden nicht mehr diskriminiert. Sie selbst hatte vor Jahrzehnten "Kommilitonen, die mit Bärten und Röcken in die Uni" kamen. Hier eignete sie sich die Erfahrungen nicht-binärer Menschen an, während sie diese durch die Formulierung "im falschen Körper geboren" diskriminierte. Jeder Mensch wird im richtigen Körper geboren, nur manchmal eben aufgrund der falschen biologischen Modelle falsch gelesen.

Genau so aber funktioniert die "universalistische Mitte der Gesellschaft". Sie definiert ihre Normen als Normalität und zerreißt dabei die Gesellschaft. Zugleich aber werfen sie allen, die an diesem Status Quo nicht festhalten möchten vor, die Gesellschaft zu zerreißen. Genau in diesem Sinne sagte Schröter, dass es keine Gesellschaft geben könne, "in der alle gleich sind". Das klingt für mich sehr nach Kant und der AfD, für die Gleichberechtigung nicht Gleichmacherei bedeuten darf, sondern anerkennen muss, dass Menschen unterschiedlich seien, weswegen es gerecht sei, dass einige einen größeren Anspruch auf Privilegien und sicheres Leben haben als andere.

Jedenfalls betonte Schröter, dass es ihr wichtiger sei, dass die "Mehrheit" (also Schröters Norm) sich wohl fühlt, statt alle in "[e]ine zusätzliche Verkomplizierung" zu zwingen, "damit sich alle wohlfühlen." Es würde auch die Mehrheit nerven. Es gäbe "mehr Menschen …, die sich" mit Vorstößen gegen Diskriminierung "nicht einverstanden erklären" als solche, die das tun. Sprache etwa habe "eine Grenze der Aufnahme an minoritären Formen, wenn sie auch noch sprechbar sein soll … Was gewinnen wir, wen wir ein drittens, viertes, fünftes, sechstes Pronomen noch einführen. Meiner Meinung nach nicht sonderlich viel", sagte Schröter. Sie wolle lieber in "einer Gesellschaft leben, in der wir Konflikte friedlich lösen". („Weimarer Kontroversen" 2022: 01:01) Mein "Neotribalismus" aber bewirke, dass die Gesellschaft in unterschiedliche Richtungen verfällt und Unfrieden stifte:

> Ich habe den Eindruck, dass über das Ziel hinausgeschossen wird, und dass das jetzt sozusagen eine Gegenreaktion hervorruft, die, A), den Prozess stoppt aber B) auch zu einer Unversöhnlichkeit führt, sicherlich nicht zu einer Fortführung von emanzipativen Bestrebungen. („Weimarer Kontroversen" 2022: 01:02)

Doch nicht Kritik an Diskriminierung zerreißt die Gesellschaft. Das leistet Diskriminierung ganz von selbst. Dazu passt dann auch, dass die über jeden Zweifel erhebende "Mitte der Gesellschaft" allen ihre universalistische Normen des eigenen Friedens diktiert und gleichzeitig allen, denen das nicht gefällt, vorwirft, anderen ihr Leben "diktieren" zu wollen.

Schröter benannte dann aber doch ihr eigentliches Grundproblem: Die "Mitte der Gesellschaft" fühlt sich dann eben doch von Diskriminierungskritik verunsichert. In Susanne Schröters Worten klang das so:

> Es ist ja nicht so, dass eine Gruppe von Menschen, die weiter sind, also die Führer dieser Gesellschaft, die alles verstanden haben, was der dumme Rest noch nicht verstanden hat, dass die uns jetzt den Weg weisen. („Weimarer Kontroversen" 2022: 01:23)

Nicht nur Unrecht tun, sich auch noch wohlfühlen wollen damit. Genau das macht Macht aus.

Susanne Schröters “Universalismus”, der konservativ an dem festhält, was die heterosexuelle Norm vorgibt und Menschen, die gegen Diskriminierung angehen, als Unruhestifter*innen abtut und offen beleidigt, ist eine große Gefahr für die Freiheit in diesem Land. Wie stark solche Positionen auch die Freiheit der Wissenschaft und Lehre bedrohen, zeigen Verbote geschlechtergerechter Sprache an Universitäten und Schulen in Bayern, Hessen und Sachsen sowie die Verbote von Gender oder Postcolonial Studies Donald Trumps oder Victor Orbáns. Ich bin sehr stolz darauf, dass wir mit dem Exzellenzcluster “Africa Multiple” ein akademisches Zuhause haben dürfen, in denen geschlechtergerechte Sprache und ganz allgemein Kritik an strukturellem Rassismus nicht nur erlaubt, sondern gefördert wird. Und genau das ist es, was ich unter Universalismus verstehe: dass Rechte für alle Menschen gleichermaßen gelten und dass anerkannt wird, dass dies noch niemals so war – wir aber auf einem guten Weg sind, entscheidende Transformationen zu gestalten.

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V

Vorwort

Aleo Susan Arndt, Yacouba Banhoro, Robert Debusmann, Mario Faust-Scalisi, Christine Krischan Hanke, Thoko Kaime, Melina C. Kalfelis, Obala Musumba, Ansgar Nünning, Vera Nünning, Stefan Ouma, Natéwindé Sawadogo, Eveline Sawadogo/Compaore, Ibrahima Sene, Peter Simatei, Fatou Sow, Michael Steppat, UNILAG ACC, Clarissa Vierke

It is a rare privilege to celebrate a scholar whose life's work defies the boundaries of discipline, geography, and personality—someone whose presence is not only intellectually formative but quietly transformative for those around him. Today, we mark sixty years in the life of Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Seesemann—a scholar of deep care, a builder of institutions, a quiet visionary, and, in the words of many, a truly remarkable human being.

This book is dedicated to Rüdiger Seeseman's becoming 60 on 19 July 2025. With this book, we gather words in honour of Rüdiger Seesemann, a person who has not been shaped conversations across continents, disciplines, and generations.

This book was composed and written in 6 weeks only. This pace would not have been possible if Rüdiger would not be the amazing person, scholar, friend, boss, and visionary to all of us. Because his colleagues care so much, they decided to make writing this book a priority in the midst of their most busy schedules. This is the love language that we wish to share, to show we care so very much about Rüdiger Seesemann. This is the love language we speak, in order to show our gratitude for Rüdiger Seesemann always being there for everyone.

Rüdiger Seesemann is a distinguished scholar of Islamic Studies with a remarkable command of languages and a deep commitment to the study of Islam in its global and African contexts. A native German speaker, he is fluent in Arabic, English, and French; possesses research proficiency in Persian, Turkish, and Kiswahili; and holds both the *Graecum* and *Latinum* qualifications in classical languages.

Rüdiger Seesemann's areas of specialisation include Sufism, Islam and modernity, Islamic education, Islamic knowledge traditions, Islam and politics, and Islamism. He is widely recognized for his ability to combine philological expertise with anthropological insight and historical depth.

Seesemann went to school in Gießen, completing his Abitur at Landgraf-Ludwig-Schule in Gießen. He began his academic studies in 1984 at the University of Marburg, where he pursued courses in Archaeology, Prehistory, and Ancient Near Eastern Studies. In 1986, he enrolled at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, where he completed his M.A. in Islamic Studies and Social Anthropology. He received his Ph.D. in 1993, also from Mainz, with a dissertation the founder on the Senegalese Sufi order, Murīdīya. It's titled: "Ahmadu Bamba und die Entstehung der Murīdīya: Analyse religiöser und historischer Hintergründe; Untersuchung seines Lebens und seiner Lehre anhand des biographischen Werkes von Muhammad al-Mustafa Aān".

From 1994 to 1995, Seesemann taught at the University of Khartoum and held a postdoctoral position at the University of Bayreuth within the graduate program Intercultural Relations in Africa. He completed his Habilitation at Bayreuth in 2004 with a major study entitled "Nach der 'Flut': Ibrâhîm Niasse (1900–1975), Sufik und Gesellschaft in Westafrika". This research was published in 2011 by Oxford University Press under the title *The Divine Flood: Ibrahim Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival*.

Between 2007 and 2008, he was a Faculty Fellow at the Kaplan Institute for the Humanities at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL (USA). He returned to Germany in 2011 as a Heisenberg Professor at the University of Bayreuth (2011–2016), and in 2017 he was appointed to the Chair of Islamic Studies in the Faculty of Languages and Literature at Bayreuth.

Since 2019, Rüdiger Seesemann has served as the Spokesperson of the Cluster of Excellence "Africa Multiple" at the University of Bayreuth, one of the most significant research consortia in global African Studies. Under his leadership, the Cluster was awarded a second funding phase in 2025, further securing its status as an internationally recognized centre of scholarly innovation and collaboration.

Rüdiger Seesemann's research has spanned Senegal, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, and Mauritania, with a sustained focus on Sufism, Islamic education, and the moral grammars of knowledge. He is a committed editor and reviewer, serving on the boards of *Islam in Africa*, *African Studies Review*, *Islamic Africa*, and *Journal of African Religions*. His academic and institutional contributions have made him a vital figure in shaping new directions for global, collaborative, and reflexive scholarship on Islam and Africa.

Across the years, Rüdiger has earned the deep respect of colleagues, students, and collaborators not only for his academic depth but for his political sharpness and unwavering ethical clarity. His leadership is grounded not in performance or power, but in a kind of steadiness that holds even under pressure – what some have called an unshakable poise, and others simply a form of integrity in action. He carries responsibility without spectacle, listens more than he speaks, and fosters trust not through declarations, but through example.

Many of us have known him across decades as a person who has always been where thinking meets lived experience. He has taught in Khartoum, researched in Senegal and Mauritania, and held conversations in apartments and under palm trees in Mombasa. One colleague remembers sharing fieldwork space with him in Kenya and recalls, with warmth, the combination of noise, intensity, and insight that defined those days—marked by his enduring love for poetry, teaching, and his students' growth.

What sets Rüdiger apart is the rare fusion of intellectual elegance and institutional courage. He is known for his research on Sufism, Islamic education, and knowledge production in Africa, but those themes are not just scholarly interests – they are reflections of his larger commitments: to epistemic humility, to the decolonization of knowledge, and to fostering scholarship across lines of power and difference. As one longtime collaborator observed, his capacity to think across doctrinal, disciplinary, and cultural boundaries is both admirable and quietly radical. He does not demand attention, but invites it through the calm force of his presence.

This same sensibility defines his role as Dean and Spokesperson of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. Under his leadership, the Cluster did more than thrive—it became a model of global, collaborative research, grounded in a vision of African Studies that is truly transdisciplinary. He navigated the complexities of institutional life with clarity and compassion, guiding a diverse team through moments of uncertainty, including the Covid-19 crisis. Colleagues speak of his ability to create community in the midst of challenge, to facilitate without dominating, and to recognize talent without competition. He is, in more than one voice, described as the reason the Cluster not only worked—but endured.

And yet, Rüdiger's presence is never limited to the realm of leadership. He is also a friend, a listener, a team player on the football pitch, and—when needed—a captain who knows when to slide-tackle the rules. His sense of humour survives even the snake pits of university bureaucracy. He is known to be thin-skinned in the best sense: attuned, responsive, never indifferent. Whether advising a young scholar on poetry or sharing long conversations by the sea, he remains deeply human—open, curious, and present.

He is also a father. To Tyron, Sascha, and Ibrahim, he is not the Dean or the Professor, but a constant presence, a source of warmth and wisdom, the root of the song that grounds their lives. His love, say those who know him closely, remains like a rock through storm.

From his origins in Gießen to the corridors of Bayreuth and beyond, Rüdiger Seesemann has built a scholarly life that resists easy summary. He is known for his work on Islam, but even more for his refusal to simplify Islam's complexity. He is known for his leadership, but even more for the way he carries leadership with grace. He is known for his intellect, but above all, he is remembered for his care.

It is no wonder that those who have shared this journey with him—whether for five years or thirty—speak not only of respect, but of affection. He is, as one contributor put it, a kindred spirit. And so today, we say simply: Ayekoo. Thank you. Be celebrated, Rüdiger. For you have been many things to many people, and your work, your presence, and your humanity have made all the difference.

Some Personal Notes of Gratefulness

> "I have known Rüdiger for more than 25 years (when I started studying and he worked on his Habilitation). I think, I met him first at AASAB (Association Afrika-interessierter Studenten und Akademiker in Bayreuth), the only association of that kind in Bayreuth at the time (which became obsolete when BIGSAS started). We organized events, exhibitions and parties probably foreshadowing the later work in the cluster... Later, we met in Kenya when I conducted fieldwork for my PhD and (in my memory) he prepared his lectures for the Northwestern University in a noisy apartment in Mombasa and had discussions with Kenyan scholars, like Hassan Ndzovu. I also attended his wedding in Makindu in 2006, because I happened to be in Kenya at the time. I remember many discussions and good advice on the poetry I was working on: For me, Rüdiger was and is, first of all, a great scholar of Islamic studies and his works on Sufism and, education foremost in Senegal, and Kenya remain an important reference to me. And later, when he came back to Bayreuth, we ended up in the Cluster Africa Multiple. I am grateful for all

the various ways of relating to each other."
جزاك الله خيراً على كل ما قدمت
(Clarissa Vierke)

"God is beyond description. Prof Sessmann Rudiger is unassuming. To understand him, one has to go beyond what is seen. When he expresses his decisions, they are often well thought out. When decisions are negative, one can almost hear him saying, If I had my way, I would say yes. His capacity to think across doctrines is admirable. His unassuming nature shows that, although he supretends over much, he proves nothing to no one. His person says it loud and clear; 'take me as you see me.' Prof. as you achieve this milestone, I wish you all the good things you wish for yourself."
(Akin-Otiko Akinmayowa)

"Obgleich Deine Heimatstadt ja leider nicht das Glück hat, einen begnadeten Troubadour wie Herbert Grönemeyer zu haben, braucht man seine grandiose Hymne auf Bochum nur wenig abzuändern, um ein Hohelied auf Gießen zu singen:

Tief in Hessen, wo die Sonne verstaubt,
ist es besser, viel besser als man glaubt.
[…]
Du bist keine Schönheit, vor Arbeit ganz grau
Du liebst ohne Schminke, bist 'ne ehrliche Haut
Leider total verbaut, aber gerade das macht dich aus.
[…]
Du bist keine Weltstadt,
auf deiner Königsallee, finden keine Modenschauen statt.

Singe oder summe dieses Lied, wenn Du das nächste Mal nach Gießen fährst.
Und wenn Du wissen möchtest, wie man Gießen genießen kann, dann guck in Dein großartiges Glossar – und zwar: unter G!

Herzliche Grüße sendet und alles Beste wünscht Dir
Ansgar Nünning (aus Gießen)"

"Rüdiger has a remarkably open mind to new ideas and approaches, showing great interest and a highly productive capacity for critical scrutiny. In all such encounters, he contributes insights both at a conceptual level and with attention to particular details. What is more, he has a strong communicative talent, reaching out to people in such a way as to invite a mutual exchange of ideas and inspire confidence in his judgment." (Michael Steppat)

"On Ruediger.

With this article, we would like to pay sincere tribute to an illustrious colleague: the Dean of the Africa Multiple Centre of Excellence, whom we have worked alongside for six years now as part of our research on Africa. Although dedicated to the study of the African continent and its diaspora, Africa Multiple has become a truly global player, bringing together researchers from all over the world, all specialising in Africa, for various scientific events.

The Centre's vision is to overcome the barriers inherited from history, whether geographical, economic, racial, disciplinary or other, in the production of knowledge. The aim is to produce truly transdisciplinary research results. Even if such an ambition may seem, today, to be an intellectual challenge—due to the 'post-truth' shift we are seeing in many parts of the world, marked by a resurgence of nationalist, racist, and anti-humanist sentiments that are reviving the hatreds and divisions of yesteryear in international relations—we fully endorse this vision, which Dean Ruediger Seesemann has embodied.

Setting up such a centre is a major challenge, particularly given its cosmopolitan nature. Running it is undoubtedly even more challenging, given the diversity of people, personalities, perceptions, and intellectual traditions that come together there. While Dean Rüdiger Seesemann has been able to count on experienced colleagues throughout his career, he has undoubtedly left his mark on the Africa Multiple Centre of Excellence. His leadership has been unquestionable, from the creation of the Centre to the renewal of its funding for a second seven-year period. His sense of compromise and openness have allowed him to keep a team of around 150 scientists together in the Africa Multiple Project."
(Yacouba Banhoro)

“Rüdiger Seesemann is probably best known for his work on Islam in Africa, particularly his insightful research into the Tijaniyya Sufi order and its historical and contemporary significance. However, I came to know and respect Professor Dr Seesemann for his passionate commitment to “reconfiguring” African Studies, which I encountered strongly during the International Conference on *African Studies –Multiple, and Relational*, held at the University of Bayreuth in 2017, to which he invited me. At that conference, I spoke about the work of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana. Subsequently, I met Rüdiger at a Point-Sud conference on *Knowledge Production in and about Africa: Intersections of Moralities and Higher Education* that was held in Dakar in 2018. As Chair of the Multiple Cluster board, I have seen that passion at close quarters, as Rüdiger has navigated the different contexts in which African Studies is read and contested as well as acknowledged and appreciated. If African Studies thrives at the University of Bayreuth and beyond, if students and professors employ African knowledges in their work, Rüdiger Seesemann will be a significant part of that story. It’s been a pleasure to be on this journey with a kindred spirit. Ayekooo!”
(Akosua Adomako Ampofo)

“Rüdiger is a phenomenon. Resilient, stubborn in the best sense of the word, determined, and he never lost his sense of humour in the snake pits of university. Criticising is always easy, but taking responsibility and accepting the hardships and shit storms that come with it isn't for everyone.”
(Martin Doevenspeck)

“I have known Rüdiger Seesemann since his early days as a postdoc in the Bayreuth Research Training Group ‘Intercultural Relations in Africa’. We played together in the GradKoll's football team without winning the President's Cup at the time. This has changed with the Africa Multiple Cluster. Rüdiger is a popular captain with ambitious goals and strict rules that he can explain clearly and embodies personally. He is thin-skinned, feels responsible for everything and doesn't shy away in exceptional cases from risky sliding tackles against disliked opponents or spontaneous encroachments on players of his own team. All in all, he has managed to keep a huge heterogeneous squad together – that was the formula for success.” (Robert Debusmann)

"Prof. Rüdiger has always put scientific controversy at the heart of his scholarship. I think it is an ethos that strongly stimulated some innovative research among African members of Africa Multiple 1.0 and contributed to further enrich AM 2.0. Prof. Thanks for teaching us."
(Natéwindé Sawadogo)

"Meeting the man of character in reconfiguring African studies! Rüdiger Seesemann, you are a man with deep vision and leadership! Anytime I have a chance to discuss or engage with you, I can see how humble you are! having known you in the academic circle has shown me your passion and fight for justice and for a just world within and outside academia. You are just a beautiful soul and I wish you all the best while you reach this beautiful age of 60! You are indeed a "gate keeper". I wish you success in this beautiful age full of health joy and laughter to you and your loved ones!"
(Eveline Sawadogo/Compaoré)

W

Women in Academia

An Autobiographic Perspective for a Woman in Burkina Faso

Eveline Sawadogo/Compaore

Introduction

In most African countries, the proportion of women in the agricultural research and development is still very low. The average women involved in the agricultural research and in agricultural leadership position is less than 20%. This situation in the Global South is similar in Burkina Faso. With more than 52% of female in the total population, the number of women involved in scientific research is very low and almost absent in the higher position where decisions are being made. For instance, among 337 researchers in total in the agricultural research Centre in Burkina Faso, only 52 are female with very few senior female researchers.

Data were collected through documentary review and interview was conducted with human resource persons at the ministry of agriculture and ministry of higher education, the gender focal person in these institutions were interviewed. These were combined with an autobiographic study, in order to understand the issue related to women in academia. This paper argues that despite stereotyping and socio-cultural conditions, women can reach doctoral and higher decision-making positions. As the results show, they have a great potential and can better conduct researches to boost the agricultural sector and therefore help improve socio-economic development of their countries. It appears necessary to educate girls and women so that they consider pregnancy, childbirth, family management, and their social role not as a handicap/obstacle, which stops them developing their huge potential, but as part of their great nature and therefore as just a challenge as any other challenge that one faces. It is also important that scholarship institutions give the flexibility to women who chose to combine their spousal role and study. Finally, if women are competent, there is a need that they are promoted to decision making positions.

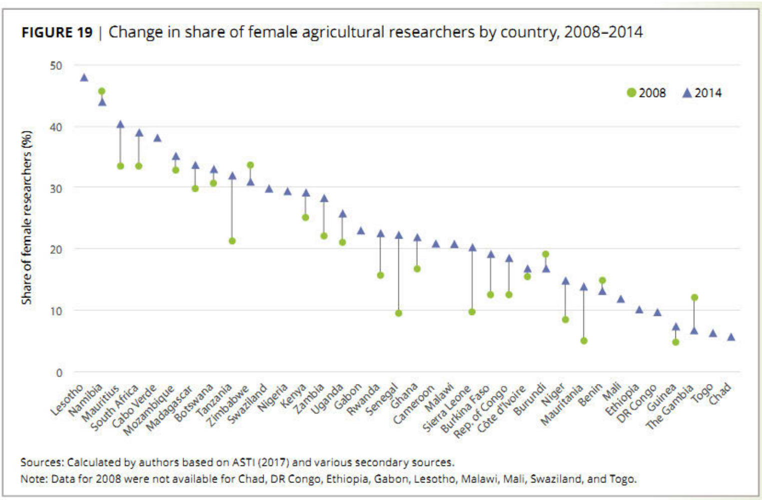
In the following lines, we will first give a brief review on gender in scientific research and development in light with the social construction theory which help us unpack what influences women's decision making by focusing on an autobiographic study of one personal carrier development throughout time. Finally, the auto-biographic study experience helped propose the ways forward so that better policy will be put into place to motivate and encourage women to get into STEM research in Burkina Faso and above in Africa context.

Literature Review: Gender in Higher Education

The scoping review exercise was very useful in the choice of the case study and in identifying the agricultural sector as a potentially interesting case for such study. Indeed, the review broadened my understanding of the history of the topic to be investigated. By writing the literature review, according to Silverman (2005, 340), "you show that: you are able to locate your study within a kind of topics, methods and theories used in your discipline." This present literature has helped achieve this. Indeed, we have explored documents in relation with women in Higher education and in STEM in particular. It has now been established that Africa's new investment should go beyond primary and secondary education for girls, there is the need and that to be able to uncover the full economic and social benefits from women, they need to integrate higher education system and through this, they can position themselves into leading position to better contribute into the continent development. The different institutions such as AU, UNESCO, AWARD are investing into women in addressing gender equality gap in terms of education and capacity building through leadership trainings. The structural changes brought about recently in the last three decades; the liberalization of the market and had put forward STEM as the driver of economic growth. As such, Africa's political leaders are building their hope into STEM for transforming the continent. This situation is actually the same for the other fields such as social sciences. According to the 2016 Gender Gap Report, the more one moves higher in terms of education the more the number of women is scanty. The report underlines the negative stereotypes and lack of role models, lowering girls' performance and hinder their aspirations. With these difficulties, some solutions are proposed through African institutions actions such as, African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD), African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the Organisation for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD), etc. Most of the government initiatives in Africa are build on political decision or NGO and associations. So far, these initiatives have not managed to really raise the number of women in science, quest for relevant development paradigms and policy conceptualization to address effectively the urgent need for Africa collectively to appropriate the process of genuine progress. Assié-Lumumba (2007) considers this as a right of women to higher education and argued that despite women's personal fulfilment, which is very important if African societies and countries really want to move forward and fight against poverty.

As shown from the figure below, there is still a lot to be done in Africa to increase the number of girls in higher education and research. For instance, between 2008 and 2014, the percentage of women in agricultural research increased to around 8%. It has been in this move for the past 5 years.

Figure 1: Proportion of women among agricultural researchers in Africa



The literature on women in higher education in Burkina Faso in general is very low and reflect the Global South. Up to now, more than 70% of the population cannot read or write. The level of literacy has changed over time when in comparison to the early 2000, for example. In terms of schooling, we observe that in urban areas, there are less disparities between the sexes. Although the accent is in recent years to promote girls' schooling, Wouango (2017) shows that nowadays parents encourage their girls to attain higher education. Despite many difficulties they are competing with boys in the classrooms. However, these new trends encounter lots of difficulties after master level for girls. So far, little has been done in terms of research to help inform policy makers on strategic planning to support girls up to doctorate level. The agricultural sector remains similar to such reality in Burkina Faso and in many parts of the world.

As in many African countries, the number of women in STEM with regard to agriculture is very low when we compare it to the average number of women in the population. It is shown that Between 2014/2015 and 2015/2016, the trend of new students entering University shows a strong increase in the field of Agriculture 128%. The enthusiasm of students for this area is beneficial and encouraging because agriculture occupies more than 80% of the active population. The number of girls remain low, at 27% (DGESS 2016).

It becomes, therefore, very important for the few existing women scientists to get organised and undertake gender-based researches to inform country level policies for the sake of women. Most often, women associations are more politically rather than scientifically capable of conducting gender-based research. Conducting research on this issue would help plan how women can be enrolled into higher education system.

Method

The present research uses both qualitative and quantitative data collected through documentary review and interviews to unpack the gender issue in agricultural research and development in Burkina Faso. As such, it investigates the number of women, their position and the process through which they get involved into research. We tried to look at their contributions through observation into the agricultural sector in Burkina Faso. Our study's characteristics, orientation and actions (Hart 1998) concern the "how", the "why", and the process involved in the choice of a woman to get in involve in scientific research. Also, we underline the merits that came up from our interviews.

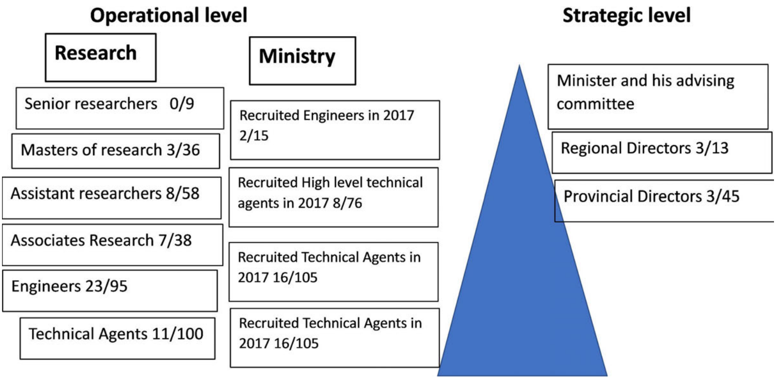
The role of women in scientific research in Burkina Faso's development was the first broad question that I began my research with. From this broad scope, I started investigating the literature on the evolution of the number of women in scientific research in Africa. This scoping review had the objective of undertaking a study, which sought to understand the position and engagement of women in agricultural research and how this impact on economic and social development. Careful consideration revealed a need for a case study, in order to attest, reject, and make some contributions to the ongoing and building research on how we can increase the number of women in science and how women scientists do make a difference when in a leading position. Women intervention, which claims to help alleviate poverty, are not only seen as the most vulnerable social group, but in contrast, they are considered also as the ones which role makes huge contribution. However, little has been done to understand the extent to which women in agricultural research remain weak in number. The present research therefore adds a new way of thinking, new dimensions of seeing the problem, and new propositions about women in science. I specifically use here the social construction approach (Pinch and Bijker 1984) to unpack gender in agricultural research and development in Burkina Faso.

Following a careful consideration of the above aspects, I settled on a narrower questions: what are the proportion of women in agricultural research in Burkina Faso? From a personal experience, how can we contribute into promoting women in agricultural research and in academia? These questions were framed with the aim of contributing to the research to inform policy makers and strategic level actors on how to encourage and increase the number of women in scientific research, in order to generate sustainable socio-economic development. As a result, it becomes important that in terms of increasing the number of women in science, it is very important that we try to understand this interpretative ability to understand social facts. This in-depth and detailed study on one case strives to understand such situations as a whole. Thus, social, economic, political, and historical reasons have shaped the issue regarding women in agricultural research and development.

Research Results

The research shows that from national level, women in agricultural sector are very few. Indeed, based on the national agricultural research centre, our study clearly shows that women represent less than 1/6 of the total staff members. Despite these few numbers, women are making an impact. For instance, one of the researchers is engaged in the rural community where she created an association and is investing a lot of her time with these vulnerable people. As a result, it shows how people actively enter into the causal process through individual and joint action' (Puddephatt and Sprus 2007, 265) appears very critical in one life. It offers the best alternative. I intend to be consistent with Silverman (2005) that the social phenomena under which I have managed to reach a doctoral level can be used to understand how and why women are made lagging behind. Most of the time, our personal desire and how we see or consider as successful life is what lead and drive us through. Sometimes, our environment, mostly the people we love, are able to influence, either greatly positively or negatively, our way of seeing good life if its through academia or otherwise.

Figure 2: Representation of proportion of women in the national agricultural research Centre and the Ministry of Agriculture



As can be seen from the above figure, the more we go higher in education, the fewer the number of women becomes. At some point, there is none at all. In the high-level research position, there are even fewer women in 2017. Even though there is an obvious engagement of women in the agricultural research and development, as discussed above, the social construction influences their carrier. More recently, in 2024, only 2 women get to the high level in agricultural research. Women, as a result, after reaching certain ages and educational level, are more concerned about marriage, getting children, and having family life.

WHY ARE WOMEN STILL LAGGING BEHIND?

Getting old without these advantages in an African context is similar to a 'failure in one life' and this is true in most young girls thinking, to the point that, this is what constitute their priority in life rather than that of having a successful carrier job some time.

The results show that research is a very demanding career and it is very difficult to combine laboratory work, fieldwork, trips, and studies for such a long time because young girls desire to get enrolled in marriage life as soon as they pass the age of 18. Another difficulty is the family life management with pregnancy and child care, which also hinder women who want to have career in research. However, the case of the personal biography contrasts with these difficulties, because as a woman, I combined pregnancy, childcare and family management with PhD study and part-time job. Such achievement was an option that I made with the support of my husband and the institution at the University of Nottigham.

The debate around gender, sometimes, is full of passion and linked to politics, rather than really research based issue that seek to find sustainable solutions. As a result, most of the proposed solutions are built without any deep research. So far, the funding bodies and policies do not give priorities to such empirical studies so that they use the research results in policy advocacies and to build country level policies.

Stereotyping and pre-concept about conducting long study is beyond women's personal control as this depends on her social construction of facts. Family life management and lack of support from a partner remain important obstacle. On the 14th of March 2017, Mofolorunsho Abidémi published the following on a Science dev blog: "If a woman has her place in a laboratory, let her seize it and do her job. The woman ideally has the same aptitudes as the man for science. We will have to stop – and especially that she (the woman) will stop one day with the debate on gender and that the woman needs to roll up her sleeves!" So far, many women have pull their sleeves! But they need the institutional support to be able to fulfil their ambition.

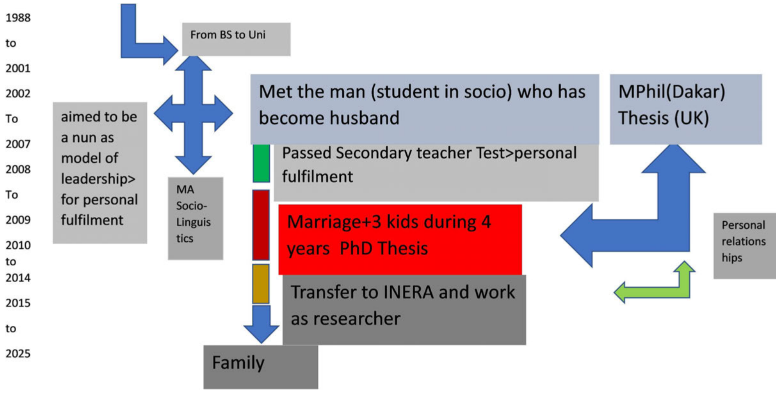
An Itinerary of a Woman: Autobiographic Case

I had managed to reach a PhD level in my study in the field of STIS (Science, Technology and Innovation Studies in Sociology and Social Policy), thanks to my social construct and institutional settings. My personal 'autobiographic' shows that the social construction has played a very important role in my personal carrier development and had made me who I am today. It does not mean I achieved a lot; it just means I managed to get through. These took me through so many different steps and levels.

After 8 years in boarding school, I have decided with my environment influence, to get into the university and leave the boarding school and the training as a None. Thus, the dream I had since my childhood had vanished and I made my decision through the influence of my environment, especially my friends who were almost all leaving the boarding school. I experienced a lot of pressure while at the university and was hesitating between going back to boarding school and be trained as a none or having to choose to have a husband and build a family life. Meeting my future husband as a student has led me to reshape my study from arts to linguistics to STIS. His influence wiped away my consideration of being a none. I got a teaching job in a high school with my government after my master graduation. My dream was to be honest and I felt it will be fulfilled as a working young girl who can take care of herself. Then getting married and having kids were my priority given that I was getting old beyond the average years in my context at age 28 at that time. My future husband, at that time, had encouraged me to register for a PhD. My PhD study was more influenced by him, he believed me and supported me through this journey. As a result, I was able to achieve it despite being a mum. Taking care of a husband as my adduction says and giving birth to 3 kids all during the 4 years PhD as a personal fulfilment shaped by my environment.

In fact, as an African woman, I did not want to miss such joy of motherhood because of a PhD, but I did have my husband fully supporting me through out, in a context where it was only us away from home in the UK. The following figure shows the different steps in my academic and social life as a woman, and it raises the issue of what a good life is and who can define it in my point of view. That is to say, the priority of what makes one happy, what drives oneself. Choosing what is important in one's life will make things achievable. There is priority to the point that such priority takes over the other things. Having a husband, family, children, birth, and housekeeping was my priority as what constitutes a happy life as an African women. As such, pregnancy or childbirth were not obstacles, but challenges to me. Away from family, parent, and friend, I managed my three babies and defended my PhD. As such, pregnancy, childbirth, etc. are not incompatible if the institution and close family are supportive. Another important aspect is the value that is shared in the family. As such, I can say that a woman like myself breaches a lot to get there, and there are options. We need to understand these options and accompany girls and women consequently. Stereotyping and pre-concept about suitability of leadership position for a woman is beyond her personal control as this depends on her social construction and facts.

Figure 3: Representation of autobiographic career itinerary



Discussion why GDO within the AMRC is Important

I have gone through many steps and different circumstances that led me to where I am now. In terms of institutional support, there was little support with huge impact that I benefited from my university (the University of Nottingham, UK) through childcare and space. The huge support from my husband, who believed in me and encouraged me throughout, has been very important up to now.

Up to now in Burkina Faso, there is the need to undertake an in-depth research to inform strategic and policy level actors on this issue related to gender in academia. Key aspects to consider is to encourage girls to go for high level degree, by giving them opportunities and examples. There is a need to put in place a platform to help girls incorporate pregnancy and childbirth, not as handicap/obstacles but as part of their challenging lives. Nowadays, scholarship institutions need to continue providing the flexibility to women who choose to combine pregnancy and study, and above all, put in place within university a mentoring team that young women can usually get inspiration from.

Understanding the philosophy of a good life can embrace how women can have both a family and a career as a scientist. Making great successful woman known to young girls and initiate mentoring for women who chose Science as a career is important. The glass ceiling for women in science is a reality (motherhood, family life, lack of an understanding and a supportive partner etc.). The new move with Gender and Diversity at the African Multiple Research Centers initiative is highly appreciated and is going to make all the difference.

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X

Xenophobia

No. → Racism

Aleo Susan Arndt

Xenophobia is a term widely used to abnegate and euphemise racism. “Oh, it’s the nature of people to hate strangers, you know?”, said the German Götz Aly in a memorable conversation with me at the office of *Die Zeit* some years ago. Memorable—because Götz Aly aggressively defended racist terminology, while insulting people like me, who challenge him for this. And memorable – because Götz Aly eventually did not give his consent to publish this “conversation” and because the jounalists from *Die Zeit’s* signaled that I was doing a “woke Kulturkampf”, while they were the only ones who are neutral and reasonable. This, in fact, is a common position of the so called “middle of *white* German society”. They hold that racism does not exist beyond the history of National Socialism and those who actively wish to reactivate it. This way, they keep sheltering in the comfort zone of not doing anything to fight racism. Yet, where racism is denied, it cannot be fought—and this is what keeps one of humanities longest and most violent catastrophes alive and active. Moreover, xenophobia is misleading whenever racism is at work. Xenophobia suggests that any British person, including white cis-man, would be affected, while an Afro-german person wouldn’t. Yet, the contrary is as true as xenophobia is thus misleading. And as for the second word part of xenophobia: demonization and (erotic) exotification are just two sides of the same medal. A white appraisal of a Black person’s alleged rhythmic talent is as racist as complimenting an Afro-German person for speaking “excellent German”.

Y

The Ypsilon Building

An Architectural Y in the Heart of Bayreuth

Aleo Susan Arndt

When I moved to Bayreuth, I was overwhelmed by the city's eagerness to offer directions to the Y-House at many crossroads. I thought, what an interesting way to name a "Frauenhaus", a women's shelter. But the extensive signposts to the Y-house, also made me get distressed: I wondered, is it that bad in Bayreuth? I know that almost every day in Germany, a woman is murdered. The numbers are rising rapidly. In 2022, there were 155 cases; in 2023, already 360. In addition, there were 578 other attempted killings of women or girls in 2024. In 2025, too, on average, two to three women a day are targeted in attacks on their lives. The figure is likely much higher, because many women do not even dare to report the crime. In most cases, the perpetrator is a partner or ex-partner—often also the father, or another male relative or acquaintance. Such femicides, though, are just the tip of the iceberg of domestic violence. And because of it, women are not safe where they should be the safest—at home. Many women have to survive in the midst of serial violence. Some, however, manage to leave and find shelter for themselves and, if applicable, their kids in so called "Frauenhäusern", "women's shelters". In Germany, there are some 400 of such refuges, offering about 7.700 places, which never suffice. So, when seeing all the signs directing at "Y-House", I was startled: Was the good signage a result of domestic violence being particularly high in Bayreuth? Or does the "Frauenhaus" advertise its location, because there is next to no violence against women in Bayreuth and they have, unlike the rest of the country, a lot of free spaces? Maybe, I also thought, the city is just nice and wants to make sure that a woman in need will have no difficulties finding the "Frauenhaus", and thus shelter, easily? Or is it a bad idea telling the violent partners where they could stalk their ex-partners easily?

While I kept turning such thoughts over in my mind for weeks, I also learned that Bayreuth has a high-rise building with a pool at its rooftop. I got very excited about this and eventually learned that this high-rise is called "Y-house", because it is shaped like a capital Y. This was when I eventually realised my mistake. I understood that the sign-posted Y-house is not a women's shelter. It's a residential building with three extending wings meeting in the centre. There is a Frauenhaus in Bayreuth, one, that is run by the Caritas. It has a capacity for 10 women, and the kids they might have. But this one is situated at Bürgerreuther Straße 9 (and only the internet, and no signs on the crossroads, would tell you this) and it has absolutely nothing to do with the Y-house—and vice versa.

All across the globe, Bayreuth is known as the city of Richard Wagner, as the city of the Wagner-Festspiele. And Wagner came to Bayreuth, because he liked the Prussian architecture that Bayreuth owes to, above all, Markgräfin Wilhelmine. There are still some of the historic villas that also recall that Bayreuth was as dear to Hitler as Wagner. Because of its geographical closeness to Hitler's capital of the heart, Nürnberg, Bayreuth was also facing numerous bombings in World War II that also destroyed besides the station some of the classic buildings, including the Markgräfliche Opernhaus that is listed as world heritage.

After the war, the city was rebuilt in the so-called *Trümmerachitektur* of the 1950s that was first and foremost pragmatic. The Y-House, constructed between 1972 and 1974, was an architectural intervention into this. From a distance, the Y-house appears to be a grey giant, drawn in the sober architectural language of the 1970s. But if you look more closely, or down from the sky, you can see how shaping the house like the letter Y is all about fluidity, innovation, openness, movement, future. This, however, did not happen in a vacuum, but was part and parcel of Bayreuth's reinventing itself in the mid-1970s—to which the founding of the University of Bayreuth as one of Germany's younger universities was a milestone.

The founding of the University of Bayreuth in 1975 was part of a broader reformist movement in higher education policy aimed at structural innovation, societal engagement, and the epistemological reorientation of the West German university system. As a so-called "reform university", Bayreuth was from the outset committed to questioning entrenched disciplinary boundaries and to establishing new research frameworks that were thematically and methodologically integrate (Mittelstraße 1994). It focused on traditional disciplines, while also embracing innovative teaching and research.

A paradigmatic example of this approach was the early institutionalisation of African Studies as a central profile field. In contrast to many other

German institutions, where African Studies historically remained shaped by colonial and linguistically or anthropologically driven paradigms, Bayreuth deliberately embraced an interdisciplinary orientation from the beginning (Seesemann 2003). The founding of the Iwalewahaus in 1981 as a centre for contemporary African art, theory, and practice permanently anchored post-colonial perspectives within the university's institutional structure. Of course, early African Studies have still also reproduced *white* supremacist power structures and epistemologies, and yet there was a pillar for Bayreuth's African Studies becoming a major site of the reconfiguration of African Studies under the visionary leadership of Rüdiger Seesemann.

The university's commitment to be innovative was also reflected architecturally: the university's campus layout was deliberately conceived as a space of proximity and exchange—a structural counter-model to the often anonymous sprawl of traditional universities. The spatial closeness of the departments was intended not only to symbolise but to enable interdisciplinarity in practice. Thus, from its inception, the University of Bayreuth positioned itself not merely as a site of knowledge production but as an epistemic space: a space in which knowledge is reflected in its social embeddedness, critically examined, and productively recomposed.

Eventually, the designs of both the university and the Y-House are closely related in their desires to create new modes of transition and openness. The Y-Building and the Campus university are commitments to modernity and transition. Both offered a response to the city's need for urban attractiveness and density without social constriction (*Nordbayerischer Kurier* 2023).

Also, as a result of having become a city with a university, Bayreuth was growing and the Y-Building offered a response to this, too. Today, nearly 400 apartments span 18 floors, along with that rooftop indoor pool, a sauna, a small row of shops, doctors' offices, a hair salon, and an engineering firm. Between 2005 and 2012, the house was renovated—energy-efficient upgrades, new windows, a fresh façade color.

At its peak, more than 800 people lived under this single roof. Today, less people share this space, but the spirit of a transgenerational home remains. Long-time retirees live alongside young students, newcomers beside those who were already there for the topping-out ceremony of the Y-House (*Schönbauer* 2018). One of the most early tenants remembers: "Back then we were young and curious. I liked the sense of newness, of urbanity.... The indoor pool was our meeting place – we celebrated, swam, laughed there." But the pool is just one of the highlights. It is complemented by the amazing view that is granted to those living in the upper floors. There, one can see far beyond Bayreuth, all the way to the Fichtel Mountains. "You get the feeling of hovering above the city – and at the same time being right in the middle of it." (*Nordbayerischer Kurier* 2023)

Indeed, like any other house, it is more than a place to live in. It's a home to people and thus to their stories, too. One of them is mine. The other day, I went to the playing ground in front of the building. A father was playing with his child and then decided that it would be time to go upstairs. The child started what many 3 year-olds love the most: asking the Why-question. "Why do we have to go home?" – "Because it's late!" – "Why is it that late?" – "Because we have been awake for so many hours!" – "Why do we need to sleep, Papa?" – "Because our body . . . . " – This went on for a while, until the father repeated: "We have to go home now." When the child responded, once again, with their sweet "why", the father seemed ready to play his last card: "Because the Y has a long tail." The child, seemingly startled in the light of this swift Joker, stopped asking and started to enter the Y-house via one of its long tails. Maybe the child already knows that the house they live in looks like a Y.

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Z

Zukünfte

Aleo Susan Arndt

Die Anthropologin Barbara Adam (2010) hat Zukunft in vier Modi gefasst: als "fact", "fate", "fortune" und "fiction". Während *fate* und *fortune* auf ein festgelegtes oder zufallsbedingtes Geschehen hinauslaufen, verweist Zukunft als *fact* auf ein Realitätsfeld. Adam aber versäumt es, dies zu Ende zu denken. Zukunft ist keine objektiv gegebene Realität, schon gar nicht vorhersagbar. Denn auch Fakten sind – im Sinne Roland Barthes (1957) – weder naturgegeben noch neutral, sondern machtkodiert erschaffen. Das macht sie zum Gegenteil von *fate* als Schicksal oder *fortune* als Glück.

Denn Zukunft geschieht nicht einfach. Zukunft wird gemacht. Zukunft ist kein Faktum, das sowieso existiert, sondern eine Möglichkeit, die geschehen kann. Hier wird Zukunft zur Projektion, zum Hoffnungsanker, zur Ressource. Diese aber sind machtkodiert und stehen niemals außerhalb der Machtverhältnisse, Ordnungen und Modelle, die Menschen bauen, um sich zu (auf Kosten anderer) zu privilegieren. Aus Macht und Privilegien (oder der Abwesenheit dieser) ergibt sich, wer Zukunft wie gestalten – begehren oder fürchten – kann. Nicht als "fate" oder "fortune", wie lebenseinschneidende Ereignisse um Krankheit oder Gesundheit oft erscheinen mögen. Zukunft ist immer auch und meist vor allem etwas, das Menschen selbst gestalten. Zukunft geschieht, weil sie gestaltet werden kann und wird. Das schließt ein, dass Zukunft auch verhindert und zerstört werden können. Manche Zukünfte bedingen einander, andere schließen sich gegenseitig aus. Manche fanden nie statt – weil andere sie verhinderten. Insofern sind auch Nicht-Ereignisse Teil der Geschichte von Zukunft.

Das zeigt das Beispiel der Maafa, der europäischen Versklavung von Afrikaner*innen. Über Jahrhunderte hinweg stahl Europa Ressourcen des afrikanischen Kontinentes und dies schloss gestohlene Menschen und deren Arbeitsleistung ein. Europa *prospered in the process*, baute sich seine Industrielle Revolution und den dazugehörigen Wohlstand auf, während Europa gleichzeitig afrikanische Länder demographisch und ökonomisch ausblutete. Dennoch erdreistet sich Europa, Afrika als korrupt, gewaltvoll sowie arm, weil faul, zu entwerfen. Verantwortungsübernahme, seien es nun Reparationszahlungen oder überfällige Entschuldigungen oder eben das Teilen aktueller und künftiger Ressourcen, bleiben dabei entsprechend aus. Das prägt die Gegenwart ebenso wie die Zukunft, die in dieser gestaltet werden kann.

Zukunft ist keine Antithese zur Vergangenheit. Was geschehen wird, war noch nicht – aber es hängt mit dem zusammen, was bereits geschah. Jede Zukunft ist in Erinnerung und Geschichte verwurzelt. Walter Benjamin schrieb 1940, die Geschichte sei "Gegenstand einer Konstruktion, deren Ort nicht die homogene und leere Zeit, sondern die von Jetztzeit erfüllte bildet." (These 9). Entsprechend ist Zukunft kein leerer Container für Kommendes, sondern verdichtete Jetztzeit – erfüllt von dem, was war, ist und nicht sein durfte. Zukunft ist nicht nur die Summe des Gemachten, sondern auch des Nicht-Gemachten; nicht nur des Gesagten, sondern auch des Verschwiegenen; nicht nur des Möglichen, sondern auch des Ausgeschlossenen. Sie umfasst das Geschehene ebenso wie das Verhinderte, das Noch-Nicht und das Nie-Mehr.

Gerade deshalb lässt sie sich Zukunft nicht im Singular denken, sondern nur als Zukünfte. Diese sind weder neutral noch gleichförmig, sondern Ergebnis und Ausdruck von Macht, Ohnmacht, Privilegien, Entbehrungen. Am Ende ist die Fiktion die einzige, die Zukunft realiter zu betreten vermag. Wie können uns erzählen, wie das Morgen oder das nächste Jahrhundert aussehen wird. Und was wir dabei sagen, wird auch beeinflussen, was kommen mag. Als Fiktion, in Erzählungen, Bildern und Visionen gedeihend, ist Zukunft ein machtvoller Motor: Ängste und Hoffnungen, Kritik und Utopie werden in sie eingeschrieben – und verändern dabei die Gegenwart ebenso wie das Erinnern der Vergangenheit.

Zukunft ist also nicht einfach das, was kommt – sie ist das, was kommen könnte. Und entscheidender noch: das, was kommen könnte, weil Menschen es genau so gestalten. Zukunft kann Leben geben oder nehmen – und ist dabei stets umkämpft. Jeder Streit über Zukunft ist ein Streit über Zeit und Raum: über Erinnerung und Erwartung, über geopolitische Strukturen, soziale Positionierungen, über Wissen, Sprache und Handlungsmacht.

„Du willst die Welt nicht ändern", singt Rio Reiser in seinem Lied "Wann?" (1987). Das aber ist ebenso politisch, wie dies nicht zu tun. Denn, so Rio weiter: Wenn du die Welt nicht ändern willst, "dann tun's eben andere für dich". Rüdiger Seesemann lebt dieses Prinzip. Er ist ein Weltgestalter, der Verantwortung für die Vergangenheit übernimmt, indem er Solidarität, Teilhabe und das Teilen von Privilegien jenseits jedes Wunsches dafür Aufmerksamkeit zu erhaschen, zu seinem wichtigstem Prinzip als Wissenschaftler, Aktivist, Chef, Vater und Mensch macht. Der Internet-Visionär William Gibson (1999) sagte: "The future is already here, it's just not very evenly distributed." (11:55) Weil Rüdiger Seesemann für eine gerechtere Welt streitet, wohnt in ihm die Zukunft, die er ist.

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