

THE BIGSAS WORLD 2.0

BEST OF

April 2021

Vol. 1



"I am in the midst of people who are also in African studies, I am in the midst of experienced researchers and I have the opportunity to leverage their own experience, and learn from them"

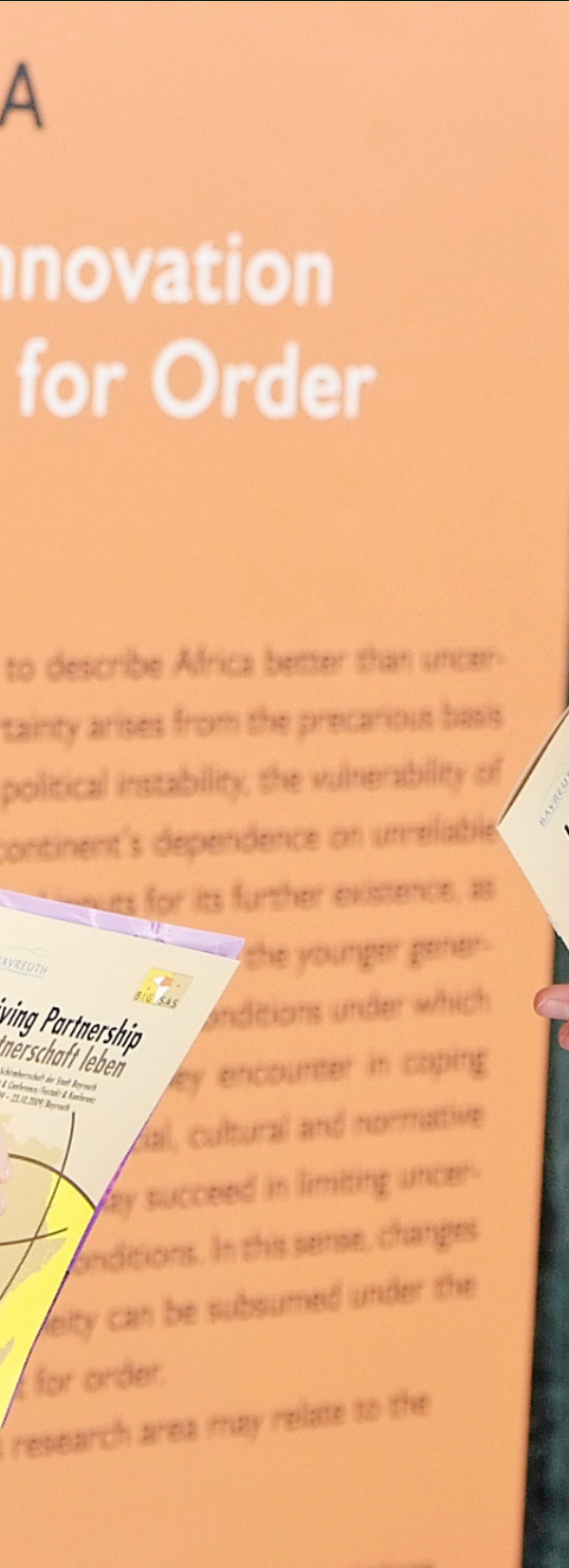
- Thierry Boudjekeu





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MTF

MEET THE FELLOWS

"Unlike other people, I didn't exactly seek out Bayreuth; it found me." (Diana Kisakye)

JFC

JUNIOR FELLOW
COSMOS

"Fashion is a cultural performance" (Dandara Maia)

Day

SPECIAL DAY

"Throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual's will to overcome adversity and to live a better life." (Asaf Augusto)

FTF

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"I know I am leaving some part of myself here" (Kamal Donko)

PROF

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"The first duty of a professor is to teach" (Prof. Dr. Thoko Kaime)

THX

THANK YOU

"It is only through all of you that the BIGSAS blog has come to life and it is also only through you that it will continue to stay alive". (Dina Sodjadan)

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ABOUT THE BIGSAS WORLD 2.0

by *Dina Sodjadan*

The Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) is part of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence funded by the German Research Foundation in the framework of the Excellence Strategy of the German Federal and State Governments. In the focus of this unique structure of creative and innovative training are approximately 81 Junior Fellows from 26 African, American, Asian and European countries. The doctoral candidates benefit from a clearly structured, academic and career-oriented training as well as a genuine expertise in the African studies which has increased continuously since the foundation of the University of Bayreuth. The international network with Partner Universities on the African continent creates even more so excellent conditions for the research of our Junior Fellows.

This brochure includes all the essential blogposts since the inception of [The BIGSAS World Blog](#) in February 2020. Over 30 posts have been published over the course of a year, focusing on both Junior Fellows and BIGSAS alumni.

The blog offers unique insights into the various spheres of the BIGSAS family; it expands the Graduates School media profile and visibility. Currently, 81 Junior Fellows are working at BIGSAS to complete numerous scientific dissertation projects. The blog gives the doctoral candidates the opportunity to present their current research projects in an interactive way, to share their experiences during their doctorate and to create and nurture their networks.

Enjoy reading the brochure. Feel free to share it in all your networks!

WHO WORKS BEHIND THE SCENES?



Dina Sodjadan, initiator and chief editor until March 2021 (c) DS



Sofie Reinl, editor since December 2020 (c) SR



Yao Sodjadan, translator since March 2020 (c) YS

SOME STATISTICAL INSIGHTS



TAGS

Africa Politicum afrika@school alumni
Alumnus art Benin Black Atlantic Brazil
Celebration Cluster Colonialism Covid-19
DAAD Education Election France
Frankophonie French French language Get-
Together GSSP history Human Rights Junior
Fellow Justice Kenya key chain Language
policy Law Literary Studies mobility Model
African Union Morocco newspapers Nigeria
Party Representative Slavery Slave Trade
sudan Terrorism TGCL Togo Wilde Liga work
group



Language Talent, Social Entrepreneur and BIGSAS
Junior Fellow - meet Thierry Boudjekeu

Education as passion - meet Ngozi Edeagu

Convivial fellow and a new representative - meet
Diana Kisakye

Togo wählt - Studierende diskutieren

Demokratie und was uns der Arabische Frühling
darüber zu sagen hat

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Meet the Fellow



LANGUAGE TALENT, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR AND BIGSAS JUNIOR FELLOW - MEET THIERRY BOUDJEKEU

by Dina Sodjadan (March 10th 2020)



Thierry has now been a BIGSAS Junior Fellow since December 2019, but Bayreuth is not a new place for him. He came to Germany for his Master's degree in 2015.

"I really like Bayreuth as a study environment, because of the international space".

The University of Bayreuth and all the opportunities in Germany have been enriching to him.

(c) Thierry Boudjekeu

He graduated in 2018, after completing an exciting internship at the UN in Bonn. He volunteered for organisations such as Engagement Global and worked for the German Cooperation back in his home country Cameroon, where he explored what is there for him. After all, his studies and life in Bayreuth changed him: *I am a new Cameroonian in a way.*

As an ambitious translator and literary scholar, the Cluster of Excellence: Africa Multiple in Bayreuth opened up an opportunity for a doctoral degree on the slave trade memory in Francophone Africa. A topic that has intrigued him for many years and which is increasingly becoming the focus of scientific and public attention.

"I had the opportunity to go back to my bucket list and get this slavery issue that was always haunting me - it is something we do not really talk about in Francophone Africa, whereas there is a lot to say about this painful past and the significant consequences that the slave trade still has in Africa today. My research journey starts with the doctoral position within the project "Black Atlantic revisited" of the Cluster".

He enthusiastically describes the networks, the academic structure and the opportunities in Bayreuth.

"I am in the midst of people who are also in African studies, I am in the midst of experienced researchers, BIGSAS Alumni for example, and I have the opportunity to leverage their own experience, and learn from them."

His project entitled "Writing the Slave Trade Trauma in Francophone Africa: An Analysis of selected Novels", which is also part of the above-mentioned project, creates challenging dimensions to which Thierry intends to dedicate growing attention in the years to come. For him, the PhD is not just "**full-time job**", but an opportunity to explore a highly traumatic aspect of African history with a focus on the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. He focuses on contemporary African novelists who brought this concern to the fore, namely Leonora Miano, Kangni Alem and Wilfried N'Sonde to name a few. Thierry's project is charged with emotion.

"It is an immensely important chapter that needs to be dredged up in order to hear the voices of the disappeared, pray for the deported, mourn the dead, achieve healing and gain back African self-consciousness darkened and shadowed by the forgotten", Thierry says.

What sounds ambitious can certainly be implemented. Whether in a dissertation, in a work group in Bayreuth or in an entire worldwide network - the world should get ready for a new orientation of African science and science on and with Africa. The University of Bayreuth, with its affiliated BIGSAS and the Cluster of Excellence: Africa Multiple, offers an academic space that is nowhere else to be found.



(c) Thierry Boudjekeu

A space where exchange takes place, not only on a scientific level. Bayreuth is an international hub with connections to the whole world.

In addition to his academic work, Thierry dedicates himself to other initiatives. As a former president of the Model African Union e.V., raising awareness and discussing "African" challenges with international students is particularly important to him. He is always committed to meeting young activists, academics, decision-makers and African conference participants.

As an experienced French Translator and Social entrepreneur, Thierry owns a translation company - TradSpace.com. With his company he contributes to a globalised world which is day by day growing closer together. His love for languages took him to Ukraine, where he learned Russian. He is also an amateur classical singer in his spare time.

CONVIVIAL FELLOW AND A NEW REPRESENTATIVE - MEET DIANA KISAKYE

by Dina Sodjadan & Diana Kisakye (April 4th 2020)

Some Junior Fellows (JF) have found a new home in Bayreuth and with the university the perfect place to study. What at the beginning takes place rather coincidentally or by accidental contacts - the journey to Bayreuth - turns out to be a profound decision for many: this is where I want to stay.

"Unlike other people, I didn't exactly seek out Bayreuth; it found me."

Diana earned a BSc. Degree from Makerere University (Kampala) in Maths and when she came to Germany, she completely switched her studies. After completing a BA in Kultur und Gesellschaft Afrikas (Culture and Society Africa) and a MA in Development Studies, she is now a JF at BIGSAS. Even though she had no academic background in social sciences, she saw other scholars as an inspiration and wanted to look at the African continent from a scholarly angle. When she attended a methods workshop at BIGSAS in 2014 as a curious BA student, she declared herself as an *"aspiring academic"* and from thereon had one goal: becoming part of BIGSAS in the future.

While Diana is an excellent example of 'starting over' in a new discipline, she continues to dive into new academic waters. She is also an employee to the Cluster of Excellence: Africa Multiple (from hereon: 'Cluster'). The project "Multiplicity in Decision-Making of Africa's Interacting Markets: The Functioning of Community Law, the Role of Market Participants and the Power of Regional Judges" combines Development Economics, Political Studies and International Law. Diana is a versatile student who does not hesitate to face new disciplinary challenges. Her determination alone is not the only reason she qualifies as a team member of the above-mentioned project. What drew Diana to the MuDAIMa project was the interdisciplinary approach and the opportunity to be affiliated with BIGSAS.

A new project awaits

For her PhD project, Diana is interested in the intersecting modalities of judicial politics and regional integration processes in Africa. *"Even though Africa has proven to be fertile ground for testing international legal regimes,"* she adds, *"scholarly accounts remain pessimistic in assessing these experiments."* Her work seeks to shed light on how Regional Economic Community courts in Africa are challenging international adjudication theories by pushing their expectations and breaking new ground. Her PhD work takes an in-depth comparative approach of three REC courts to explore how African REC courts construct and exercise their power. The research prioritises judges and their key constituencies as a window into understanding the adjudication processes and their impact on regional integration processes.

Grounded in relational processes of informality, judicial agency, and the courts' utility purposes, the study opens up new ways of thinking about the performance of international courts in non-Western settings. It seeks to expand our understanding of some of the key players in regional politics whilst unravelling intricate details about the rule of law in Africa.

In her current position on the MuDAIMa project, she is still in the process of juggling around a lot of work. Being part of a project, carrying out research, and delivering results do not release her from her further PhD obligations. In addition to the project, she is also required to write her dissertation, which in this case is linked to the 'Cluster' project but cannot be transferred one-to-one. However, Diana has a good sense of synergies, which she benefits from as a doctoral student. For instance, during the Covid pandemic, she has had to develop creative ways of doing fieldwork through online interviews and using existing documents while she awaits the chance to travel to her research destinations.

Being a representative to her fellow colleagues in the 'Cluster'

Nevertheless, as a doctoral student in the 'Cluster' and as a JF at BIGSAS, it may happen that one sits between two chairs. These two institutions are interwoven with each other while maintaining their independence. Meanwhile, there may also be doctoral students in 'Cluster' projects who are not yet able to fully understand the purpose of BIGSAS. Diana considers it a privilege that she is already familiar with the Bayreuth structures. She has been in touch with BIGSAS for many years, as several of her friends completed their graduate school research here. Besides, BIGSAS is seen as an umbrella, *"that grants you the rights to do things, like applying for funds, or to attend workgroups"*. Thus, one can enjoy many advantages that support one's doctoral studies.

Going back to the doctoral students employed in the 'Cluster' and only later become part of BIGSAS, there are still many open questions regarding structures and participation, rights, and duties. Herefore, it is essential to reach out to these students in time and address them with the right information. Diana sees this as her task and demonstrates her support by acting as a representative for 'Cluster doctoral students'.

After being asked by the Dean of the 'Cluster' to come up with a representative to attend the Academic Committee (AC) meetings, many students were not forthcoming. She took it upon herself to serve her colleagues because she cares about her peers' advancement and getting their grievances heard. When the democratic decision took place to confirm her in her office, she was happy to support the 'Cluster' and improve the structure and working place for her fellow students.

***"I am somebody, who likes things to be done. If I can do them, then I do them!
And if I can't, or I think I don't have the capacity to do them, then I stay away"***

Unlike the BIGSAS representatives, the position as a 'Cluster' PhD representative has not yet implemented an incentive, such as a three-month extension or a regulation, e.g. for how long one is carrying the position. Is that something that bothers her? No, she states: *"We just started to do this. And I see it as a voluntary thing"*. There is, of course, also a difference between the representative positions at BIGSAS and in the 'Cluster'. The latter is less work, as one attends the AC meetings, which are held three times a year. The rest of the work is done in one's free time, like sending out e-mails. Diana emphasises that she would have done it anyway, as she is a "people person". It is honourable that she uses her resources on behalf of her fellow students because only as a group can their voice be heard.

"If we understand that it is through BIGSAS that we can get our voice as PhD students heard and that we are not a separate entity from BIGSAS, then this would help to overcome the current gap that some are speaking of. People have to understand that all these calls we are making, through BIGSAS, are not intended to bother them or take time away from their working schedule. On the contrary, it's there to enable them to do their work better, in a more systematic way, to create a sense of community, to create some guidance and some safe space for doctoral students to know that they can come through this institution to raise their concerns".



Diana's biggest concern, and task, is to support the togetherness among all the JF, those of the 'Cluster' and beyond. "No one is an island", and all the students have various groups they are a part of. Coincidentally, we had this interview during the COVID-19 crisis, and it is, especially in 'times like these', essential to stay connected and to uplift each other.

(c) Diana Kisakye

EDUCATION AS PASSION - MEET NGOZI EDEAGU

by Dina Sodjadan (May 26th 2020)

When Ngozi Edeagu arrived in Bayreuth in October 2019 she had already seen many other places in the world. She undertook schooling in Nigeria, but also in the UK and in Asia, attending international schools and diving into different cultures. With degrees from the University of Nigeria and the University of Oxford, she now found her way to Bayreuth. We are curious: What are her ideas for the next years?

While she speaks about her experiences as a dedicated university teacher for history in Nigeria, she stresses the importance of pursuing an additional degree for more upwards mobility in the academic sector. When she researched for opportunities in Europe, Canada and the US, she came to the realisation: "I never thought of Germany" - even though her brother was a student at the TU Munich and constantly pointed out: "German schools are excellent".

After some consideration and further research, she stumbled upon BIGSAS and applied for the a DAAD GSP scholarship. Her colleagues from Nigeria emphasized that in comparison to the UK, for instance, "Germany is about the long-term relationship", an idea she really liked.

"Germany is about the long-term relationship."

Additionally, she got in touch with BIGSAS Alumnus Uchenna Oyali to inquire first-hand about the doctorate in Germany and particularly at BIGSAS. He provided her with important information, gave her practical advice and they are still in touch. What a great example for the BIGSAS network stretching across the world.

Her interest and long-time experience in education sparked the idea for a PhD project in which she explores the link between newspapers, non-elite groups and the decolonisation process in Nigeria from 1937 to 1957. While at the time, subscribers published their grievances and newspapers like the West African Pilot, these newspapers were mostly published in English, which meant less access for non-elite groups who she describes as non- and semi-literate people. Furthermore, despite the literacy rate which was less than 6% at the time, the non-elites were still able to air their grievances and thus participated in the decolonisation agenda.



(c) West African Pilot / Ngozi Edeagu

It is not only her current PhD project that highlights the significance of education in every-day life but also her extra-curricular activities. Ngozi has been a passionate volunteer since primary school (yes, that early!) starting as a member of the Nigerian Red Cross Society. While she tries to summarise all her past activities as a volunteer, one can see the love she carries for the people around her from participating in her country's National Youth Service Corps and various school alumni activities - to name a few - volunteering has become a huge part of her life.

So it was already clear that she would take up some volunteering in Bayreuth as well. When Ngozi met Junior Fellow Hanza Diman, who is always "**full of ideas**", he introduced her to the Afrika@school project (formerly BIGSAS@school). It only seemed natural for Ngozi, who has experience as a teacher, to help "**change the narrative about Africa**" by engaging with students in Bayreuth and the surrounding areas. She stresses that this is a responsibility that other Nigerian university students like her have assumed in the past using organisations such as the African Students Association in the US as early as the 1940s. While they were very committed in providing information about Nigeria and language skills to the US-American Peace Corps, Ngozi sees her own service in the community as a continuation of their work.

"We need to educate people, especially with all the false representations in school texts about Africa."

In February 2020 a group of volunteers gave workshops for the 8th grade at a secondary school in Bayreuth. Ngozi says that it was a great experience for her, even though some students had funny ideas about 'Africa', e.g. they wondered if young people owned mobile phones. But of course, educating people - not just students, but senior citizens as well - is a constant process. So she wants to continue, not only to provide her unique perspective to others, but also to learn from different people. By doing that "*there is going to be a connection*" - one that ties different cultures together.



Comments on the blog

Meshack writes: *Ngozi is very right. I think there are many misunderstandings about Africans. There is therefore an urgent need to educate the western world to correct the idea that the average African is backward, corrupt and incorrigible. Africans are great people who have the natural ability to explore their world and deal with all situations.*

Nsese Ishola says: *Great work Ngozi! We need more volunteers like you to change the narrative.*

Chiaka Nnodi adds: *Very interesting. I love this.*

Ezenwa comments: *Very enlightening. Kudos Ngozi. Wish you all the best.*



(c) Ngozi Edeagu

SIE HÄLT DIE FÄDEN IN DER HAND - IM GESPRÄCH MIT LENA NAUMANN

by Dina Sodjadan (July 22nd 2020)

Wirft man einen Blick auf ihren Werdegang, so erkennt man zwei prägende Elemente – zum einen ihren Studienort und ihre Lebensmitte Bayreuth; zum anderen die Passion zu einer Vielzahl kultureller, künstlerischer und musikalischer Projekte. Heute im Gespräch: Lena Naumann.

Eigentlich war Bayreuth nicht unbedingt die erste Adresse, die Lena sich für ihren Bachelor vorgestellt hatte. Doch einige Jahre später ist die gebürtige Hessin immer noch in Oberfranken anzutreffen. Nach dem Bachelorstudium Afrikanische Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst verbrachte sie ein gutes halbes Jahr am Goethe-Institut Nairobi und seit 2010 arbeitet sie in dem von Ulli Beier 1981 gegründeten Iwalewahaus. In ihrem Master Kultur und Gesellschaft Afrikas – mit den Schwerpunkten Ethnologie sowie Kunst und Kuration – war sie des Öfteren die einzige Studentin in der kunst- und kulturwissenschaftlichen Einrichtung. Dies tat ihrer Motivation allerdings keinen Abbruch, denn nach einem Praktikum bei der Landesmusikakademie in Berlin, bei dem sie das Musikfestival 'Klangwelten' organisierte, verschlug es sie erneut nach Bayreuth, ins Archiv von Ulli Beier. Eines ihrer bislang größeren Projekte war es, den Nachlass des Iwalewahausgründers zu digitalisieren und für die Übergabe nach Oshogbo vorzubereiten. Während für einige das stundenlange Scannen und Sortieren eher nach einer monotonen Aufgabe klingt, war es für Lena der **"best job ever!"**, denn hier konnte sie sich intensiv mit Originalfotografien beschäftigen. Auf den Spuren von Ulli Beier ist sie schließlich auch an Material zu Susanne Wenger gekommen, die nun auch Teil ihrer Dissertation sind.

Nach ihrem Werkvertrag bekam sie 2016 die Voluntarysstelle im Iwalewahaus, konnte als Kuratorin weitere Praxiserfahrung sammeln und ist seitdem immer wieder in unterschiedlichen Positionen aktiv. Als Junior Researcher war sie Teil des Forschungsprojektes Afrikanische Kunstgeschichte und die Formierung einer modernen Ästhetik unter der Leitung von Nadine Siegert und reiste innerhalb des Projekts das erste Mal nach Nigeria.

"Ich war dann das erste Mal in den Heiligen Hainen - an dem 'Sacred Grove' von Oshogbo - und da hat es mich wirklich weggeflasht, weil dort die Künstlerin Susanne Wenger agiert hat, die sich auch als Yoruba-Priesterin hat initiieren lassen. Diese Begegnung..., es gibt dort wahnsinnig tolle Skulpturen, Plastiken, Schreine, die sie restauriert hat, mit dem New Sacred Art Movement... das war der schönste Ort an dem ich in meinem Leben je war. Das war wirklich eine spirituelle Erfahrung".

Ihre Leidenschaft für Kunst hat die Doktorandin, die am Iwalewahaus unter der Supervision von Dr. Ulf Vierke promoviert somit bereits zu Beginn ihres Studiums an der Universität Bayreuth entdeckt und stetig fortgeführt und vertieft. Seit April 2019 ist sie Junior Fellow an der BIGSAS.

Auf den Spuren des New Sacred Art Movement

In Nigeria kam Lena also mit Susanne Wenger - der ersten Frau von Ulli Beier und bekannte Künstlerin aus Österreich - in Berührung. Hier lernte sie das New Sacred Art Movement, eine bedeutende Kunstbewegung Nigerias, kennen, die sie zukünftig auch wissenschaftlich betrachten wollte. Denn obwohl die ausgebildete Kuratorin ihre praktische Arbeit in kulturellen und kulturwissenschaftlichen Betrieben liebt, wollte sie doch **"in den wissenschaftlichen Diskurs einsteigen"**. Somit war der Weg in die Promotion geebnet. Für die Junior Fellow ist es wichtig herauszufinden, was die Kunstbewegung zur Kanonbildung von Nigerianischer modernen Kunst beiträgt. Des Weiteren steht Susanne Wenger, die bereits 1950 nach Nigeria auswanderte und dort als Künstlerin fungierte, bei der Bewegung sehr stark im Vordergrund. Die Österreicherin hat nämlich nicht nur die dortige Kunstbewegung gegründet, sondern sich auch als Yoruba-Priesterin initiieren lassen. Lenas Ergriffenheit, Ambition und Ehrgeiz dem wissenschaftlichen Diskurs etwas beizutragen und auch von der Biografie einer einzelnen Person wegzulenken, kann schließlich zur Geschichtsschreibung nigerianischer Kunst beitragen. Obwohl die Doktorandin noch im Februar 2020 in Nigeria war, um den Nachlass von Ulli Beier zu übergeben, zog die Covid-19 Pandemie nicht spurlos an ihr vorbei.

Passion Puppenspiel

Auch wenn Bayreuth ein recht überschaubares Städtchen ist, ist das Operla vielen Bewohner*innen (noch) unbekannt. 'Opera???' Die Eisdiele am Kanal?' - nein 'OPERLa', das kleine magische Marionettentheater in der Steingräberpassage. Für Lena war es im Jahr 2014 ein totaler Zufall, das kleine Theater - in dem unter anderem Opern von Richard Wagner gespielt werden - zu entdecken. Obwohl die Doktorandin bereits eine große Affinität zum Theater hatte und auch beim internationalen Atelier-Theater in Bayreuth aktiv mitwirkte, hatte sie im Puppenspiel keinerlei Erfahrungen.

"Ich kann mich wirklich so schnell begeistern lassen und wieder einmal war das ein glücklicher Zufall in meinem Leben, der auch maßgeblich auf mich eingewirkt hat. Ich bin kein Wagner Fan, aber ich hab' diese Musik gehört und dann habe ich dieses Spiel gesehen... es ist grandios, wie man diesen mächtigen Wagner mit diesen kleinen Puppen (darstellen kann) und alles ist irgendwie so leicht und mit einem Augenzwinkern zu betrachten. Das hat mir total gut gefallen, dass dies ernsthaft verfolgt wird, aber sich einfach nicht so ernst nimmt".



Die mobile Bühne (c) Baensch

Aus Zufall wurde Begeisterung und aus Begeisterung wurde eine Passion. Lena wollte das Marionettentheater - eines der ältesten Künste - unbedingt lernen und hat ihre Fingerfertigkeit in Workshops und durch viel Proben erlernt. Über kleinere Rollen hat sie sich mittlerweile „hochgespielt“. Doch neben ihrer Aktivität im Operla produziert Lena mit ihrem Freund Steffen Riess, der Produzent und Musiker ist, eine Kurzfassung der Oper Hänsel und Gretel. Das Stück soll in Kindergärten, Schulen oder Pflegeeinrichtungen vorgespielt werden. Das Besondere: es gibt eine mobile Bühne, die überall hinfahren und eingesetzt werden kann. Obwohl das Puppentheater oftmals als Nische ausgemacht wird, ist die Resonanz vom Publikum immer wieder positiv - ein Besuch im zauberhaften Operla lohnt sich deshalb auf jeden Fall.

Kuration und Umsetzung von Kunst und Musik

Dass die Kunst ein großer Teil von Lenas Leben ist, wird in zahlreichen Facetten ihres Alltags deutlich. Ihre vielen abgeschlossenen und aktiven Projekte im Iwalewahaus zeigen, dass sich die Kuratorin ziemlich unentbehrlich macht. Eines ihrer Projekte beschäftigt sich mit musikalischen Schätzen aus dem Archiv des Iwalewahaus. Die 'Music Archive Listening Session' findet immer zwei Mal im Semester statt. Hinzu kommt die 'African Beat Night', die zur Partyszene Bayreuths beiträgt. Beide Veranstaltungsreihen kuratiert Lena mit ihrer Kollegin Alexandra Kuhnke.



Im Archiv mit Alexandra Kuhnke (c) Andi Weiland |
Universität Bayreuth

Die Zusammenarbeit mit internationalen Künstlern ist der Doktorandin sehr wichtig, Bayreuth bietet dafür viel Platz und zahlreiche Netzwerke.

Zuletzt konnte Lena im Atelier RW44 - einem der wenigen Kunsträume in der Stadt - eine Ausstellung mit Werken von Nuno Silas, Masterstudent 'African Visual and Verbal Arts' organisieren.



(c) Lena Naumann



The blog post is also available in English.
Click [here](#).

SOZIOLOGE UND FOTOGRAF - GBEOGNIN MICKAEL HOUNGBEDJI STELLT SICH VOR

von Dina Sodjadan (August 3rd 2020)



(c) Gbeognin Mickael Houngbedji

Seine Zeit in Deutschland begann im Jahr 2009 in Heidelberg, wo er einen Sprachkurs absolvierte und schließlich ein Soziologiestudium am Max-Weber-Institut für Soziologie aufnahm. Dort beschäftigte er sich z.B. mit Gesundheits- und Lebensstilen. Nach dem Bachelorstudium wechselte er an die Universität Osnabrück, wo er Sozialwissenschaften studierte. Während seines Masterstudiums im Mittelpunkt des Osnabrücker Landes forschte er für seine Abschlussarbeit in seinem Heimatland Benin. Dort ging er Diskursen internationaler Organisationen im Rahmen der Kinderarbeitsbekämpfung wissenschaftlich nach. In seiner Feldforschung, die einen starken qualitativen Fokus aufwies, interviewte er zahlreiche Akteur*innen und führte teilnehmende Beobachtungen durch. Aus seiner Forschung wuchs das Interesse einer Promotion, sodass er kurzerhand nach einer Betreuung für eine Doktorarbeit suchte.

Somit ist Gbeognin Mickael Houngbedji nach seinem Masterabschluss zurück nach Heidelberg gegangen, von wo aus er sich auf die Suche einer neuen Universität machte. Als schließlich 2017 die Entscheidung auf Bayreuth fiel begann ein neues akademisches Kapitel. Der Stadt am Neckar - Heidelberg - hat er übrigens nie vollends den Rücken zugekehrt; er pendelt zwischen Bayern und Baden-Württemberg hin und her.

Soziologe durch und durch?

In Bayreuth hat er mit Prof. Dr. Erdmute Alber seine Doktormutter gefunden, die allerdings - im Gegensatz zu Gbeognin Mickael - Sozialanthropologin ist.

„Ich bin wirklich sehr stark Soziologe und das macht die Arbeit auch manchmal schwierig. Ich nutze immer die soziologische Perspektive, große Theorien, die alles erklären müssen“.

Frau Alber gibt ihm dann Impulse, die ihm helfen seine wissenschaftliche Arbeit auch aus anderen Blickwinkeln zu betrachten. Als er 2018 an der BIGSAS aufgenommen wurde, befand er sich bereits wieder in Benin und stieg erneut in eine Feldforschung ein. Sein aktuelles Dissertationsprojekt lautet: „Lehrjahre sind keine Herrenjahre“: Die Bedingungen in der Ausbildung und der Umgang mit internationalen Normen und internen Verordnungen zu Kinderschutz bei Schneidern, Schweißern, Maurern und Eisenflechtern in Benin.

Seine Forschung, die über ein Jahr ging, stellte ihn vor einige Herausforderungen.

„Klar, ich komme aus Benin und ich bin dort aufgewachsen, aber viele Sachen sind mir selbstverständlich und dadurch entsteht Verzerrung“.

Eine lange Forschungsdauer war deshalb wichtig, um sich selbst als Forscher reflektieren zu können. Durch seine akademische Ausbildung in Deutschland nahm er oftmals eine starke deutsche Perspektive ein und empfand es als herausfordernd sich ‚richtig‘ zu positionieren. Fragen wie: **„Gehöre ich dazu?“** kreisten durch seinen Kopf. Für Forscher*innen, die nicht aus Benin kommen, aber dort forschen, kann diese Frage leicht beantwortet werden. Obwohl er selbst denken könnte, dass er ‚dazu gehört‘, kann durch seine Biographie für andere Menschen der Eindruck entstehen, dass er ‚nicht dazugehört‘. Eine lange Feldforschung hat ihm deshalb geholfen sich wieder **„zu sozialisieren“**. Durch seine lange Zeit im Feld erhält der Soziologe Gbeognin Mickael noch ganz andere wissenschaftliche Facetten. Schließlich verbindet er mehrere Disziplinen: Ethnologie, Soziologie und sogar Rechtswissenschaften. Letztere sind von besonderer Bedeutung, da es in seiner Forschung auch um Normen, Verordnungen und Regeln geht, die sich mit (Kinder-)Arbeit und Produktion befassen. Seine vorherige Ausbildung als Beauftragter für Arbeit und soziale Sicherheit (Inspecteur du Travail et de la Sécurité Sociale) an der Verwaltungshochschule der Universität von Abomey-Calavi (ENAM-UAC) half ihm außerdem in der Umsetzung einiger bürokratischer Angelegenheiten.

Nun steckt der Junior Fellow in Büchern, denn erst wenn es wieder erlaubt ist, kann Gbeognin Mickael erneut nach Benin reisen, um noch letzte Interviews für seine Dissertation zu führen.

Aktuell lernt er auch weiter die Vorzüge von Bayreuth kennen, denn im Gegensatz zu Heidelberg, gibt es hier eine internationalere, afrikanische Gemeinschaft. Dass hier auch andere Sprachen als Deutsch gesprochen werden, schätzt er sehr. Neben seiner Promotion geht der Beninese auch noch anderen Tätigkeiten nach, so z.B. der Kampfkunst Capoeira und der Fotografie.

Fotografie: Hobby und Leidenschaft

Seine Freude an der Fotografie entstand bereits während seiner Schulzeit in Benin. Der Junior Fellow hat früher gerne gemalt und seine fertigen Kunstwerke vom Fotografen des Dorfes ablichten lassen. Auch Treffen mit Freunden hat er fotografieren lassen und dann die Fotos gegen einen kleinen Obolus erworben. Nach dem Abitur hat er sich öfters eine Digitalkamera ausgeliehen, denn **„die Zeit geht schnell vorbei und man braucht viele Erinnerungen“**. So kam es schließlich dazu, dass sich Gbeognin Mickael in Deutschland eine eigene Kamera kaufte, um Lebensmomente festzuhalten. Sein visuelles Archiv ist nun schon mehrere Terabyte groß.

„Die Zeit, in der ich in Benin in der Schule war, ist schon vorbei. Die Zeit in Deutschland geht auch irgendwann vorbei. Wenn ich dann keine Erinnerungen habe, wäre das nicht so schön. Und besondere Erinnerungen sind nur Erinnerungen, wenn man sie selbst konstruiert hat“.

„Solange die Löwen nicht ihre eigenen Dichter haben, werden die Jagdgeschichten weiter die Jäger verherrlichen“. Afrikanisches Sprichwort

Bilder und Fotografien sind immer auch Teil einer bestimmten Denkweise, auf denen oftmals ‚die Anderen‘ dargestellt werden – so ist es für den Junior Fellow besonders wichtig seine eigenen Fotografien anzufertigen, aus seiner Perspektive.

Über die vergangenen Jahre ist die Kamera ein fester Bestandteil in seinem Leben geworden. Er nimmt sie sogar zu Lerntreffen mit und hat für die BIGSAS das Get-Together im Februar 2020 fotografiert.

Der Artikel ist auch auf Französisch verfügbar.

L'article est également disponible en français.

(Transcription de Yao Sodjadan)



Einblick in Gbeognin Mickaels Forschung in Benin
(c) Gbeognin Mickael HOUNGbedjji

THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA - MEET SHADEN KAMEL

by Dina Sodjadan (September 1st 2020)

It was during her bachelor studies at the October University for Modern Sciences and Arts in Egypt (in mass communication with a major in journalism) when the Arab Spring started to emerge. Studying in Egypt she was able to witness political participation of her fellow Egyptians. That's when she decided to focus on social media as a starting point.

"In times like these"... how often have we heard this sentence lately and used it ourselves? Covid-19 is interfering with a great deal of research. Travelling is still only possible for some people. Many African countries remain closed, and there is still no getting in or out in certain places. So, what's there to do when it comes to research where physical interaction is necessary? Shaden's research focus lies on social media and participation in the digital environment. In times like these, such research is a step ahead. The Junior Follow can continue working on her dissertation from Bayreuth, despite her terminated field trip to Cairo due to the pandemic. While she focused on youth in her bachelor's degree, she focused on the news framing of political actors on international websites in 2011 and 2013 in her master's degree. She received her master's degree in media and global communication, which she did at the University of Helsinki in Finland, in 2015. Afterwards she went back to Egypt to teach at her BA university for three years. Women's political participation, agency and usage of social media in these periods (during the revolutions in 2011 and 2013) has inspired her to want to research how women reflect agency and use social media in the everyday life (e.g. show case struggles, connect to find solutions, jobs etc). Since 2019 she has been part of BIGSAS and has been working extensively on the topic of women empowerment.

Facebook groups as a place of empowerment

"Looking at how people incorporate the media in their everyday life and what possibilities it could give them is worth looking at, because it is impacting many people"

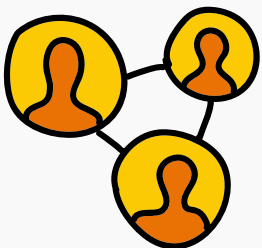
Facebook has become an indispensable part of many people's lives. And even if there are some who have already deleted their account or at least paused it, for many users it is still one of the most important digital platforms for their everyday exchange. With an account on Facebook, one inevitably ends up in Facebook groups, which can revolve around any topic. Whether large or small, closed or open, there are hardly any topics that go unnoticed. Shaden Kamel also focuses on Facebook groups that contribute to the empowerment of women in Egypt.

In doing so, she examines how exactly support between women takes place, for example by helping each other as entrepreneurs. But not only the exchange about business or career is at the forefront, also normal conversations between women, e.g. about motherhood or alike. There are no taboos here and for many participants such groups offer a safe space to talk freely. However, research online is not as easy as one might think. The Junior Fellow has to get to the bottom of questions whether all profiles are real profiles. In conversations with her interviewees, it often emerges that founders of Facebook groups need to be careful who is approved to the group, by making sure to investigate whether potential members' profile are fake or not. There are also some challenges in terms of researching content in private Facebook groups, as they are also a platform of public communication once you become a member. Especially when it comes to women's practices on social media, discourse about gender roles, women's struggles and rights is becoming more and more prevalent and important.

The PhD student is more than passionate about the topic of her dissertation. Her joy is noticeable in the conversation, something she would like to share with more colleagues in Bayreuth. In her bachelor and master studies she found herself among like-minded people. At BIGSAS and the University of Bayreuth, there are fewer people who deal with social media and civic participation. A newly found work group - Culture, Media, and Plurality in Africa - offers a space to interact with her fellow students.

Bayreuth - a place for new ideas and perspectives

Shaden also enjoys life in Bayreuth. Especially the quiet atmosphere appeals to her. The comparison to Cairo or also Hurgada, where she lived for some time, is of course noticeable. Shaden says that the advantage of BIGSAS is the international exchange. Here, she can develop her own thoughts and gain new perspectives and ideas. At the same time, this is also challenging, as she wants to find resonance with other colleagues for her research. In the end, it is the interdisciplinary approach that distinguishes the research at BIGSAS and to which Shaden also contributes with her work.



Shaden is also part of the current BIGSAS Junior Fellow representative team. Together with Andreas Wüst she aims to connect JF among each other. Even though the pandemic has thwarted some plans, digital exchange in particular is more important than ever.



(c) Shaden Kamel

CONNECTING LATIN AMERICA AND AFRICA - IN CONVERSATION WITH VALERIE GRUBER

by Dina Sodjadan (October 14th 2020)

If you take a look at the profile of our Junior Fellow Valerie Gruber, you will quickly notice that a lot has happened before she started her doctoral studies. Valerie graduated in 2016 with a Master's degree in International Cultural and Business Studies in Passau and has spent several study-related stays in Spain, Mexico and Brazil. Finally, she stuck to Brazil, lived in 'favelas' and got in touch with the Afro-descendant population there. These encounters eventually led her from Salvador da Bahia to Bayreuth.

Bayreuth doesn't have considerably more inhabitants than Passau. Therefore, Valerie Gruber is familiar with quiet, neat little towns where it is easy to live and study. The difference between Salvador da Bahia and Bayreuth, however, does not pass by without leaving a trace (about 75,000 vs. nearly 3 million inhabitants). Nevertheless, her journey took her directly from Brazil to Bayreuth to explore the relations between Europe, Africa and Latin America. After holding several positions at different institutions in Bayreuth and carrying out a DAAD-funded research stay in Colombia, Valerie has now been a research associate in the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth for almost a year. Her project is titled: "Moral Geographies of Re-Existence: Socio-cultural Practices and Visions of a Good Life in Afro-descendant Communities in Salvador da Bahia (Brazil) and Cartagena de Indias (Colombia)".



Festival in honor of the sea goddess Yemanjá in Salvador da Bahia (Brazil) (c) Valerie Gruber

While living in Bayreuth, the doctoral student travels back to Latin America on a regular basis (of course before the Covid-19 pandemic and currently only virtually). Her research and collaboration with Afro-descendant communities in Brazil and Colombia is of utmost importance to Valerie. Her time in Latin America has motivated her to complement her experiences and insights with a dissertation.

Through countless dialogues, explorations and some detours, her research topic has developed organically. She now sees her doctorate **"as an opportunity to formalize a project that has grown over the years"**. In February 2020 she was admitted to BIGSAS as a doctoral student.

No conventional research

She doesn't want to limit her research to common methods such as participant observation or interviews. In dialogue with local people (both in Brazil and Colombia), Valerie Gruber has begun to think things differently and has worked towards developing a collective research practice. In doing so, she focuses on two port cities which, as places of colonisation and enslavement, have taken on an ambivalent socio-political and socio-cultural role. In order to compare these multi-layered contexts, she has developed a participatory approach in collaboration with BIGSAS alumnus Dr. Gilbert Shang Ndi and the communities, with ten people each from Brazil and Colombia participating in an intercultural exchange. The two focus groups, which jointly produce knowledge and art, have already been able to get to know each other through a series of digital meetings and will (if travel regulations permit) meet in person eventually. Hence, her participatory action research is by no means a conventional approach - rather, learning with and from each other is at the centre of her project.

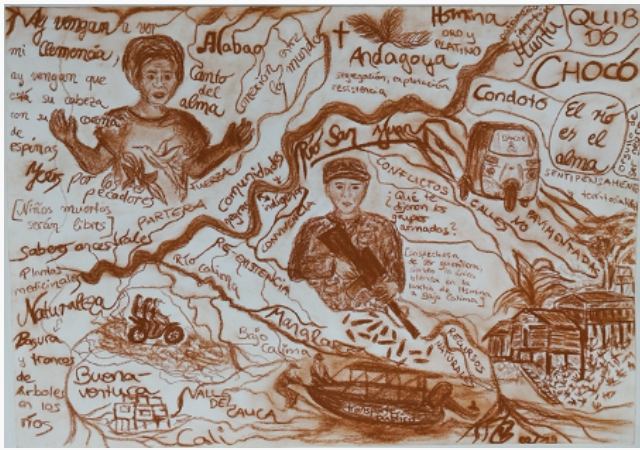
Re-existence and 'buen vivir' (good life) are discussed

Valerie Gruber has been part of social and cultural projects in Brazil and Colombia for years. Working together, they ask the question: "How can the arts stimulate social transformation?" and: "What can the various communities learn from each other in the pursuit of a good life?" In this context, the traumatic past of enslavement as well as the current experience of social inequality and racial discrimination is of particular importance. The selected partner organisations, Grupo Cultural Candilé from Cartagena and Rede REPROTAI from Salvador, make use of artistic forms of expression such as music, dance and poetry in order to preserve their history and cultural heritage and, at the same time, rethink their future. These forms of art, pedagogy and communication are also an important part of the virtual exchange, which currently takes place every two weeks via video conference. Although field research had to be postponed, the ongoing dialogue is already a complete success. Every meeting ultimately revolves around the question of re-existence in its various forms and manifestations.

"How can art and culture stimulate socio-spatial transformation and how can people enjoy a good or better life in their communities?"



San Basilio de Palenque (Colombia) - Symbol of resistance and freedom struggle of enslaved Africans in Latin America (c) Valerie Gruber



Drawing of a research trip through the Colombian Pacific region, February 2019 (c) Valerie Gruber

The meetings take place in Portuguese and Spanish. Although sometimes everyone understands each other quite well, a translation is needed for deeper discussions. Valerie is in charge of translating, which means that **“mental digression is not allowed”** ;-). But the meetings are a lot of fun and one can already see the effects of digital networking. In a WhatsApp group, the members of the participatory action research programme exchange ideas on a variety of topics. In addition, language courses were organised so that the participants can understand each other better.

The Brazilian group members have already been successfully implementing community-based tourism for several years - an area from which their Colombian fellows want to learn. Through all these encounters, visions of a ‘better life’ are revealed.

Project is the focus of attention

Her PhD is obviously important to the Junior Fellow. In the end, however, her studies should not only result in a book.

“I’m not doing the dissertation because of the title, but because of the project. The doctorate is an ideal opportunity to do exactly this - knowledge co-production is combined with a socially responsible and artistic project. And it was always clear to me: either this project or none.”

The limited freedom to travel is not easy for Valerie either, and when asked what other activities are left to do when not being able to travel to Colombia or Brazil, the PhD student replies with a smile: *“I love water - even rivers and lakes”*. And the access to nature is of course an easy one here in Upper Franconia. She also loves dancing. Salsa has become her passion - and she not only enjoys it in Latin America, but also in Bayreuth and the surrounding areas. In addition, drawing is an activity that helps Valerie to clear her mind. ***“Sometimes I get up and know: now I need a red chalk pencil and paper. Then the picture almost draws itself. It comes from inside, I don’t plan that, you could almost close your eyes and the picture emerges. It is something that needs to get out”***.

A side project of Valerie Gruber, Diana Mignano, Gilbert Shang Ndi and Cláudio Manoel Duarte de Souza is their website *“DjumbaiALA - Africa and Latin America in Dialogue”*.

And of course, a quiet spot like Bayreuth also invites to write articles or book chapters. But even though *“you can find water, dance and life here”*, Valerie is already looking forward to traveling back to the communities where it never gets boring.



(c) Valerie Gruber

WAXATLAS - MAPPING AFRICAN PRINTS - MEET DANDARA MAIA

by Sofie Reinl (December 9th 2020)



WaxAtlas Exhibition (c) Dandara Maia

Dandara Maia joined BIGSAS in October of 2019. Her journey to this point could be called unconventional. Graduating 2012 in Fashion Design and working several years in the fashion industry in Rio de Janeiro, she was specialized in textile print design. But her scientific interest grew deeper and she rejoined academia:

"I wanted to explore, how people feel, when they dress, or how they choose a fabric with a specific pattern".

"Fashion is a cultural performance"

She graduated in 2018 with a M.A. Visual Arts, Design, Image and Culture at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro - Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro) and her thesis titled: "African Prints as a Political Tool of the Afro-Brazilian Identity". Working on how identities are shaped through fashion, she could barely touch the surface of all the themes and implications she wanted to talk about.

"Fashion is a cultural performance and also an act: You dress because you want to say and show something. I'm interested in what this something is and how it is different and similar in these two places".

Change in Methodology

But the Covid-19 pandemic forced a change in methodology. With traveling abroad being highly restricted she faced a difficult challenge: How can I still pursue my questions? She started to focus on the visual analysis of the images and patterns of the prints. *"Which type of things are inside the images that I could relate to how people feel about them. There is something that I can connect"*.

In the process Dandara developed WAXATLAS, inspired by Aby Warburgs Bilderatlas Mnemosyne, where he drew connections of recurring themes and motifs from the renaissance to modern times and illustrated these in compiled panels. WAXATLAS follows this concept and tries to map the traces and historical background of the wax prints that have developed in colonial times.



Wax prints (c) Dandara Maia

(c) Dandara Maia

Dandara poses the question:

“What is remaining from Batik of Java, what is coming from West-African cultures, or from Europeans who are looking to Africa, looking to Java and try to come up with something new?”

WAXATLAS exhibition

Working many months on conceptualizing and building her panels it remained a productive methodology, until her supervisor and director of the Iwalewahaus Dr. Ulf Vierke, upon seeing the creative and artistic nature of the panels, suggested an exhibition: this emphasizes that curatorial work can be seen as research and research as curatorial work.

WAXATLAS, which was open until the 28.02.2021, *“invited you to trace the diverse routes and stories that are written into textiles”*.

BIGSAS-Community

BIGSAS and the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence provide the important fundamental structure and network for Dandaras doctoral research. The strong connection to Africa and the diversity of backgrounds, interests and ideas among the Junior Fellows make it a *“perfect place to study”* for her.

“I love the fact, that we are a community. Being a doctoral candidate can be very lonely - I’m not working inside a big project - I’m working alone. In BIGSAS I feel like we have such a nice community and so much opportunity to exchange - even in moments where you are not thinking, that you are talking about your research, but you are in a way. I feel home”.

WOMEN AS VIOLENT ACTORS - CATHELIN NYABWENGI SHARES HER EMOTIVE RESEARCH IN KENYA'S SECURITY SECTOR

by Sofie Reinl (February 22nd 2021)

Catheline Nyabwengi joined BIGSAS in winter 2020, making her a relatively “new” Junior Fellow. Even though she is in the earliest stages of her dissertation, she already has an interesting story to tell. Her academic endeavour took off when she was writing her master’s thesis about the history and transformation of the Chinkororo Movement – a violent group formation in Kenya. In the course of her master’s thesis, she had a realization that brought about the idea for her doctoral project.

Where are the women?

“While analysing my data, I realized that women were rarely featured in the perpetration of violence and security in the country. So, I started making my own observations.”

She started to notice different treatment at entryways and security checkpoints, as she was rarely searched. On the other hand, most men face serious frisking. Additionally, male security personnel dominated the work force, with only a few women working in such jobs. She began to follow the Kenyan public and international discourse. She found that women were majorly represented as either victims of violence, in need of protection or coerced and manipulated into committing violent acts. While this could explain the difference in perception and the absence of women in security jobs, an important question arose for Catheline: Does this match with reality?

Women as violent actors

Going back in history, she found proof that women have been actively participating in violent acts and a lot of terror attacks in Kenya. This triggered her to draft a research proposal, through which she would gain an informed point of view that could help her distinguish the myth from real histories. Her goal is to challenge the prevailing notion of women participating in violence as being victims or coerced actors. Her purpose is to ultimately influence Kenyan security sector policies:

“If we are not treating all members of a society as equals in security aspects, we are producing gender blind counterterrorism strategies that are incomplete and unsuccessful. Because we treat women as intrinsically vulnerable, we are concealing a very important part and actor in society.”

She suggests a change in perception. Instead of putting women in the periphery of the public sphere and as passive beneficiaries of policies that they did not take part in making, which do not ultimately help them. She wants to include women in peacekeeping, conflict resolutions and integration processes. This is also, why she centres questions about women as violent actors: How are they recruited, treated and how do they fight?

Studying historic sources in archives and literature, as well as conducting in-person interviews with female members of violent groups, she has received unique insights and a platform to connect. But:

“Security is ...sensitive”

Her sample groups consist of former members of terroristic groups in Kenya like Al-Shabaab, Mungiki and Gaza. This is naturally a highly sensitive topic of national interest. Catheline has received multiple threats, emotional and physical harassment and is often regarded with suspicion. Because Kenyan society has established security as a male territory, she is also confronted with irritation and disbelief, why a woman would be interested in these topics. Although she is aware of the ethical challenges her research topic entails, she tries to free herself of any pre-emptive notions and biases:

“This allows me to ask productive questions. It is all about a normal friendly conversation... You cannot put yourself above them.”

Dangerous field

These field trips require her to put herself in harm's way: Even though the Kenyan government assures amnesty to members who have come forward and surrendered, most people do not trust the national security sector. This mistrust leads most former fighters to remain in hiding. On one side, they are unsure of being forgiven, if they present themselves to local security officials. On the other hand, they fear repercussion from members of their former group that might have followed them. This means that any access to a conversation with them is restricted by caution and distrust: No phones, no recorders at the meeting point - mostly without any of her friends and sometimes family knowing Catheline's location or whereabouts.

“My husband though supportive of my career path, does not love this line of study because of the risks I have to endure. But you have to wear courage. After all, if you don't do it, who will?”



(c) Catheline Nyabwengi

Outlook

Her research has given Catheline thick skin – emotionally and mentally. It gave her the courage to put herself out there and open her own YouTube Channel, where she discusses and shares her opinion on everyday concerns on security in Kenya. With the hopes of being involved in policy making in her country, she plans to return to Kenya at the end of her PhD. She has visions about setting up a research and publication centre concerning terror and violence in Kenya. In December 2019, Catheline won the 3rd position in United Nations Counter Terrorism Challenge where she in collaboration with Grace Atuhaire presented a policy proposal for online community policing. In May 2020, they also won the 2nd place in an essay competition from “The Policy Corner”, where Catheline together with Grace wrote “Restoring Trust and Building Bridges: Addressing Online Radicalization in Africa”. Her future sure looks bright!

catheline Bosibori
168 Abonnenten

ÜBERSICHT **VIDEOS** PLAYLISTS KANÄLE DISKUSSION KANALINFO

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Thumbnail	Title	Views	Time
	why is security important	111 Aufrufe • vor 1 Woche gestreamt	39:46
	Youth and political violence in Kenya	246 Aufrufe • vor 1 Monat	22:39
	KAPEDO KILLINGS :WARLORDS AND...	475 Aufrufe • vor 1 Monat	12:45
	Police vs. the public	135 Aufrufe • vor 2 Monaten	13:06
	CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION IS NOT A...	124 Aufrufe • vor 6 Monaten	7:46
	A STAGNANT COASTAL ECONOMY IS A SECURITY...	109 Aufrufe • vor 6 Monaten	13:47
	Legalizing abortion will never empower women.	116 Aufrufe • vor 7 Monaten	14:23
	THE LINK BETWEEN CORRUPTION AND...	126 Aufrufe • vor 7 Monaten	21:23
	YOUTH , PEACE AND SECURITY IN IGAD	206 Aufrufe • vor 8 Monaten	17:00
	MAKE ENTRY INTO THE POLICE FORCE A DIFFICULT...	181 Aufrufe • vor 8 Monaten	14:11
	THE LOCKDOWN IS A GATEWAY TO CRIMINALITY	123 Aufrufe • vor 9 Monaten	9:04
	CHINESE BRUTALITY ON AFRICANS	247 Aufrufe • vor 10 Monaten	10:03
	SAY NO TO CYBERBULLYING.	175 Aufrufe • vor 10 Monaten	7:07
	COVID-19 ACT	219 Aufrufe • vor 11 Monaten	5:21
	Likoni ferry curfew round up	384 Aufrufe • vor 11 Monaten	4:33
	The BBs part 3	50 Aufrufe • vor 11 Monaten	15:52
	The BBs part 2	40 Aufrufe • vor 11 Monaten	15:38
	The BBs part 1	59 Aufrufe • vor 11 Monaten	15:57

Screen Capture of Cathelines YouTube Channel

For now, she is one of the newest additions to the Junior Fellow group of BIGSAS and is happy about the community, overlapping projects and different points of view she is gaining through the interaction with other fellows.

“For me BIGSAS is all about the network, the platform and the scholars from diverse backgrounds. But also, about the continuous guidance I receive, because a PhD is a process not an event. I appreciate the understanding, that we are different students, from different background, facing different challenges.”

Junior Fellow Cosmos
Special Day



TABLE RONDE DE LA DISCUSSION SUR LES PROCHAINES ÉLECTIONS PRÉSIDENTIELLES AU TOGO À BAYREUTH

by Hanza Diman & Lars Springfeld (February 25th 2020)

La deuxième table ronde de discussion d' « Africa Politicum » a réuni une vingtaine d'étudiants_es et de doctorants_es africains_aines et européens_ennes de l'Université de Bayreuth le jeudi 13 février. Ensemble les participants se sont penchés sur prochaines élections présidentielles du 22 février prochain au Togo. La discussion a porté non seulement sur les élections et les demandes de l'opposition pour mettre fin au règne de Faure Gnassingbé, mais aussi sur d'autres questions plus fondamentales libellées comme suit : Faure est-il vraiment le seul coupable du manque d'alternance au sommet de l'État au Togo ? Le manque d'unité de l'opposition n'est-il également pas une partie importante du problème ? Ou s'il ne s'agit pas plutôt du symptôme d'un système persistant d'exploitation et de dépendance post-coloniale ?

Quelle impasse pour quelle élection?

Les participants _es ont décrypté les enjeux des élections en partant du rôle de l'opposition et de la question de savoir si elle représente un véritable changement ou une véritable alternative politique au système existant ? Le scepticisme dominant envers l'opposition était principalement lié à l'absence d'une vision unificatrice pour un meilleur avenir (politique) du pays. Il y a également eu un large consensus sur le fait qu'il ne faut pas soutenir un candidat plutôt qu'un autre. Car dans son état actuel, l'opposition - divisée entre elle et sans programme politique concret allant au-delà de la revendication « Faure doit partir » - contribue plus à la haine et à la division qu'à un véritable changement politique. Le gouvernement n'est "fort" que parce que l'opposition actuelle a peu de crédibilité auprès de la population.

La vision des prochaines élections elles-mêmes était tout aussi pessimiste. Entre autres choses, il y a eu des appels à une nouvelle mobilisation générale, comme celle qui a eu lieu en 2017 sous la direction de Tikti Achadam. Plus précisément, il a été suggéré que l'opposition travaille à une réglementation légale des dépenses de campagne électorale. Cependant, il a été répondu que de telles réglementations ne sont généralement pas respectées et que la campagne électorale de Faure est largement financée par des entreprises (internationales) et des gouvernements occidentaux.

De même, le « problème » politique au Togo est plus complexe qu'un simple différend entre « l'opposition et Faure Gnassingbe ». Ceci suppose qu'il faudrait l'examiner de manière structurelle et systémique pour essayer de le résoudre. Ce constat est non seulement pour le Togo, mais aussi à de nombreux autres pays africains qui sont dirigés par des dictatures.

Quel avenir socio-politique pour le Togo?

La population pourrait prendre encore plus conscience du « problème », défendre son avenir politique et agir en conséquence. L'exemple burkinabé avec le mouvement « Balai Citoyen » a été cité comme exemple pour le Togo et d'autres pays. D'autres étaient d'avis que le changement ne peut pas avoir lieu au Togo et dans de nombreux autres pays africains que si les hommes politiques* et la population préféraient l'« intérêt national » à l'« intérêt individuel ».

Les avis étaient partagés aussi sur le rôle de la communauté internationale (UE, CEDEAO, UA, etc.). Certains ont appelé à une plus grande ingérence politique sous la forme d'une reconnaissance officielle de la nature antidémocratique et autoritaire du régime. Un boycott électoral avec le soutien de la communauté internationale pourrait être une solution, mais n'est pas réaliste après l'expérience des élections législatives de 2018.

Quelques participants_tes* ont exprimé l'opinion que, en fait, le parlement actuel n'est légitimé que par la reconnaissance de la communauté internationale et non par le peuple. D'autres, en revanche, ont plaidé pour le principe de non-ingérence. Au lieu d'attendre l'intervention de l'UA ou de la CEDEAO, le changement devrait venir du Togo et de la population togolaise eux-mêmes.

Une populations non éduquée ou inconsciente?

Les participants_es ont également mis un accent particulier sur plus d'« éducation publique » de la population sur les enjeux politiques en rapport avec leur relation avec les structures gouvernantes. En effet, dans les conditions actuelles (pauvreté, manque d'éducation et de besoins de base, etc.), de nombreuses personnes sont incapables de prendre une décision politique réfléchie et font confiance au gouvernement (en raison des cadeaux électoraux) au lieu d'oeuvrer pour un réel changement. Ce travail d'éducation pourrait être effectué principalement par des journalistes.

Ceci a été fortement contredit par les participants qui considèrent qu'il est problématique de voir le problème dans le manque d'éducation de la population. Le vrai problème, selon ces derniers, est plutôt un manque d'indépendance ou le refus d'un développement autodéterminé. Les populations ne sont pas moins conscientes des enjeux politiques, elles savent exactement ce qu'elles veulent et sont (comme le montrent les manifestations de 2017) prêtes à descendre dans la rue pour réclamer leurs droits et demander des changements dans la gestion des affaires politiques.

En conclusion, les participants_es ont convenu que les problèmes politiques au Togo comme au-delà doit être considéré sur un plan structurel et que les facteurs socio-économiques (structures de dépendance néocoloniales, exploitation des ressources par les sociétés transnationales), le manque d'unité et de projets de sociétés claires des partis politiques de l'opposition, et un peu plus d'engagement et d'implication des populations pour un réel changement. De même, le soutien du régime de Faure Gnassingbé peut continuer à être expliqué par les anciennes puissances coloniales que sont l'Allemagne et la France, deux puissances qui ont beaucoup à gagner du fait que la situation actuelle demeure telle qu'elle. C'est aux populations du Togo et d'ailleurs d'en prendre plus conscience et agir en conséquence. Enfin, l'Allemagne et la France peuvent soutenir le changement au Togo, notamment en raison de l'énorme influence de la diaspora togolaise (envois de fonds, soutien à l'opposition et à la résistance de la société civile). En outre, une certaine pression peut être exercée à travers une sensibilisation du public européen afin d'amener ce dernier à s'intéresser au rôle et influence de certaines puissances européennes (Allemagne et France, par exemple) dans les pays comme le Togo.



(c) Africa Politicum



Africa Politicum is a think tank where various experts from different fields come together to address Africa-related issues. The discussion about the election in Togo was their kick-off event. (c) Africa Politicum

About Africa Politicum (AP)

Africa Politicum (AP) emerged in January 2020 as an independent and a non-profit think-and-do tank with the primary objective of reflecting and speaking out on political, socio-economic, cultural and geopolitical issues and challenges related to Africa and its diaspora. Its core mission is to objectively and credibly inform, advise and empower African peoples and institutions as well as foreign institutions active on the continent, on the challenges facing Africa for which it must find lasting solutions. AP aims at making a significant contribution to the research and development of sustainable ideas and lines of thought to help tackle major challenges faced by Africa.

Der Artikel ist auch auf Deutsch verfügbar. Klick [hier](#).



MOVING FORWARD THROUGH COMMITMENT

by Dina Sodjadan (June 26th 2020)

Bayreuth has potential and the doctoral students at BIGSAS are not only using their dissertation project to demonstrate that. They become active in many ways. Today on display: Hanza Diman.

Hanza came to Germany for the first time at the end of 2011. He received a scholarship from DAAD to conduct literature research in Bayreuth for his studies at the University Abomey Calavi (Benin). Although he was only to spend six months in Upper Franconia, he soon realised that there were other opportunities for him in Bayreuth. Thanks to the contact with an alumnus of the University of Bayreuth, he discovered the programme Culture and Society of Africa. Without further ado, he found himself in Bayreuth again and began his master's studies with a focus on African history and Francophone studies. Due to his scientific enthusiasm and commitment, which he showed during his master's studies, he enrolled as a PhD candidate under the supervision of Prof. Achim von Oppen and Prof. Uli Beisel. Although he did not become part of BIGSAS until April 2016, Hanza has already been participating in the BIGSAS colloquium for a long time. This initiative gave him the possibility to meet new people and to create a network. Due to the 'Open-Door-Policy' of BIGSAS, this was the perfect opportunity for him to get used to the BIGSAS system bit by bit and to prepare for his doctoral studies.



Hanza submitted his doctoral thesis at the end of 2020 and will defend it in the course of the current year. (c) Jule Diman-Heilingloh

"This was a very important moment for me! If you are already involved with doctoral students, and the management of BIGSAS is also open to those who have not yet been doctoral students, then you already feel as part of the system. And then you think that if you are doing your doctorate, it must be at BIGSAS. One has just already got a taste of it".

Doctoral studies = mythical world?

Hanza says that many people think that a doctorate is something completely different from a master's degree, two different worlds, so to speak. But **"actually, they belong together too"**, says the doctoral student. Often, students already deal with the contents of their master's studies, which they then concretize or deepen in their doctorate. Then he adds with a wink: **"sure, you have to be smart"**.

In addition to his great motivation for his PhD project, he also took advantage of all the offers at BIGSAS that he was interested in. This included not only the BIGSAS colloquium, but also a large number of workshops. According to the motto: **“Here is a repertoire of possibilities. I have to do something”**, he also organised events by himself (e.g. on the subject of project management).

“This is the only way to gain other practical experience besides your dissertation. When you organize a workshop, it is not only about the content, but also about the organizational aspects, which play an important role. You might be able to do the content, but organizing a workshop is a completely different challenge. Then I thought: If you’re doing your doctorate, then there’s not necessarily the possibility of doing an internship, but if BIGSAS gives you the opportunity to organize and stage things, why not?”

However, a workshop cannot simply be up and running. It requires discipline and determination, skills that Hanza has been able to strengthen over the years at BIGSAS. The Beninese was also able to prove his skills as a member of the BIGSAS football team. Several goals were scored in the Wilde Liga. In 2019 he was also the representative of the Junior Fellows together with Larissa Mbobda.

Taking the initiative

Hanza is of the opinion that BIGSAS supports everyone who has an idea and wants to put it into practice. He thinks that the Junior Fellows have a lot to win by taking more initiative and organising more events from which the whole BIGSAS community would profit. ***“I simply enjoy getting involved in initiatives or founding them, just writing the dissertation would be too boring for me!”***



Hanza will certainly not be bored. In addition to organising events within BIGSAS, Hanza is also one of the BIGSAS Junior Fellows who founded the Model African Union e.V. and project coordinator for Afrika@School. The Afrika@School project, inspired by the former BIGSAS@School project, thrives on the diversity of workshops offered at Bavarian schools by students of the university. This project gives the participants the opportunity to organise a workshop and to get in touch with students, to discuss and critically reflect on Africa related topics. But the project further promotes social interaction with the elderly population, as Afrika@School is also present in retirement homes.

Why are such projects so important?

On the one hand, the media portrayals of Africa in Germany are not balanced, which leads to great dissatisfaction. Schools should serve as institutions in which such images are critically examined.

“Not everything that is said about Africa is wrong, that’s not the point, but we don’t go to schools to sugar-coat things about Africa, we just want that when you talk about the bad things in Africa, you also take a look at the positive things on the continent”.

This also leads to earlier education, so that images do not become established as stereotypes in the mind of the students so quickly. A balance is established. Ultimately, it is important for Hanza to contribute something to a process of change himself: *“if you can make a difference, then you have to be aware of it and also feel obliged to do so in some way”* - the balance has to be maintained and this is exactly where the initiative of his fellow students is needed.

New project: Africa Politicum

Hanza has founded a new think-and-do-tank called Africa Politicum in January 2020. With Africa Politicum, the expertise of African intellectuals and researchers especially those based in Bayreuth and enrolled at BIGSAS is put at the forefront simply *“because there is a lot of potential here in Bayreuth and within BIGSAS that should be promoted”*. And it is exactly what stimulated the creation of AP and what the platform, which outreach shall not be limited to Bayreuth, also stands for. Whether the presidential election in Togo or Nigerian Border Politics, or the current Political Crisis in Cameroon - AP deals with burning issues that challenge the political, socio-economic and cultural agenda in the African countries.



A F R I C A
P O L I T I C U M



With Hanza being the president, other than Junior Fellows and now alumni, founded the MAU e.V. in 2015. Jean Pierre Boutché was in charge of the Education Department, Blaise Muhire was the First Secretary General and Rose Nyakio was the Second First Secretary General of MAU e.V. The first conference in 2016 was put together under high cooperation with BIGSAS and became the first Model African Union in Germany. (c) Model African Union

Apart from Hanza, there are other Junior Fellows who are part of the expertise of Africa Politicum - Ibrahim Bachir, Seyni Mamoudou Ibrahim, Ngozi Edeagu and Hamissou Rhissa Achaffert, Abdallah Idhssaine and Andreas Wüst. (c) Africa Politicum

COPING WITH COVID-19

by Dina Sodjadan (July 15th 2020)

While the Covid-19 pandemic is taking its toll on all of us we specifically asked how the Corona virus has changed the research of some BIGSAS Junior Fellows.

Of course we remember physical meetings, workshops and get-togethers but it all seems quite far away. Yes - some institutions have tried to move back to 'normal', but what we've known as 'normal' has changed significantly. How many of you have used Skype again, after years of neglect, or tried their luck with Zoom and other online meeting tools? How many of you had to put their research on hold because traveling - especially by airplane - was suddenly off the table? It is a trying time for those of you, who scheduled a field trip and are not able to travel. It is a trying time for those of you, who are 'stuck' in their research country and are unable to return to Germany. The Covid-19 pandemic pushes higher education online, favouring the global elite and those who have access to all the important resources. It pushes on-the-ground research, face-to-face meetings and other physical interactions off the surface.

Cancelled trips, conferences, summer schools

Junior Fellow Shaden Kamel had to cut her field trip short. She says: "**Consequently, this will impact me from attending a conference, as it depended on my fieldwork**". It is indeed the case that one event oftentimes affects another, hence one missing piece can lead to an unfinished puzzle. Many of you have to overthink their time schedule. Kamel was also unable to attend a summer school she was interested in, so new events have to take place soon.

Lena Naumann planned a trip to Nigeria to conduct interviews for her thesis. These interviews are very important for her, because some of them are with contemporary witnesses with whom she has already spoken briefly, but further information is still missing. Back in July 2020 she says:

"Even if I could travel, these people are still in the middle of a lockdown. This pandemic is very problematic for them, because most of them are artists. These are very challenging times".

Positive sides?

Aside from all the research one conducts in the field, interviews need to be listened to, chapters need to be written, articles need to be read... Kamel states: "**I would say the only positive impact of this period is that it allowed me to focus more on writing**".

Another Junior Fellow, who was 'stuck' in Ghana where his research takes place, overcame certain challenges by being even more ambitious. John Ebotui Yajalin says: *"In my case, the data collection was halted when the government imposed a partial lockdown of the two main cities Accra and Kumasi where my survey was taken place. Even though I was frustrated, the lockdown period gave me ample time to transcribe my interviews and enter my data into SPSS. Eventually, when the lockdown was lifted, I continued but had it tough arranging interviews with officials. In the end, I completed the task"*.

A pandemic like this urges us all to be more creative, resilient and ambitious as the Status Quo is challenged in many ways.



John Ebotui Yajalin (left) conducting field work in Ghana during the Covid-19 pandemic. (c) John Ebotui Yajalin

Defending in times of a pandemic?

Yes, it is possible! While first there was a hold on disputations, BIGSAS is able to conduct defences again since June 2020. Unfortunately, Junior Fellows had to defend in front of committee members only and no additional guests were allowed. Even now - almost a year later - defences have to take place in camera or even virtually. Usually, lots of friends, colleagues and family members attend the disputations to celebrate with the Junior Fellows after their successful examination. However, all we can do at the time being is wait for an improvement of the situation and the revocation of restrictions.

Alzbeta Sváblová was the first one who defended her PhD project in camera. She shares her experience: *"Defending in the times of Covid-19 was very much marked by the insecurity of the whole situation for me. My first scheduled date was cancelled, since the social distancing regulations were still very strict. The preparation for the disputation was a bit complicated due to my family situation - schools were closed, so we had to home-school our daughter. This, together with my husband working in a system-relevant job, meant that I had very limited time for my work. The defence itself, however, went well. Small technical problems were promptly managed and the two hours passed in no time. And although I imagined it in a different way, I will always remember my defence as a part of this extraordinary time. I am grateful that it could be organised and really appreciate all the support from my committee members and BIGSAS administration team"*.

Covid-19 the change-maker? From one institution to a system of higher education

We are not arguing the significance of the Corona virus for the health of humans all over the world. In regards to education, with an emphasis on higher education, one can observe different opinions seeing the pandemic as a threat or even as a chance. As already stated in the beginning, the negative consequences are fewer face-to-face meetings, conferences or alike. Due to travel restrictions the "international flow of talent and knowledge is disrupted". The limitations in education are now more present than ever: less offline delivery of knowledge and information adds to the privilege of those who are already able to access information (digitally) in their daily routine.

Yes, everything tries to move online. Universities had to come up with fast ideas on how to educate their students during lockdowns. University staff were oftentimes overwhelmed by this new art of teaching - suddenly digital (il)literacy becomes a widely discussed topic. But even with enough media literacy the access to resources remains problematic. In the case of Kenya for example, 90% of all users access the internet via their mobile phone. 1 GB of data however costs currently 4,90US\$. This tells us one thing: data is too expensive. Many countries invested in online learning before the pandemic, such as Somalia, where education also takes place virtually and via apps.

ICTs (information and communication technology) are part of the SDGs (sustainable development goals). Goal 4 aims for quality education, however Covid-19 reverses the (little) progress that has been made in the past years. Education needs to be delivered. Otherwise, we will observe forms of protest and upheavals. An open letter from African intellectuals demands a reform of public policy to favour the African population, to finally change curricula and invest in a new political idea of Africa itself.

The pandemic offers yet another insight in a capitalist, elitist world system, where the rich (in form of different capital) exploit the poor. Marketisation and austerity will add to a new dependency. Universities lose a lot of their 'income', due to less enrolled students and funds by the government, organisations or individuals. Let's not forget all the contract workers who lost their job.

The pandemic changes the idea of (higher) education completely. Is moving online a threat or a chance? How did you cope with your research? How are those of you who work at universities coping and what is the way forward?

BIGSAS JUNIOR FELLOWS, AREN'T WE ALL ONE?

by *Oladapo Ajayi & Mingqing Yuan (September 9th 2020)*

Oladapo Ajayi (Dapo) and Mingqing Yuan (Alice) have been Junior Fellow representatives for two semesters. Here is their goodbye letter to their fellow students.

"Being BIGSAS Junior Fellow representatives is an experience that was worthwhile for us. We felt honored of being elected as the Reps while at the same realised the weight of responsibility and promise in front of us when stepping into the position. Our first meeting with Hanza and Larissa (the reps before them) was helpful. They provided tips and insights on the workings of BIGSAS which fired us up with confidence and smoothed the path ahead of us.

With all sincerity, the moment where we changed the email signature to Alice and Dapo announced the change, and yes, composing the first email was not that easy. We still remember the nervousness and long-hour discussion before sending out our first email...

...beginning with "Dear all BIGSAS JFs". These are moments one gets to feel and appreciate what many junior representatives have had to do for their fellow students and on their behalf.

Dr. Scherer and Juliané's unrelenting support and encouragement also helped us settle down in our roles. They are always ready to put us through, patient in advice and supporting our plans and understanding of our tasks. Even though these two staff are usually our first point of call, the entire BIGSAS staff is supportive, giving us tips as they continue to work round the clock and mostly behind the scenes for the sake of the community. Yes, the Junior Fellows are always the primary beneficiaries of the roles of silent heroes moving mountains beyond the spotlight.

Being in the position allows us to know the role that the administrative staff play, and we appreciate all the efforts and support specially and whole-heartedly. If we must reflect on the things that we could not achieve within the period we served as representatives, we will not hesitate to admit our lapses and imperfection. We suppose that is the default nature of human. Notwithstanding, we take responsibilities for any perceived inadequacies during our two semesters term as BIGSAS reps.

One of the instances we felt left down by circumstances beyond our control was the Swimming Training for Adult Beginners we initiated. The project and the logistics of planning demanded a huge amount of time and networking. In this regard, we must appreciate the amiable staff of the University of Bayreuth Welcome Centre, Angela, Lea, Susan & Thorsten for offering their entire support and exploring all networks (some personal) to help us achieve the project. The class that was meant to run into the summer semester break was over-subscribed. As at our last count, more than 25 registered. Unfortunately, COVID-19 happened! Yes, your guess is as good as ours... and our world as we know it began to change...The good news is that we are and would be survivors! And yes, we mean you the readers and us!

Tedious but fulfilling:

Perhaps, have you ever wondered what or how we feel preparing Newsletters? Tired! The Newsletter being a core task of the JFs representative can be demanding as we struggle with our own works and with all the challenges and at the latter part, the challenges posed by COVID-19 both physically and psychologically. So, once again to all former Junior Fellow representatives out there who produced the Newsletters, we salute you, and yes, we stood on your shoulders all through the year. However, undeniably, the Newsletter business is also one of the most fulfilling tasks to embark on. It is a process of creation, imagination and accountability. We debated and learnt a lot from it. We grow with the community and share the happiness and celebration of the achievement of every Junior Fellow. Newsletter is a platform of all of us and for all of us. Thumbs up to those Junior Fellows who send their feedbacks and appreciation to us. Sincerely, those emails remain treasures to us.

Wait! Are you waiting for this - our modest results? The answer is none! LOL.

You should just be more active and care about our community.

Let's nurture and have mutual respect for each other. Cooperate and support Shaden and Andreas - your new reps! Being representatives can be lonely and challenging, but remember, despite all difficulties, the reps are always here for you. They're ready to respond, to act and to engage whenever needed. Shaden and Andreas deserve our understanding and cooperation. Finally, we enjoyed and appreciate a lot the privilege of close friendships with some of our colleagues who provided us assistance when we needed and offered us their unbiased opinions. You all should get friends like that. These ones match their words with actions when need to be. No! We are not giving names until you invite us for dinner at your apartment.

In case you find it difficult to understand what we have been saying, don't worry, sometimes we can be confused too, but in sum: For us, being Junior Fellow representatives is about the little things, it is about trying, it is a push here and there, it is about a community of dynamic emerging scholars.

Yours truly, Alice & Dapo"



(left) BIGSAS Junior Fellows (and Alumni) at Cinema Africa (2019) and (right) at a get together at the mensa (2019).

(c) Oladapo Ajayi



LET'S TALK ABOUT VISUAL, PERFORMANCE, AND PRACTICE-BASED ARTS

by Dina Sodjadan (January 7th 2021)



Trip to the Berlin Biennale.
(c) Lena Naumann

It's a grey morning in October 2020, when shortly after 10 a.m. five Junior Fellows meet for a virtual coffee and tea. Little by little, they all enter the virtual room and greet each other with a good morning. On the computer screen you see friendly faces, which also show a little bit of tiredness. The members of the work group "Artistic Research" meet every two weeks to exchange about their (doctoral) projects. But first, the focus shifts to the well-being of all participants. Sophie Lembcke is based in Berlin and at the time of the Zoom meeting the Corona situation in the capital is very tense. The case numbers of Covid-19-infected people are increasing every day and therefore it is important for the participants to ask each other: Are you feeling alright?

They quickly drift off, remembering a visit to the Berlin Biennale a few weeks earlier. In September they were able to participate in cultural life. Junior Fellows from Bayreuth travelled to Berlin together, where Sophie welcomed them for a visit. For three days they explored different exhibitions.

"That's simply something completely different than always staring at the screen, especially when it comes to art" (- Sophie)

Together, the memories are being nourished, because the next (partial) lockdown came sooner than expected and cultural institutions, museums and exhibition spaces must remain closed again.

Back to the digital space: today Valerie Gruber will present her research, emphasising the aspect of art. What is special about the BIGSAS work groups is that all the participants conduct very different kinds of research, which nevertheless overlap and show some similarities. In the case of the work group "Artistic Research" it is primarily the focus on visual, performance, and practice-based arts.

Artistic research as a tool for transformation

The work group creates a space for the artist-researcher to navigate between bubbles of communities and bubbles of knowledge, for that they are translating and reframing forms of knowledge. It also focusses on the methods of artistic research as well as developing idiosyncratic methodologies. By engaging with questions of knowledge production to and within academia, the group deals with views on how and where and to whom knowledge is created. After all, artistic research is also a tool for (political, social) transformation. At 10:20 am all participants are online, and Valerie starts talking about her project in Latin America. Together they ask the question: „*What does artistic research mean for our current projects?*” In Valerie’s case, the performative triggers the political sphere and can thus lead to political change. All Junior Fellows listen with excitement, sometimes only the participants’ hair is visible, as they focus on a piece of paper writing down notes. At 10:50 a.m. Sophie continues, shares her thoughts, shows videos and encourages a debate: Does academic activism exist? In the meantime, questions are asked and after both presentations, the Junior Fellows enter a joint discussion. Today, the focus lies on decolonial practices, how one can stretch and question the boundaries in research and science, and above all, to what extent art and artistic research is used as a tool to slowly but surely overcome limits and restrictions.

The work groups at BIGSAS offer a space for networking and exchange. Quite often, practical ideas like events or even the publication of a BIGSASworks! issue are born. In BIGSAS, different people come together, all of whom have gone through a different academic and personal journey. The imprint that the doctoral candidates have experienced leads not least to the choice of the doctoral thesis topic that one will be working on at the end. Work groups serve as a platform to change one’s perspective, to rethink one’s own project and even to make new acquaintances and friends. Work groups thus offer an opportunity for further growth and thinking, even if the exchange (currently) takes place in the digital space.

The Work Group “Artistic Research” consists of six members, who are, Khadija Benthami, Valerie Gruber, Shaden Kamel, Sophie Lembcke, Dandara Maia Schellenberg, Lena Naumann.



(c) Lena Naumann

Go ahead and engage in WGs

The plans of the work groups are being followed with excitement, and who knows, maybe YOU too would like to found a WG? More information about the work groups can be accessed [here](#). Questions can be directed to BIGSAS at any time.

JUSTICE FOR AFRICANS BY AFRICANS

by Cecilia Ngaiza (February 20th 2020)

The World Day of Social Justice – established by the United Nations in 2007 and first celebrated in 2009 – sheds light on social justice issues all over the world. Junior Fellow Cecilia Ngaiza explains the importance of social justice for her own research at BIGSAS.

...human rights must be responsive to African circumstances. Clearly, collective rights...are an essential element of human rights in Africa. [1]

This year (2020), I am proud to celebrate a World Day of Social Justice in an advent of conducting my PhD research based on peoples' rights. It is my deep conviction that social justice in any society, country or region is hardly attained if people are faced with human rights violations. In Africa particularly, human rights have been in violation since time immemorial. However, the situation was manifested during the period of slave trade and colonialism. Post the colonial period, some of the newly independent African countries' governments conducted themselves undemocratically through authoritarian, exploitative, oppressive, corrupt and discriminatory governance at the expense of human rights and social justice. This resulted into several coup d' etats, protracted civil wars plus wars of hostility and regime change. Such circumstances culminated into people's rampant economic crises, cultural restlessness, political insecurities, internal and external displacements of people.

This background necessitated presence of the coordinated human rights system in Africa, stemming from the adoption of the regional human rights' instrument. The drafting process of the said African regional human rights agreement was put in action by the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU) in the year 1979 and culminated into the adoption of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights "the Charter" by the OAU member states in 1981. The adopted Charter uniquely contains all three generations of rights with the third generation of rights (people's rights) [2] affording it its peculiar characteristic as it addresses group/solidarity rights which are inherently vital to attaining social justice.

Despite the fact that the Charter was adopted without the definition of who are the 'peoples' as mentioned in the title and articles 19 to 24 of the Charter, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights' jurisprudence has inter alia fit indigenous peoples to such position.

[1] *Social and Economic Rights Action Center (SERAC) and Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) versus Nigeria, Communication number 155/96, paragraph 68.*

[2] *Right to equality, right to free dispose of wealth and natural resources, right to economic, social and cultural development, right to national and international peace and security and the right to satisfactory environment respectively.*

This is where my research interest developed. I undertake to study the relationship that exist between peoples' rights embedded in the Charter and the indigenous peoples, drawing specific examples from the Akie, Barbaig, Hadza and the Maasai peoples of Tanzania.

I conduct my research with the supposition that, the feasibility of the abovementioned provisions of the Charter addressing peoples' rights brings about social justice amongst the indigenous peoples in Tanzania and else where in the African continent. This can be done when member states to the Charter like Tanzania fulfills its duty to promote and protect peoples' rights domestically through policies, legal and institutional initiatives.

Therefore, through my research, I deliberately intend to positively contribute knowledge in the human rights field on the viability of attaining social justice for the indigenous peoples via positive implementation of regional human rights law at the national level. I am of the belief that, the outcome of my study will give the world even more reasons to celebrate the World Day of Social Justice.

No human rights, no social justice.

Happy World Day of Social Justice 2020!

About the Author

Cecilia Ngaiza is a PhD Junior Fellow at BIGSAS working with the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence - research section Affiliations, under the project titled "Human Rights, Corporate Social Responsibility and Interacting Markets in Africa". She holds a Master of Laws (LLM) in Regional Integration and East African Community Law and a Bachelor of Laws (Hons), both from the University of Dar es Salaam. She is also an Advocate of the High Court of Tanzania and a Member to Tanzania Women Lawyers' Association (TAWLA). She has a dedicated interest in the human rights law field and has worked with the aforementioned community based human rights non-governmental organization - TAWLA situated in Tanzania, before joining the University of Dar es Salaam, School of Law as an Assistant Lecturer.



Through BIGSAS, the researcher desires to accomplish her advancement of knowledge and experience in the specific study of third generation of rights (peoples' rights). The acquired knowledge and skills throughout the study will be significant to the researcher's career as an academician and a human rights advocate, specifically in an African community setting with which she intends to work closely in the future.

LA JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

by Carolin Herzog (March 20th 2020)



Chaque 20 mars, les francophones de tous les continents célèbrent la Journée internationale de la francophonie. L'expression « francophonie » est utilisée pour désigner, d'une part, l'ensemble des locuteurs et locutrices du français et d'autre part, tous les États dans lesquels le français est la langue officielle et/ou le français est parlé au quotidien[1].

De nombreuses organisations culturelles (Institut français) organisent des événements en vue de promouvoir la langue française dans de nombreuses et différentes régions du monde à l'occasion de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Le français, considéré comme la deuxième langue étrangère la plus apprise, aux côtés de l'anglais, il est parlé sur les cinq continents. Plus particulièrement en Afrique, on y trouve non seulement des États francophones, mais aussi des régions où le français est enseigné.

Hérité du passé colonial, le français est resté la langue officielle (en dehors des autres langues) de 19 États en Afrique subsaharienne et de quelques pays du Maghreb. Il convient de noter que non seulement la France, mais aussi la Belgique a introduit la langue française dans ses anciennes colonies.

La francophonie a toujours été une nécessité, pour la promotion de la langue française dans sa diversité à travers le monde entier. L'exemple de l'écrivaine franco-marocaine Leïla Slimani lauréate du prix Goncourt, qui a été nommée Ambassadrice de la Francophonie en 2017 par le Président Macron, montre cette place importante qu'occupe la Francophonie. Par ailleurs, la francophonie perpétue également des traditions vieillissantes, telles que la relation hiérarchique intrinsèque entre la France et les autres pays francophones. Certes, la France est au cœur de la francophonie, mais les régions et notamment les pays francophones d'Afrique évoluent vers un statut périphérique et dépendent des structures et des organismes de financement français, en particulier dans le secteur culturel.

Toutefois, cette journée sera une occasion de se pencher sur le rôle actuel de la francophonie et de discuter à la fois défis et opportunités de cette communauté linguistique.

[1] Semujanga, Josias : „Panorama des littératures francophones“. In : Ndiaye, Christine (Hrsg.): *Introduction aux littératures francophones. Afrique, Caraïbe, Maghreb. Les presses de l'Université Montréal, Montréal, 2004.*

A propos de l'auteur

Carolin Herzog a soutenu sa thèse de doctorat le 10.02.2020 avec succès et est actuellement une alumna de BIGSAS. Dans le cadre de son doctorat, elle s'est intéressée à la fiction et à la littérature narrative contemporaine de la langue française au Burundi.



Traduit par Yao Sodjadan

Der Artikel ist auch auf Deutsch verfügbar.
Einfach [hier](#) klicken

CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION, DEMOCRACY AND MOROCCAN LANGUAGE POLICY

by Abdellah Idhssaine (April 16th 2020)

On the occasion of the World Voice Day 2020, I am pleased to share with you a few reflections with respect to patterns of cultural discrimination in Morocco, an issue which I thoroughly address in my doctoral research project.

The rebellious uprisings the MENA region has recently undergone could not have gone unnoticed without ramifications on the Moroccan political arena where several popular protests raised slogans against the ongoing corruption underlying the Moroccan socio-economic system.

The increasing tension expressed by the 20 February movement has resulted in an unprecedented constitutional reform in 2011 whereby the State aimed to reinforce the patterns of democratization among Moroccans both at the macro (i.e., institutional) and micro (i.e., socio-economic) levels.

The procrastination policy embraced by decision makers to proceed with the, de facto, implementation of the provisions of the amended constitution has not brought about substantial changes as regards the socioeconomic problems Morocco is facing, including gender inequality, access to healthcare, lack of education as well as linguistic and cultural discrimination.

In what follows, I shall briefly pinpoint a few manifestations of the linguistic and cultural discrimination the Amazigh Cultural Movement is experiencing due to the pan-Arabist and Islamist ideology adopted by the ruling party (i.e., PJD).

A closer look at the provisions of Article 5 of the amended constitution reveals that both Arabic and Amazigh are recognized as official languages of Morocco. However, the scope of Amazigh in a number of priority domains of public life such as administrations, education, media outlets, official documents as well as courts remains considerably limited, compared to that of Arabic and French.

A large portion of Amazighs born in remote areas do not speak a word in Arabic; yet, they are required to defend themselves in Arabic during court proceedings, an act which presumably violates the provisions underlying the 2011 constitution.

Another form of discrimination against the Amazigh community concerns the use of Arabic as medium of instruction for pupils who do not speak the language; this does not seem to align with the regionalization project Morocco aims to pursue to reinforce fair distribution of power at the cultural, economic and political level.

Despite UNESCO's urgent recommendation to teach in mother tongues during the early years of primary education, the State continues to assimilate members of the Amazigh community to the Islamic ideology in which Arabic seems to be prioritized over any other language.

A potential resolution to minimize the linguistic and cultural discrimination against the Amazigh community resides in a democratic implementation of the provisions of Article 5 such that it is compatible with the regionalization project Morocco aims to pursue in an attempt to reinforce patterns of democratization in Morocco.



(c) Abdellah Idhssaine

About the Author

Abdellah Idhssaine is a Junior Fellow completing a PhD under a cotutelle program between Mohammed V University in Morocco and Bayreuth University in Germany. He is currently conducting research on Moroccan Language Policy and the Berber/Amazigh Language Revitalization. He wrote his master's thesis, which was published in 2016, on the Syntax of T-agreement in Tashelhit within Minimalism. Besides his experience as a teacher of English language, he has organized and participated in national and international conferences. He also attended the International Summer School Course on Linguistic Politics and Linguistic Planning at the University of Foreigners of Siena in Italy, the International Summer School Course on Advance Research Design and Statistics at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands, as well as the School of Democracy at Nimar in Morocco. He is also a published author in Scopus-indexed Journals such as the Journal of North African Studies - Routledge. His research interests include Language and Politics, Minority Languages, Language Shift, Language Revitalization Programs, EFL Teaching and Amazigh Syntax.

LA DÉMOCRATIE ET CE QUE LE PRINTEMPS ARABE A À NOUS APPRENDRE À CE SUJET

by *Andreas Wüst (September 15th 2020)*

En 2007, les Nations unies ont déclaré le 15 septembre comme Journée internationale de la démocratie. Andreas Wüst nous entraîne dans un voyage en Tunisie et nous explique pourquoi la démocratie devrait être remise en question.

Je me souviens d'une journée il y a cinq ans précisément. A l'époque je faisais un stage dans une fondation allemande en Tunisie, qui avait pour objectif de soutenir et accompagner le pays dans sa transition démocratique. J'étais plein d'enthousiasme et de détermination pour cette mission. En ce jour de mi-Septembre 2015, je pris place dans l'un des nombreux petits taxis qui comptent parmi les moyens de transports les plus populaires dans le fourmillement de la circulation tunisienne. J'avais rendez-vous avec une ONG tunisienne, mais plus que ce rendez-vous d'une heure et demie, je me rappellerais mon trajet en taxi de près d'une vingtaine de minutes. Après peu de temps, je me trouvais en pleine discussion avec le chauffeur. Au début nous ne parlions que de sujets banals du genre : D'où je venais, ce que faisais à Tunis etc. Tantôt la conversation se tourna vers la situation politique dans laquelle se trouvait la Tunisie. Depuis que le dictateur tunisien de longue date, Zine el-Abidine ben Ali a été démis de ses fonctions et exilé en Arabie Saoudite en printemps 2011 par les protestations pacifiques de la révolution jasmin, le pays nord-africain a accompli des progrès remarquables. Après la chute de l'autocrate, la population tunisienne avait choisi la voie démocratique, vivement acclamé par l'occident. Avec les premières élections libres du pays l'assemblée constituante avait vu le jour et le premier gouvernement élu par le peuple était entré en office sous l'égide de l'Ennahda, parti islamiste modéré.



Musée du Bardo (c) Andreas Wüst

En 2014, la nouvelle constitution - la plus libérale du monde arabe - avait été approuvée et dans la même année un nouveau président avait gagné les premières élections présidentielles. Au début de l'année 2015 finalement - d'ailleurs l'année de mon premier séjour en Tunisie - le premier gouvernement nommé sous la nouvelle constitution avait entamé son travail. Vu cette performance extraordinaire, les Tunisiens, n'auraient-ils eu droit d'être fiers de l'acquis? Moi, je l'étais, toujours ébloui par l'euphorie de la révolution de 2010/11 réussite, que j'avais suivie depuis l'Allemagne tout en croisant les doigts pour les Tunisiens. A l'époque, j'étais encore élève en classe terminale et fasciné par la révolution allemande qui avait fait tomber le mur de Berlin en 1989, soit 3 ans avant ma naissance. J'étais sûr que j'étais là en train d'assister à un moment historique qui allait reproduire l'exemple allemand.

Ce jour-là en septembre 2015, j'étais donc d'autant plus surpris quand j'écoutais les paroles dudit chauffeur de taxis qui me conduisait dans les rues de Tunis. L'image qu'il m'a dépeint sur la situation était complètement différente. C'était une image que j'allais croiser encore souvent durant mon séjour en Tunisie et qui ne correspondait point à mon propre regard en rose sur les événements depuis 2011.

D'aspirations déçues et de rêves évaporés

Contrairement à la joie et à l'ambiance de renouveau, qui avait emporté les gens en 2011, et contrairement à l'optimisme que m'avaient signalé mes interlocuteurs issus de l'élite politique du pays ; bref contrairement à tout ce que j'avais attendu, vu mes expériences antérieures, la voix du chauffeur de taxi exposait de la colère, de la frustration et de l'angoisse à l'égard de l'avenir.

D'après lui, rien n'avait changé depuis 2011, de moins pas au mieux : L'économie toujours en baisse, l'islamisme en hausse, chacun faisait ce qu'il voulait et ce qui lui paraissait utile. Je n'avais qu'à regarder le chaos dans les rues : sous le dictateur Ben Ali il y avait eu de l'ordre au moins et les gens avaient observé les règles. Et maintenant ? Rien de tout cela ! A quoi bon donc toute cette nouvelle liberté si l'économie était toujours par terre et si l'on n'avait rien à manger.

Je ne savais pas quoi dire, j'étais embarrassé et, en tant qu'étranger, je ne me sentais pas dans la position de mettre en avant les acquis politiques du pays ni de souligner à quel point les changements obtenus étaient impressionnants. Trop réels, me paraissaient les besoins inassouvis et les rêves déçus de cet homme. En effet la révolution avait plongé l'économie tunisienne dans une dépression profonde qui trouble le pays jusqu'à ce jour. Cette crise s'était aggravée davantage en 2015 quand, dans un court délai de quelques semaines seulement entre mars et juin, deux atroces attaques terroristes avaient frappé le pays.



Thermes d'Antonin de Carthage (c) Andreas Wüst

Ces jours-là plus que 60 personnes avaient été tuées dans un resort touristique à la plage de Sousse et dans le Musée archéologique du Bardo à Tunis. Et avec cela, s'était effondrée l'une des branches économiques les plus importantes du pays, le tourisme.

Cette crise se manifesta de manière douloureuse quelques jours plus tard. À l'époque, je travaillais également pour une maison d'édition française spécialisée dans les lettres classiques. Dans le cadre d'une recherche pour un reportage de voyage (*Urbs antiqua fuit - une journée sous le soleil de Carthage & Musa, mihi causas memora*) je visitai les grands sites archéologiques de Carthage qui se trouvent aux marges du Tunis moderne. Ma promenade qui me faisait découvrir les vestiges magnifiques des bains d'Antonin le Pieux, m'amena finalement au petit magasin d'un marchand de souvenirs. Je m'arrêtai devant les rayons et commença une discussion avec la propriétaire.

Comme je l'avais déjà entendu quelques jours auparavant, elle aussi ne montra plus aucune passion pour la démocratie. Elle aussi, elle se faisait des soucis par rapport à l'avenir. Je devrais regarder autour de moi si je ne remarquais pas comment le site était vide. A la ronde j'étais le seul touriste alors qu'autrefois, des centaines de personnes par jour seraient venues voir ces miracles durant cette saison-là. Maintenant - et surtout depuis les attaques terroristes du printemps - ce n'était plus qu'une dizaine qui trouvait le chemin de son magasin. Si cela continuait comme ça, elle devait fermer sa boutique ! Une fois de plus je ne savais pas quoi répondre, je me tus et m'en allai peu après.

Plus tard dans la journée, durant une visite guidée au Musée du Bardo, on s'arrêta devant une mosaïque antique installée par terre. Mon guide me demanda alors de faire attention et de ne marcher que très doucement sur le chef d'oeuvre. Il regrettait beaucoup qu'il ne pouvait plus m'offrir des pantoufles en toison pour protéger la mosaïque de la poussière des semelles de nos chaussures. Malheureusement, les vieilles pantoufles s'étaient abîmées avec le temps et l'actuelle situation financière du musée ne permettait pas l'achat de nouveaux exemplaires. Ainsi cette mosaïque qui, couverte de sable du désert, avait survécu aux temps et qui depuis sa découverte était exposé au musée, risquait maintenant de disparaître à l'endroit même qui normalement devrait la protéger. Quel dilemme : sans mosaïque pas de touristes, mais avec touristes pas de mosaïque ! Qu'aurais-je dû répondre à cela ? J'étais sincèrement désolé et essayais d'éviter de toucher la mosaïque. Par la suite, mon guide m'amena, sans que je l'aurais voulu, dans les salles normalement fermées au public où quelques semaines auparavant 24 personnes avaient été tuées dans une atroce attaque terroriste. L'aspect qui se présenta était trop pour moi : ce sang qui avait pénétré le sol en marbre, ces vitrines cassées par des projectiles, ces éclats de grenades et ces trous de balles dans les murs me hantent jusqu'à ce jour.

La démocratie - un passe-partout ?

Cinq ans vont bientôt écoulés depuis cette visite au Musée du Bardo. Et en décembre 2020, la Révolution de Jasmin fêtera son dixième anniversaire. A l'époque, des milliers de personnes avaient quitté leurs maisons pour revendiquer plus de participation politique et une amélioration de leurs conditions de vie.

Le mécontentement dans les rues avait alors déclenché une vague de protestations que l'on connaît aujourd'hui sous le nom souvent critiqué de „Printemps arabe“ et qui allait par la suite bouleverser toute une région. Or jusqu'à ce jour, la Tunisie demeure le seul pays dans la région du Maroc à la Syrie à avoir réussi la transition d'un régime autocrate à une démocratie. Le prix qu'a payé le pays est pourtant élevé, l'économie souffre toujours et l'élite politique n'arrive pas à sortir d'une bagarre permanente.

Le sort du pays et de la région ainsi que des gens qui y habitent ne me lâchent plus depuis. Cette lutte souvent pénible pour la stabilité et un peu plus d'aisance me fascine toujours. Mon projet de doctorat sur la politique culturelle de ces pays me permet alors d'entrer en dialogue avec beaucoup de personnes.

Ainsi au Maroc, l'un des rares pays où le régime autoritaire est resté largement intact malgré quelques petites réformes, j'ai récemment mené une interview avec un chercheur de l'Université Mohammed V de Rabat. Comme beaucoup de marocains, il est convaincu que la démocratie comme nous la connaissons à l'occident n'est pas viable au Maroc.

Mon interlocuteur plaide au contraire pour une approche qui prenne en considération les circonstances locales aussi bien culturelles que historiques. En ce qui concerne son propre pays il pense que la forme de „démocratie“ pratiquée au Maroc avec un roi à la tête de l'état qui réconcilie en sa personne les différentes identités présentes dans sa nation et qui sert d'arbitre dans des situations d'impasse politique, s'est prouvée la meilleure et la plus stable pour le pays. Au Maroc en tout cas on voulait épargner au peuple un sort comme l'ont connu les pays en guerre civile tels que la Libye, la Syrie et le Yémen, ou encore la situation de la Tunisie qui malgré son orientation démocratique à l'occidentale n'arrive pas à sortir de la crise.

Winston Churchill a dit une fois en 1947 : 'Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time...'

En fait, la démocratie est la pire des formes de gouvernement à l'exception de toutes celles qui ont été essayées de temps en temps. Même si, personnellement, je souhaite aux peuples marocain, tunisien et autres que les propos de Winston Churchill s'avèrent justes et que la liberté, l'égalité et l'état de droit règneront partout un jour, je commence tout de même à comprendre que ces paradigmes, qui se sont prouvés utiles chez nous, ne doivent pas nécessairement l'être aussi ailleurs. Ou comme l'a formulé le professeur de l'Université de Rabat pour le cas marocain :

En fait, la démocratie est la pire des formes de gouvernement à l'exception de toutes celles qui ont été essayées de temps en temps. Même si, personnellement, je souhaite aux peuples marocain, tunisien et autres que les propos de Winston Churchill s'avèrent justes et que la liberté, l'égalité et l'état de droit règnent partout un jour, je commence tout de même à comprendre que ces paradigmes, qui se sont prouvés utiles chez nous, ne doivent pas nécessairement l'être aussi ailleurs. Ou comme l'a formulé le professeur de l'Université de Rabat pour le cas marocain :

„Il y a certains stéréotypes sur le Maroc, il y a une certaine vision, je dirais, carrée sur le Maroc. Soit on dit que le Maroc est un régime autoritaire et ça s'arrête là, soit nous sommes devant un régime irréprochable. Or il n'en est rien de tout cela. Nous sommes devant un régime qui est en pleine vie, qui n'est pas parfait, mais qui se perfectionne au jour le jour. Et la perfection dans le cas marocain n'est pas synonyme d'occidentalité. Et pas synonyme du modèle occidental. C'est à dire que si vous cherchez à voir au Maroc une photocopie ou une copie de la rationalité française ou occidentale, vous vous trompez dès le départ. D'ailleurs cette manière de voir à l'américaine traditionnelle, c'est dépassé. Maintenant la rationalité peut être aussi locale, seulement il s'agit de découvrir comment elle fonctionne”.



(c) Andreas Wüst

Avec mon étude doctorale j'essaie alors de mieux comprendre le fonctionnement de ces autres régimes qui sur un niveau empirique fournissent à leurs populations suffisamment de raisons de les soutenir. Ces régimes alors que peut-être non-démocratiques selon des critères établis, peuvent tout de même être légitimes aux yeux des gens : Qu'ils s'appuient sur une référence théologique ou idéologique, qu'ils se servent du charisme d'un leader politique ou d'une ascendance royale - ces régimes sont loin d'être uniformes ou monolithiques. Tout au contraire, ils évoluent en permanence et font souvent preuve d'une capacité surprenante d'adaptation aux situations changeantes tout en répondant, dans une certaine mesure, aux besoins et demandes socio-politiques et économiques de la population. Si, avec mes recherches, j'arrive à ajouter même un peu au savoir sur cette danse de funambule, mon travail ne sera pas en vain.

Der Artikel ist auch auf Deutsch verfügbar.

(Traduction française par Andreas Wüst et Yao Sodjadan)

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF BREAD - BON APPETIT

by Dina Sodjadan (October 16th 2020)



(c) Dina Sodjadan

On October 16th we celebrate the international day of bread. Many of you may think: the Germans again! They love their bread. What clearly sounds like a cliché is quite often true in reality. But bread is not just bread, it's a craft. While some of us don't want to miss their muesli in the morning, others prefer to make jam bread. In the evening you get a hearty sandwich with cheese and sausage. What Germans who live abroad miss: real German bread. As a result, this popular commodity can quickly be traded between different households. But as much as the craving for bread may be present in some of us, bread is an integral part of almost every culture around the world. Two of our Junior Fellow share their recipes today. Joh Sarre loves homemade whole grain bread, but also 'Gurusa din', a Nubian specialty.

"Just recently a friend asked me what I miss most about Germany when I'm in a non-European country. After a short thought, my answer was actually: bread - probably the most clichéd answer among German expats. My absolute favorite bread is my home-baked whole grain bread - thanks to a simple recipe for success it even takes less time to prepare than cycling to the bakery. My favorite food on field research was actually bread-like: The Nubian specialty 'Gurusa din', a kind of fluffy pancake, is the only pastry I know that is made with yeast AND baking powder. It is cooked in a pan with the lid closed and tastes good with sweetened tea or with hearty sauces, for example meat or okra" - Joh Sarre.

Our Junior Fellows shares the recipe, which is especially suitable for PhD students and other people with little time and high energy requirements

- 500 gr wholemeal spelt flour
- 150 gr seeds (sunflowers, linseed, pumpkin, chia, chopped nuts...mixed to taste)
- 1/2 l water
- 2 tsp dry yeast
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tablespoons fruit vinegar (e.g. apple vinegar)

Mix the dry ingredients in a bowl, mix the liquid ingredients in the measuring cup, then tilt together and knead into a viscous dough using dough hooks. Pour into a box form (30x15cm), place in a cold (!) oven, set to 200°C top/bottom heat. 1h later the bread should be ready, i.e. it should sound hollow when you tap on the bottom. Unfortunately only works really well in an electric oven, gas ovens get too hot too quickly.

Veronica Buchumi, who already baked her delicious chapati for the BIGSAS Get-Together in February 2020, shares her recipe with us. For those who have not yet made their own chapati, the process can appear to be endless. But with a little practice you will soon become a master baker yourself.

First of all, Veronica follows the recipe from BigOven. She then adds her own flair:

- The salt, sugar and oil can be mixed directly into the flour before adding water. I prefer using milk in most cases as it adds a different flavour - water is best if you are cooking for a person with allergy to milk/lactose. You can add a bit of butter too (Water/Milk has to be warm).

In most cases I use 1kg of flour to make chapati and for that I use rough 600ml of water/milk, a full teaspoon of sugar and salt (one spoon for each), and two tablespoons of vegetable oil and two tablespoon of melted butter (if you want though) - vegetable oil is totally fine. The dough has to be quite soft as in not too hard and not too soft. Thus, I would recommend adding water slowly to avoid putting too much water and be forced to add more flour to make it nice. Usually, you know it is good if the dough is non-stick and kind of elastic if you pull it.

- You also don't have to wait for 40 mins, unless you have time. Sometimes I wait, sometimes I just cook straight away.
- Check the rolling process and the cooking [here](#) (and learn some Swahili too, yay!)

Veronica concludes: The bottom line is that the most important ingredients for chapati are: wheat flour, salt, sugar, cooking oil. The rest is luxury and just to add flavour.

So not all bread is the same. Bread is eaten in all latitudes and longitudes of our planet. There are sweet and savory variations. Some types are eaten plain, others are served with a drink or a main course.



(c) Dina Sodjadan

Write your notes here...



THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY - AN INTERVIEW WITH ASAF AUGUSTO ON NORTH TO SOUTH MIGRATION

by Sofie Reinl (December 18th 2020)

In 2000 the UN determined the 18th of December to be celebrated as the International Migrants Day, in remembrance of the “International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families” which was adopted on the same date in 1990.

In current times migration is a highly politicised topic in the western public and academic sphere, focusing mainly on South to North movements of individuals and families. Often grouped up and equated with discourses about refugees, it comes with a literal barrage of different political opinions, public strategies, and institutional responses.

In the light of the 20th International Migrants Day today, the undisputed relevance and the recent successful defence of his doctoral thesis “North to South Migration: Portuguese Labour Migration to Angola”, we sat down with Asaf Augusto to discuss an interesting blind spot in debates about international migration: namely North-South Migration, with an emphasis on Portuguese migrant workers to Angola as a “new” form of migration.

Postcolonial theory, Lusotropicalism and Coloniality[1]

Using the lens of the postcolonial theory Asaf looked at the legacy of the Portuguese Colonial Enterprise in Angola, which was highly influenced by “Lusotropicalism”. This was the ideology of superiority over other forms of colonialism, due to the emphasis on a peaceful liaison between coloniser and colonised: paraded by the relatively high number of interracial marriages and mixed-race children. This notion of racial harmony, though often in contrast with the reality of racialised hierarchies and stereotypes, exerts much influence in Angolan and Portuguese public perception of their relationship until today. In this context Asaf uses the concept of Coloniality: namely colonial concepts, ideas and images that transcend direct colonial rule.

“The slogan of Angola is from the north to the south we are one people: This was the myth that the government implemented. Within this notion of ‘one people’, issues of race, class and ethnicity were completely dismissed. Even when it happened, they said: “No this is not who we are”. This is not just part of Angolan nation building, but also the legacy of Portuguese colonialism”.

This might also help in understanding the Portuguese reluctance to grant their colonies independence. Officially they were postulated as provinces, not colonies, and henceforth inseparable from the Portuguese Motherland. The Independence of Angola in 1975 was preceded by 13 years of armed liberation struggle, that was ceased with the overthrow of the far-right Estado Novo regime in Portugal and the full concession by the new regime.

“New” Migration

If Angola and Portugal share this common past and continue to have a close international relationship, then what exactly can be “new” about Portuguese migration to Angola?

“Since the end of colonialism Angola is conventionally not a country where Europeans migrate to. This “new” migration is not just employed by retirees or tourists. Portuguese people are choosing Angola, because they are looking for jobs – to get good salaries and send money back to Portugal.”

It is interesting, that the motivation in this North-South-Migration doesn't differ from other trends of international migration. For example, the UN writes the following:

“Throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual's will to overcome adversity and to live a better life[2].”

Though, the perception of self and others and the ‘starting’ conditions for Portuguese migrants in Angola are quite different and highly influenced by Coloniality. It starts by a distinction in every-day language: permanent movement from North to South is rarely called migration, instead Portuguese migrants are referred to as ‘expatriates’. They often see themselves as descendants of industrialised countries, who have come to help and develop. This is also mirrored in Angolan beliefs about work ethics, trust and skills. The narrative of the lazy native contrasted by the hard-working Portuguese is still dominant in a lot of contexts, which in turn lends more trust to Portuguese workers than Angolans: If you need to get something done, you need a Portuguese manager. Asaf also looks at skill as a plastic concept:

“What is considered skill in Angola is often not considered skill in Portugal. Someone working as an electrician in Portugal might end up working as an engineer in Angola.”

The consequence is not only a difference in wages (up to four times more), but also an unfair favouritism when it comes to positions of power. Not infrequently does that lead to tensions and discontent at the workplace, when Angolans realise that not every Portuguese co-workers and superior is actually sufficiently or better ‘skilled’ than them.

Angolan Responses

Bringing this to the forefront of Angolan mainstream, a public discourse remains a sensitive issue – one could say almost a taboo. Ideas of Lusotropicalism and Coloniality present Angola as a multiracial country, without major racial tensions. If one tries to make a political statement, public outcries often follow, painting the speaker as a ‘racist’ towards white Angolans. Asaf makes clear, that white citizens are by no means a homogenous group and have a multitude of different backgrounds, identities, and origin stories. Many are long-time active members in the Angolan civil society, hold public offices and are deeply valued and beloved by constituents, neighbours, and friends. All of this might explain the widespread aversion to one-dimensional attempts to politically capitalise on issues of race and ethnicity. But it continues to present a difficulty when one tries to describe and resolve tensions and discontent of Angolan workers in relation to their Portuguese co-workers and superiors.

The International Migrants Day

Are initiatives like the UN International Migrants Day on the other hand a good platform to raise overall awareness? Asaf's thoughts are clear:

“The UN and other organisation tend to concentrate on the South-North migration. This is also the image you receive from media and public officials. Unconsciously they don't believe that North-South migration can happen, because there is always this dramatic understanding of migration: people from the Global South who desperately try to reach the Global North. In my thesis I try to demonstrate that this is not always the case and problematise all those implications. I am critically looking at how the concept of migration is shaped by Eurocentric ideas of Europe as a paradise and the rest as none-existent or under-developed.”

We congratulate Asaf for the successful completion of his PhD degree and are curious for further contributions in theory and empirical research. In the name of BIGSAS, we wish him all the best for his future!

[1] Augusto; King (2020): “Skilled white bodies”: Portuguese workers in Angola as a case of North-South migration; In: The Geographical Journal 186; p.116-127

[2] <https://www.un.org/en/observances/migrants-day>

Asaf as one of the moderators at the BIGSAS Journalist Award 2019.
(c) Frank Wunderatsch



Follow the Fellow Achievements



WHAT'S NEXT, MR. KAMAL DONKO?

by Dina Sodjadan (March 27th 2020)

After his Master's degree from University of Cologne and some time back in his home country Benin, he decided to move back to Germany and start a research on the "African frontier". During Kamal's time in Bayreuth, he made good friends and enjoyed great support from his supervisors and the administrative staff at BIGSAS. Even though Bayreuth compared to Cologne is quite small, he has only positive thoughts about this upper Franconian city to share.

"I know I am leaving some part of myself here"

When he thinks about the past years and his doctoral project, he describes his time as exciting, challenging and happy. This looks like a great outcome - so we ask: what was the most exciting part? "**The day of my defence!**" This makes sense, especially as a defence marks an important step towards a new chapter. However, the excitement arose particularly around the time of the examination. The alumnus thought, "**why early in the morning, especially 8:30 am**". While he had problems sleeping, due to being nervous, he was also able to keep his calm. On the next day, he presented professionally and engaged in nice discussions. After that, his friends were there to congratulate him on his achievements (...this was the 'pre-Corona' time...)

The biggest struggle: Running for a visa

Even though Kamal Donko has successfully handed in his thesis named "Territory, identity and politics in a frontier zone: the case of central Benin", there have always been struggles around his visa. He makes a good point: "**academia is about thinking, but how can one think, while always running around in a jungle of bureaucracy?**" He proudly made it, and it is not to forget that even just starting a doctorate can be the first battle to fight.

What is next?

It was only five days after his defence that Mr Donko left Bayreuth. But, here comes what a lot of students are aiming at: Based in Parakou, the third biggest city in Benin, the alumnus will be part of a the research project "Migration control, forced immobility and violent mobilization in the border triangle of Burkina Faso, Benin and Niger" as a postdoc. Being part of the Research Section "Mobilities" in the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, he will keep his ties with Bayreuth even after his doctoral studies at BIGSAS.



(c) Kamal Donko

WHAT'S NEXT, CAROLIN HERZOG?

by Dina Sodjadan (May 5th 2020)



(c) TGCL / Andi Weiland

She discovered the great variety of Burundian literature and put it down on paper in her dissertation. Carolin Herzog is now alumna of BIGSAS, after having delivered a successful defence in February 2020. We are interested: what has driven her ahead and what will happen next.

The journey to Bayreuth was more a coincidence than an active decision. During an internship in Brussels she heard about the TGCL - Tanzanian-German Centre for Eastern African Legal Studies in Bayreuth. The joint project between the University of Dar es Salaam and the University of Bayreuth was founded in 2008 and offers Master's and PhD scholarships for ambitious students of the East African Community. When support was needed in 2013, Carolin applied and soon became part of the team.

Coming from the field of German, French and Spanish literature and linguistics, the environment of the University of Bayreuth invited her to become a part of the Africa research. While working at the TGCL, she thought about a research with a regional focus on East Africa. She contacted Professor Ute Fendler, with whom she regularly exchanged ideas in the decision-making process. Initially, Carolin focused on Rwandan literature, but soon realised that there is little research on Burundian literature.

"I was completely not aware of Burundi at that time, I have to admit. But this research topic caught me, because I could be one of the first in this field."

After carrying out the necessary preparatory research and writing an exposé, Carolin became part of BIGSAS where she particularly appreciated the "**powerful community**" with which she was able to interact over the years. One of the highlights were the many conversations that provided an opportunity for exchange as well as the self-organised "**writing ashrams**". The work groups also proved to be enriching; they offered a way to reflect on a topic from different angles. Other BIGSAS workshops such as a consulting workshop created room for additional interactions.

Surely there must have been a special experience during the doctoral training period? Yes - the Annual Conference of the African Literature Association which was hosted by Yale University in New Haven in 2017. While around 600 people come together for a whole week and one can choose from seven panels taking place at the same time, this either ends in a complete overwhelming or exciting experience. For Carolin it was the latter: ***"I was so impressed by the gathering of international experts on African literature. It was hard to choose what presentations to attend"***.

At the conference she gave one of her first presentations in French. She mastered this challenge and was rewarded with positive feedback.

"I don't like to hold presentations so much, but it was good and so motivating. That is what strikes me the most - the questions and the critique was always good for my work and dissertation".

Of course, there were also a few downsides during the PhD. A big challenge was the selection process of the novels. But here too, discussions with colleagues and mentors helped.

"Literature is so plenty, there are so many angles to look at it."

The writing process also proved to be difficult at times. But participation in external and self-organised writing camps ultimately spurred the writing process and the majority of the writing part could be completed within twelve months.

Although Carolin officially completed her doctorate in less than two years, she stresses the long preparatory work she put into it. It's important to research and explore a topic thoroughly. To do this, she attended seminars at the Romance Studies chair and read many books in advance. Ultimately, all the work has paid off: she is now Dr Carolin Herzog.

What is next?

In addition to her doctorate she has also remained loyal to the TGCL. Through her commitment she now continued to be part of the team as the TGCL project manager at the University of Bayreuth until the end of 2020. Since February 2021 she joined The African Network Germany e.V. as the director.

Additionally, she is tackling other projects that are linked to her doctoral studies. Her dissertation, for example, which is already available online may also be printed by a publishing house. She also wrote an article for a book chapter on the literary field in Burundi. Her love for reading novels continues and many Burundian works are still on her bookshelf - passion doesn't stop with the dissertation.

MAKING CONNECTIONS IN AND BEYOND BAYREUTH: CHARLES MOYO

by Dina Sodjadan (August 18th 2020)



(c) Charles Moyo

Charles Moyo completed his doctoral studies in 2019 and went back to his home country Zimbabwe. The Alumnus is now based in Zambia, working as a Gender-Based Violence and M&E Expert for Lifeline/Childline Zambia (LLCZ). He describes the challenges he faced during his doctoral studies in Bayreuth and the positive sides of all the connections he made. He also speaks about the transition into the job market, which has not been easy but worth the wait.

Charles was a master's student at the University of Passau when he heard about Bayreuth in 2013. One of his professors was organising a seminar with colleague Prof. Dr. Dieter Neubert on "Development Strategies in Kenya and Thailand". Students from the University of Bayreuth came to Passau and Charles, in return, went to Bayreuth with his classmates. That is where he got to know the university and the city. At the same time, the then MA student met former Junior Fellows of BIGSAS, who gave an insight into the graduate school. Nevertheless, BIGSAS was quickly forgotten and only over a year later did it return on his radar. When he applied for his doctoral studies, he became a Junior Fellow at BIGSAS in 2015.

Bayreuth - small city with a cosmopolitan vibe

Charles liked the size of the city very much. Although Passau has even fewer inhabitants than Bayreuth, it is mainly the cosmopolitan nature that characterises both the city and the university. The alumnus enjoyed his time at cultural institutions such as the Iwalewahaus. A highlight for him was an exhibition on Zimbabwean sculptures. The fact that he was able to encounter a piece of home more than 8,000 kilometres away was "**great moment for me to experience Zimbabwean culture outside Zimbabwe**". BIGSAS is also cosmopolitan by nature - a place where opportunities for networking and cultural exchange exist. His fellow students and the staff "**made me feel like home and we ended up being like a family. BIGSAS was not only limited to academic business but also had a vibrant social life**".

Further highlights were also the numerous lectures, conferences, workshops or colloquiums he visited during his time at the graduate school. It was also during these events that he met Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Wole Soyinka as well as many other filmmakers, artists, novelists, academicians.

KHG and KAAD as important support

“The biggest challenge during my PhD studies was the distance that separated me from my family. I was away from my wife and two kids and it was not easy.”

Charles shares this dilemma with many other former and active Junior Fellows. It poses a great challenge when part of one's family lives in the home country and oneself tries to gain ground in a foreign place for a few years. The only way to overcome this distance is through digital communication, at least for a few hours a week. When Charles travelled to Zimbabwe for some field research for his dissertation, he was able to celebrate a short reunion with his family. Contact with other international students was therefore particularly important to him. The Catholic University Community (KHG) played a decisive role in this, where he found many friends. Additionally, he co-organised various events at the catholic institution, such as the Africa Culture Evening. Financing his doctorate was also not always easy for the alumnus. After a one-year scholarship, Charles needed new financial support. When he finally became a scholarship holder at The Catholic Academic Exchange Service (KAAD), he could not only feel financial relief, but found another important family for him. He was able to attend numerous events and get to know cities inside and outside Germany.

The time after BIGSAS - reunion and realignment

Returning to his family in Zimbabwe was one big relief. However, due to the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe, he decided to move to Zambia. There he founded the RHOMA Foreign Relation Institute, an international affairs policy think tank in Lusaka, where he worked for some time. As a Senior Associate Charles did not only consult the Institute on its endeavors but was also the chief editor of a new magazine called “The Diplomat Magazine”. While establishing a new institute into the international landscape is demanding enough, the Covid-19 pandemic is also affecting the work of Charles in a big way. This is also one of the reasons why Charles decided to switch jobs.

He is now a Gender-Based Violence and M&E Expert for Lifeline/Childline Zambia (LLCZ), an organization that offers psychosocial support especially telephone counselling to survivors (victims) of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and child abuse. The organization works closely with the Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Health, Zambia Police Service and other relevant stakeholders for building synergies and referral purposes.

We wish Charles the best of luck in these important endeavours!

DIE KUNST WANDELBAR ZU SEIN - ALUMNUS FABIAN LEHMANN IM INTERVIEW

by Dina Sodjadan (August 24th 2020)

Seinen akademischen Werdegang begann der Alumnus 2006 in Bayreuth, als er sein Bachelorstudium im Fach Geografische Entwicklungsforschung Afrikas aufnahm. Danach lernte er das Iwalewahaus während eines Praktikums kennen. Nach seinem Master in Lüneburg ging es zurück nach Bayreuth ins Iwalewahaus, wo er später die Promotion aufnahm. Jetzt pendelt Fabian Lehmann zwischen Hamburg und Wittenberge hin und her.

Fabian Lehmann ist niemand, der jeden Schritt im Leben genau plant. Im Gegenteil: er nimmt sich die Zeit, um zu überlegen, was als nächstes kommen soll. So fiel die Entscheidung nach dem Abitur zum Beispiel auf ein Freiwilliges Ökologisches Jahr und nach dem Bachelor auf ein Praktikum im Iwalewahaus. Für ihn war es an der Zeit „**weg von den Fakten**“ zu kommen und sich zunehmend mit Kultur zu beschäftigen. Während des Praktikums hat er sodann seine erste Ausstellung kuratiert, was sicherlich auch ausschlaggebend dabei war, einen Masterstudiengang zu wählen, der einen Kunstschwerpunkt hatte (Culture, Arts & Media an der Universität Lüneburg).

Auch seine Expertise über den afrikanischen Kontinent, die er bereits in Bayreuth vor allem in Geografie, Politik und Wirtschaft erlangte, nahm er mit nach Lüneburg, wo er seine Abschlussarbeit über Christoph Schlingensiefs Operndorf in Afrika schrieb. Diese wurde u.a. von Dr. Ulf Vierke betreut, der den Alumnus nach einer Herausgeberassistenz in einem Forschungsprojekt der Uni Lüneburg wieder nach Bayreuth holte.

Anruf aus Bayreuth

Das Operndorf Afrika wurde im Februar 2010 in Burkina Faso vom Theater- und Filmemacher Christoph Schlingensief eingeweiht. Nur ein halbes Jahr später verstarb der visionäre Künstler und hinterlässt einen zukunftsweisenden Ort, an dem Kunst in der Mitte der Schulausbildung von über 200 Kindern steht. Als Fabian Lehmann seine Abschlussarbeit über den besagten Ort schreibt, kann er noch nicht wissen, dass bald darauf im Iwalewahaus eine Ausstellung zu Christoph Schlingensief geplant wird. Doch schließlich kam ein Anruf, der ihn zurück nach Bayreuth holte.

Zweieinhalb Jahre lang hat er das Projekt „Wagner – Schlingensief – Afrika“ betreut. Am Ende wurden aus der Ausstellung eine Konferenz und schließlich ein Sammelband, wo er Mitherausgeber ist. Es war dann zwar kein Telefonat, dafür aber mehrere Gespräche mit Ulf Vierke und Nadine Siegert, die ihn zur Promotion animierten.

„Ich wollte das eigentlich nicht unbedingt, weil ich genug hatte von der Arbeit im stillen Kämmerlein“.

Doch Fabian Lehmann merkte, dass ihm solch eine Qualifikation durchaus von Nutzen sein kann. Sodann bastelte er ein Jahr an seinem Thema herum und entschied sich weiter zu Christoph Schlingensief zu arbeiten, der neben Burkina Faso auch in anderen afrikanischen Ländern aktiv war, so z.B. Namibia. Hinzu kam das Interesse an der deutschen Kolonialzeit, was schließlich zu seinem Thema „Postkoloniale Gegenbilder: Künstlerische Reflexionen des Erinnerns an den deutschen Kolonialismus in Namibia“ führte.

Soll ich's wirklich machen oder lass ich's lieber sein?

Obwohl eine Promotion durchaus seine Vorzüge hat, brauchte Fabian Lehmann auch hier Zeit, genau darüber nachzudenken, ob dies der richtige Weg für ihn ist.

„Bis auf eine Person haben viele gejammert, die eine Promotion gemacht haben. Die haben mir davon abgeraten...oder vielleicht nicht abgeraten, aber es war nur eine Person dabei, die begeistert war. Ich hab's aber nie bereut! Ganz im Gegenteil - es war eine super Zeit. Sich drei Jahre mit einem Thema auseinander zu setzen, ist einmalig“.

Diese einmalige Zeit hat Fabian Lehmann ohne große Krisen und auch mit sehr guten Bedingungen hinter sich gelassen. Während seiner Promotion ist Fabian Lehmann zwei Mal nach Namibia gereist, um dort einen Zugang zur lokalen Kunstszene zu gewinnen. In Bayreuth nahm er an Workshops und Coaching-Angeboten teil, arbeitete an einem abwechslungsreichen Thema an einem ruhigen Arbeitsplatz im Iwalewahaus. Ebenso einmalig: eine Monografie, denn für ihn war es immer sein Traum, ein eigenes Buch zu schreiben.

Aus der anfänglichen Unsicherheit wurde vor allem zum Zeitpunkt seiner Verteidigung im Juni 2020 echter Stolz. Obwohl Fabian Lehmann schon seit Anfang 2020 mit beiden Beinen im Berufsleben steht, befasste er sich sehr intensiv mit seiner Dissertation, um sich auf seine Disputation vorzubereiten. Ob das nicht anstrengend war? *„Ja, die zeitliche Distanz war eine echte Herausforderung, aber am Ende verstand ich meine Arbeit noch besser als zu dem Zeitpunkt, an dem ich sie abgab“.*

Aus Liebe zum Schreiben - der Weg zum Journalismus

Unter der Woche fährt Fabian gespannt in die „Der Prignitzer“-Redaktion, denn dort ist er als Journalist tätig. Doch bevor er den Weg zum Journalismus einschlug, ging es von Bayreuth nach Hamburg, um dort den Arbeitsmarkt zu erkunden. Fest stand: **„eine Unikarriere einzuschlagen, kommt für mich nicht in Frage“**; also schaute sich der Alumnus nach neuen Tätigkeiten um. Dabei standen Kulturinstitute und Museen auf seiner Liste u.a. für Kuratorenstellen. Doch hier folgte die Ernüchterung, denn auf wenige begehrte Stellen gab es viele Bewerber*innen, sodass für Fabian Lehmann zunächst keine Anstellung dabei war. Gleichzeitig hat es ihn gereizt, sich weiter mit Texten zu befassen, so wie es auch schon in verschiedenen Projekten in der Vergangenheit passiert ist. Seine Expertise, z.B. über die Aufarbeitung der Kolonialzeit konnte er bereits vor seiner Redakteursstelle in verschiedenen Beiträgen zum Ausdruck bringen. *„Dann bin ich auf die Idee gekommen, versuch es doch mal bei einer Zeitung.“*

Kurzerhand fand er sich in der Prignitz in Brandenburg wieder, ca. 200 km von Hamburg entfernt. Der gebürtige Brandenburger empfand schnell Lokalpatriotismus und trat die Stelle zunächst für ein Jahr an. Die Chance, direkt als Redakteur einzusteigen, obwohl er vorher niemals bei einer Zeitung gewesen ist, war für ihn verlockend und erneut einmalig. Seine Liebe zum Schreiben beweist der Alumnus nun in seiner täglichen Arbeit als Lokaljournalist. Seine Arbeit ist ein bunter Blumenstrauß, der sehr facettenreich ist. Er beschäftigt sich z.B. mit Themen wie Landwirtschaft, Naturschutz, Rechtsextremismus oder digitale Arbeit..

Und die Kunst?

Obwohl Themen zur Kunst weniger Anklang im aktuellen Job finden, bekommt die Kunst in seinen anderen Projekten weiterhin Aufmerksamkeit. Freundinnen von Fabian Lehmann aus Namibia haben zum Beispiel eine Website, die als digitale Galerie fungiert.

UNTERWEGS MIT DEM PRIGNITZBUS

Corona, der Bus und ich



(c) Der Prignitzer

Dort kauft er für das Iwalewaha Kunst ein, was ihm viel Spaß macht. Des Weiteren schreibt er Reportagen, z.B. über eine Kulturwoche in Kamerun, die er im November 2019 besuchte.

Auf die Frage, ob er nicht wieder mehr mit Kunst und Kultur zu tun haben möchte, antwortet der Alumnus leicht nachdenklich: **„Ich bin da ein wenig zwiegespalten. Einerseits macht mir die Arbeit hier wirklich Spaß, andererseits möchte ich auch zurück nach Hamburg und meine Hoffnung wäre, dass sich das miteinander vereinbaren lässt. Als Lokalredakteur muss ich natürlich vor Ort sein, aber ich könnte z.B. die Länderseiten übernehmen oder auch gerne das Kulturressort. Die Arbeit mit Texten macht mir sehr viel Spaß, sogar mehr als Ausstellungen zu organisieren.“**



(c) Sabine Linn

Ausstellungen auf die Beine zu stellen ist durchaus sehr viel Arbeit Bücher oder Texte: die bleiben, so Fabian Lehmann. Was auch bleibt, ist die Verbindung zu Bayreuth. Seine Beziehung zur Stadt ist und bleibt eng, gerade weil er in all den Jahren die Vorzüge zu schätzen gelernt hat. Dazu zählt z.B. die Brauereikultur, die Gemütlichkeit und die Biergärten, etwas, das im Norden fehlt, und dass der Brandenburger sehr vermisst. Und das Iwalewaha, ein Ort voller Kunst... Fabian Lehmann ist sich sicher, dass es immer wieder Anlässe gibt, nach Bayreuth zurückzukehren. Warum dann auch nicht zur Kunst?

WESTAFRIKA, OSTAFRIKA, OBERFRANKEN, NIEDERSACHSEN - MAIKE VOIGT FINDET IMMER IHREN WEG

by Dina Sodjadan (January 24th 2021)

Nach acht Jahren in Bayreuth geht es für Alumna Maike Voigt zurück nach Niedersachsen. Im Gespräch verrät sie uns, was sie dort vorhat.

Nachdem Maike 2009 ihr Abitur abgeschlossen hatte, zog es sie nach Göttingen, wo sie Ethnologie und Sprachwissenschaften studierte. 2012 wagte sie den Schritt nach Bayern und begann an der Universität Bayreuth ihren Master im Fach Kultur und Gesellschaft Afrikas.



(c) DSW/Simona Bednarek

Die gewählten Schwerpunkte der Ethnologie und Entwicklungspolitik kombinierten Inhalte ihres vorherigen Studiums mit neuen Herausforderungen. Ein spannender Aspekt des Studiengangs war auch eine angeleitete Lehrforschung, die bereits seit vielen Jahren fester Bestandteil des Programms ist. Für Maike und ihre Kommiliton:innen ging es nach Togo und Benin, eine **„sehr spannende Erfahrung“**, die sie auch heute noch prägt.

Eins ist klar: als sie 2012 nach Bayreuth kam, hätte sie nicht gedacht, dass sie auch acht Jahre später noch in den Genuss oberfränkischer Natur sowie kulinarischer Spezialitäten kommen würde – dazu später mehr ;-).

Der Weg zur Promotion

Das Schreiben der Masterarbeit, sowie das Befassen mit Theorien und diese mit eigenen empirischen Daten zu füttern, haben ihr sehr gefallen. **„Etwas Eigenes zu erarbeiten“**, war schließlich auch ein Ansporn die Promotion zu beginnen. Neben dem Handwerkszeug, das sie bereits im Masterstudium lernen und ausprobieren konnte, war es auch das Angebot einer wissenschaftlichen Mitarbeiterstelle, die sie darin bestärkte, die Promotion aufzunehmen. So konnte Maike für zwei Jahre an der Academy (unter der Leitung ihrer Doktormutter Erdmute Alber sowie ihres Gutachters Dieter Neubert) an einem interdisziplinären Projekt mitwirken und neben dem wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten auch praktische Erfahrungen in der Veranstaltungsorganisation und Administration sammeln.

Geografisch bewegte sich Maike dann von Westafrika nach Ostafrika und befasste sich in ihrer Promotionsforschung mit Mittelschichten und Unternehmertum in Kenia. Die Forschung in Kenia hat ihr Spaß gemacht und für sie war es auch **„reizvoll noch einmal etwas Neues auszuprobieren“**.

Doch das Jonglieren einer halben Stelle sowie der Forschung und Familie war für sie eine echte Herausforderung. Während es an der Academy immer ein volles Semesterprogramm gab, flog Maike in den Semesterferien nach Kenia: **„Ich war nie richtig hier oder dort. Ich war entweder mit der nächsten Reise beschäftigt oder mit einem Fuß schon wieder auf dem Rückweg“**. Das war vor allem schwierig für familiäre Kontakte. Sie wurde regelmäßig mit der Frage konfrontiert: **„Wann fährst du denn wieder nach Kenia?“** – denn alle wussten: bald müssen sie wieder für einige Wochen oder Monate auf Maike verzichten. Insgesamt hat ihr die Tätigkeit an der Academy sehr gut gefallen, dort konnte sie viele Wissenschaftler:innen aus europäischen und afrikanischen Ländern kennenlernen, sowie Arbeitserfahrung sammeln, die ihr nun sicherlich auch in der aktuellen Position zugutekommt.

Nach acht Jahren Bayreuth - was wird man vermissen?

Maike stellt schnell klar: **„Naja, ich gehe ja nur so halb. Mein Freund kommt aus der Gegend und bleibt auch erstmal hier“**. Die Zeit in Bayreuth war schön, die Kleinstadt ist zur zweiten Heimat geworden mit folgendem Ergebnis: **„Ich spreche jetzt fließend fränkisch und esse gerne Bratwürstchen“**. Natürlich hat Bayreuth auch noch andere kulinarische Highlights zu bieten, die wir hier nicht unterschlagen wollen. Schon einmal den fränkischen Sauerbraten mit Lebkuchensauce probiert? Dies ist eine von Maikes Lieblings Speisen geworden und etwas, das sie in Niedersachsen sicherlich vermissen wird.

Doch Maike, die sich als **„Kleinstadtmensch“** beschreibt, wird hier nicht nur die Kulinarik, sondern auch das Grün vermissen, denn auch Fahrradfahren und Wandern gehörten bei ihr in den letzten Jahren zur Tagesordnung. Das einzige Manko: Bayreuth ist und bleibt schlecht angebunden. Sie hat wenig Verständnis dafür, dass eine ICE Verbindung oder eine direkte Verbindung nach Dresden, die es beide einmal gab, abgeschafft wurden, dies macht den Weg nach und aus Bayreuth oftmals sehr langwierig.

Natürlich wird der Alumna auch die Zeit an der BIGSAS sehr fehlen. Obwohl man noch oftmals zu hören bekommt, dass **„die Doktorarbeit im stillen Kämmerlein geschrieben wird“**, war das in Bayreuth gar nicht der Fall. Das liegt vor allem daran, dass BIGSAS so organisiert ist, dass man ständig in Kontakt mit Kommiliton:innen kommen kann. Auch das interdisziplinäre Arbeiten wird angestoßen, z.B. in Work Groups. Dadurch hat man einen Einblick in die Arbeit anderer Wissenschaftler:innen und immer die Möglichkeit Feedback zu bekommen. Aus der Work Group „Lesekreis“ ist eine aktive Gruppe von Schreiber:innen entstanden, die sich über einige Jahre immer wieder in einem Schreibaschram getroffen haben.

Auch soziale Aktivitäten wurden nicht vernachlässigt. So traf man sich in der Woche pünktlich um 12:30 Uhr zum Mensaessen (wo wir wieder bei der Kulinarik wären...). Das heißt im Umkehrschluss, dass es nicht nur einen langweiligen Bibliotheks-Alltag gab, sondern stetigen Austausch und auch gegenseitige Motivation.

Übrigens: Der sogenannte Schreibaschram wurde von der UBTGS für zwei Tage ermöglicht. Nach der Teilnahme haben einige Doktorand:innen das Konzept übernommen, sich die Inhalte rekonstruiert und immer wieder über mehrere Wochen gemeinschaftlich zu viert oder fünft zusammen geschrieben und gegessen. Nach dem Prinzip **„Außenwelt ade“** (Handys werden weggeschlossen, das Internet wird abgestellt) verzeichneten einige Junior Fellows große Erfolge. Auch Maike berichtet: **„In den Schreibaschrams sind große Teile meiner Dissertation entstanden. Außerdem wird man als Gruppe auch noch einmal ganz anders zusammengeschrämt“**.

Auch die Teilnahme an verschiedenen Konferenzen, allen voran der ECAS in Basel und Edinburgh, waren für die Alumna großartige Erfahrungen. Durch die Möglichkeit, die eigene Forschung vorzustellen und dafür Rückmeldungen zu erhalten, konnte Maike jederzeit motiviert an ihrer Dissertation arbeiten. In Edinburgh stellte sie 2019 z.B. Unternehmer:innenbiografien vor, die Teil ihrer Doktorarbeit sind. Das Ergebnis: „Auch andere fanden mein Thema cool, das ist die beste Motivation“.

Und jetzt geht es zurück nach Niedersachsen!

Die Suche nach einer Stelle nach der Promotion war nicht einfach und **„Spaß hat es nicht gemacht“**. Maike hat ihre Dissertation im März 2020 abgegeben und war ein halbes Jahr lang mit der Jobsuche beschäftigt. **„Es war ja natürlich auch Corona, sodass viele Bewerbungsverfahren eingestellt wurden. Da braucht man auf jeden Fall ein gutes Durchhaltevermögen“**. Doch Ende gut, alles gut. Denn jetzt geht es nach Hannover zur Deutschen Stiftung Weltbevölkerung, wo Maike als Referentin der Geschäftsführung arbeitet. Die Stelle wurde neu geschaffen und seit November 2020 beschäftigt sie sich mit Themen in den Bereichen sexuelle und reproduktive Rechte und Gesundheit in Ostafrika. Sie berichtet:

„Im Rahmen meiner neuen Stelle bin ich in diverse Projekte der Geschäftsführung eingebunden. Eins, das ich besonders spannend finde, ist die Planung der Stiftungsteilnahme an der International Conference on Family Planning, die 2021 in Thailand stattfinden soll. Hier wollen Stiftungsmitarbeiter:innen aus den Länderbüros in Ostafrika in Konferenzbeiträgen aus den Projekten berichten und Mitarbeiter:innen aus Brüssel, Berlin und Hannover wollen neue Kontakte zu Partner:innen und Geldgeber:innen knüpfen. Die Koordination des Auftritts, der auch einen Messestand beinhaltet, liegt nun bei mir in Zusammenarbeit mit meinen neuen Kolleg:innen“.

Wir wünschen ihr viel Freude im neuen Job und hoffen, dass sie auch weiterhin den Weg nach Oberfranken finden wird!



By the way: The article is also available in English! Click [here](#)



PASSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION - ALUMNUS EMNET TADESSE WOLDEGIORGIS SHARES INSIGHTS INTO HIS WORK

by Dina Sodjadan & Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis (February 8th 2021)



(c) Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis

Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis is an Associate Professor of Higher Education Studies at the University of Johannesburg. He has been researching higher education issues in Africa since 2006. He completed his PhD at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, where he worked as a researcher since 2015. His research focuses on South-South partnership models, regionalisation and internationalisation of higher education in Africa, decolonization debates and economics of higher education. He did his joint master's degree in Higher Education Studies at Oslo University in Norway, Tampere University in Finland and Aveiro University in Portugal.

He is certified in two advanced level research trainings in higher education in the Netherlands at the Centre for Institutional Cooperation (ICIS) Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam; and training on Leadership and Management of Higher Education Institutions in Maastricht School of Management. Prior to his position at Bayreuth University, he was Head of the Quality Assurance Office, Head of Department and team leader at Mekelle University, Ethiopia. He has published a number of articles, book chapters and books on higher education issues, particularly theories of regionalisation, student mobility, cost sharing, harmonisation of higher education systems and decolonization debates in Africa. Currently, he is working on higher education transformations in Africa.

Emnet Woldegiorgis planned to pursue his doctoral degree in Europe. While he was browsing the web, he came across Bayreuth University and realised that the university in Bavaria would be a great fit. He was drawn to the interdisciplinary approaches of various institutions and never regret his choice of moving to Bayreuth. Even though Bayreuth is quite small, ***"it is a cultural melting pot with a rich history that attracts scholars from a wide array of backgrounds which exposes one to different ways of living that one wouldn't otherwise have had a lived experience thereof"***.

Even the extracurricular activities persuaded Emnet to participate in a whole lot of events. The many festivities that Bayreuth city, the university and other organisations had to offer would complete Emnets time in Upper Franconia.

There would be the Afro-Caribbean Festivals, events at the Lwalewahaus or even string of concerts and performances by an assortment of artists from all parts of Africa and beyond. He was even drawn to the world-renowned 19th-century composer Wilhelm Richard Wagner whose operas are performed to much fanfare at the annual Bayreuth festival (Bayreuther Festspiele). It is the composition of Bavarian and cosmopolitan offers that complement the academic endeavors of many international academics.

Being an academic in Bayreuth

“The cosmopolitan appearance and posture of the institution supplied one with fertile ground to explore research topics while taking an innovative approach. The sheer interaction with other young scholars in itself enriched one’s life experience”.

It is not just the University of Bayreuth that offers many all-embracing encounters, but the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies, where Emnet completed his doctoral studies together with several other scholars. He says: “BIGSAS provided full support in terms of academic activities including research, field work and the organisation of conferences, workshops and colloquiums”. Being part of a network at the University, Emnet strengthened his effort of pursuing the profession of being a researcher, while his own network grew intensively. By pursuing his passion, he met several other scholars in academia as well as established researchers, scientists, policymakers and even politicians.

“I started publishing academic works while there, it was the springboard from which I presented my various works as far afield as the US, Canada, parts of Asia including Japan and of course Africa”.

Even though there were also some challenges, such as learning the German language or feeling homesick in his first months in Germany, Emnet would always advise someone to go for a PhD.

“I believe the PhD path is a profound journey of research and deep learning experience. I have derived great fulfilment in the course of reading and doing research at Bayreuth, which can never be replicated elsewhere in my academic lifetime”.

Of course, conceptualising a research topic, deciding on a topic, formulating research questions, thinking about the right methodology and obtaining data from potential respondents may also present difficulties along the doctoral journey. Also, Emnet was hagridden by confusion and frustration during his studies. He changed and reformulated his research questions, methodology and theoretical framework a number of times.

Still, he concludes: *“the learning experience equipped one with the requisite skills to embark on a large scale research, accompanied with many benefits and opportunities”*, for him those centered around meeting people from the African Union, Association of African Universities and other big regional organisations.

After BIGSAS - what happened and where is Emnet now?

Towards the completion of the PhD there was a vacancy for a post-doctoral research position at BIGSAS for which Emnet applied. For three years he worked on a concept of partnership in higher education looking into different models of partnership between African and European universities. Born out of that endeavour was a book published in 2019 in collaboration with a colleague (Dr. Christine Scherer). The whole effort sought to forge partnerships in a practical and sustainable way which led to applying for European Union funding to establish student mobility between the participating universities in Africa and Europe, Germany in particular.

The European Union provided funds to support the initiative. Directly after that programme he was recruited, still within BIGSAS, and became a research fellow within the African Cluster Project which was doing research on Academic Freedom in Africa. This stint lasted 6 months at which point he considered the move to South Africa after securing the position of Associate Professor of Higher Education at the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies (AMCHS) at the University of Johannesburg.

What made him choose AMCHS as his next destination?

Same as Bayreuth, Emnet was attracted by its Pro Africa focus and its vision was well within the ambit of his previous studies and research so it was a natural progression. From inception the centre was decidedly Pan-African with a view to revolutionise higher education with a particular emphasis on social and economic development in Africa. The AMCHS is one of the leading research centres in Africa with scholars from different disciplinary and research areas. The centre works on challenging research questions in the area of epistemic access, the decolonisation debated, size and shapes of higher education, documenting the contributions of generations of African scholars, on digital divide, and the responses of higher education systems towards COVID-19 pandemic.

The centre disseminates critical research through a book series under the auspices of the African Higher Education: Developments and Perspectives. It seeks to agitate for serious engagement by all stakeholders who are interested in African higher education. It also recognises the value of collaborations and as such fosters partnerships with organisations of a similar posturing.

More on AMCHS: What is the Institution currently working on and which projects have been completed recently?

AMCHS has a number of projects that are in motion at present, chief among these is the Generations of African Scholars which is our flagship project and is projected to be completed in 2025 having been initiated in 2020. Alumnus Emnet Woldegiorgis is heading this project which essentially seeks to document the contribution that African scholars have made to science, innovation and technology and higher education in general.

The subjects of study have been carefully selected from across the continent, and include thought leaders such as Archie Mafeje, Bernard Magubane, Thandika Mkandawire and Eduardo Mondlane (Southern Africa); Valentine Y Mudimbe, Jacques Depelchin and Alex Kagame (Central Africa); Mahmoud Mamdani, Ali Mazrui and Catherine Odora Hoppers (East Africa); Chinua Achebe, Joseph Ki-Zerbo and Kwame Nkrumah (West Africa); Samir Amin, Nawal el Saadawi and Ibn Khaldun (North Africa); and Walter Rodney, Frantz Fanon and Ali Mazrui (Global Africa). We urge fellow scholars to produce books and chapters in books on the aforementioned contributions. This endeavour will see the placement of the African voice at the centre of the solutions to African problems as it should be.

AMCHS has completed a number of projects recently two of which are: Knowledge and Change in African Universities: Challenges and Opportunities which was sponsored by the Ford Foundation. This project examines Universities in Africa on their processes from research to dissemination. The second project is: Higher Education Transformation in South Africa. The focus area of this project is the complexities and dynamics of higher education transformation in South Africa, the project seeks to rethink the transformation of the country's higher education in the context of Africa and the global world.

And on which projects is Emnet working?

"I'm currently editing a book titled "Higher Education In The Face Of The Global Pandemic", which brings together scholars from across Africa to examine coping mechanisms of higher education institutions and systems during the Covid-19 pandemic".

While the decolonisation debate is continuing to be a hot topic in Africa and beyond, Emnet contributed to a book published in 2020 whose title is "Decolonisation of Higher Education in Africa: Perspectives from Hybrid Knowledge Production". The book discusses decolonisation and hybrid science and facilitating the involvement of indigenous knowledge systems in African higher education.

The argument is that the Eurocentric model adopted by learning institutions is not comprehensive and therefore calls for a unified Euro and Afro outlook in order to reach the desired outcomes. Emnet consequently has also published an article whose central question is: How can we conceptualise the debates of decolonisation in a space which has never been colonised?

A reference list of the abovementioned recent works that Emnet is involved in:

- Woldegiorgis, E. T. (2020) *Re-Thinking Inclusive Higher Education for Students With Disabilities: A Proactive Approach Towards Epistemic Access in Ethiopia*. In *Social, Educational, and Cultural Perspectives of Disabilities in the Global South* (pp. 235-250). IGI Global.
- Woldegiorgis, E. T. (2020). *Decolonising a higher education system which has never been colonised*. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1-13.
- Woldegiorgis, E. T., Turner, I., & Brahim, A. (Eds.). (2020). *Decolonisation of Higher Education in Africa: Perspectives from Hybrid Knowledge Production*. Routledge.

Lastly, how is the Alumnus coping with the pandemic currently, on an academic but also personal level?

Sadly, the pandemic took its toll on Emnet. His move to South Africa couldn't have happened at a more inopportune time. When he arrived in South Africa in March 2020, the South African government announced that it would institute lockdown measures just a week later to mitigate against the yet unknown effects of what came to be a devastating pandemic. While he was new to the country (luckily, he knew Johannesburg from former visits), securing accommodation and procuring sundry supplies was challenging for him. **"I was plunged into a crisis before I could obtain the necessary orientation to thrive properly"**. This continued to be a challenge on a professional level as well, as he was unable to meet his new colleagues and adequately interact with them. Notwithstanding, Emnet managed to overcome these hurdles, as well as to execute and complete his assigned projects.

However, Emnet received devastating news from his home country Ethiopia. His mother had passed away during a time where he was unable to leave South Africa to be with friends and family to mourn. He is now bouncing back, as is the South African routine. Emnet Woldegiorgis has already proven in the past that he can adapt quickly to new environments. His character is one of resilience, perseverance, passion and the urge to always learn something new and to take up current debates and advance them through his expertise. Despite some setbacks, Emnet has never failed to seize opportunities and, with his years of experience and contribution, has made a lasting impact on debates around higher education in Africa.

We are excited to follow his future steps and projects!

EIN STREIFZUG DURCH KENIAS HAUPTSTADT IN DER DUNKELHEIT - HANNA LENA REICH BERICHTET VON IHRER FORSCHUNG

by Dina Sodjadan (February 28th 2021)



(c) Hanna Lena Reich

Routiniert durchstreift Hanna Lena die kenianische Hauptstadt Nairobi an einem Samstagabend. Gemeinsam mit Freund*innen zieht sie von Club zu Club - wird Teil von einer Masse Nachtschwärmer*innen. Sie passiert lichtdurchtränkte Straßen, in denen Speisen und Getränke angeboten werden, durchquert Räume, in denen mit Drogen gehandelt wird, bewegt sich auf einer vibrierenden Tanzfläche inmitten unbekannter Menschen, deren Duft und Bewegungen eins wird mit der ausgelassenen Atmosphäre des Clubs.

Wir alle befanden uns schon einmal in Hanna Lenas Schuhen, machten die Nacht zum Tage, durchlebten dunkle Stunden, die plötzlich durch das Aufgehen der Sonne am Horizont verschwanden. Die Nacht steht in Balance zum Tag, das Dunkle in Relation zum Hellen, wir leben mittendrin in einer von Helligkeit und Dunkelheit strukturierten Welt.

Eintauchen in die Nacht

Hanna Lena Reich, die im Herbst 2020 ihre Promotion an der BIGSAS abschloss, weiß selbst wie es sich anfühlt, wenn die Balance zwischen Tag und Nacht ins Wanken gerät. Nach fünf Jahren der Promotion durchwanderte sie nicht nur die Nacht in Nairobi, sondern auch in ihre eigenen vier Wänden in Bayreuth. Die Nacht dient hier nicht nur als Inspiration um ‚nocturnal atmospheres‘ einzufangen, nein, sie war auch da, wenn Hanna Lena von Schlaflosigkeit gepeinigt wurde. Die Alumna nutzte die ruhigen Stunden, in denen die Mehrheit der Bayreuther*innen schlief, um über ihre Zeit in Kenia zu reflektieren.

Während ihrer Masterforschung (ihren Bachelor und Master absolvierte die Nordhessin auch an der Universität Bayreuth) reiste Hanna Lena nach Tansania, um dort zu Reisepraktiken und Aushandlungsprozessen von Nähe und Distanz in Überlandbussen zu forschen. Natürlich wurden auch die Wochenenden von der Studierenden genutzt, um das tansanische Tag- und Nachtleben kennenzulernen. Als sie an einem Nachmittag einen Motorradtaxifahrer fragte, ob er sie zur ‚Corner Bar‘ bringen könnte, entgegnete dieser, dass die Bar erst dann so hieß, wenn die Sonne untergegangen sei und die Lichter anfangen zu dämmern. Zwei Jahre später stieß Hanna Lena auf diese Erinnerung, die sie in ihrem Feldtagebuch festhielt. Ein Ort, der nachts nicht nur einen neuen Namen erhält, sondern eine ganz neue Welt eröffnet. Dieser gedankliche Besuch in der Vergangenheit führte zu weiteren Überlegungen. Gibt es eigentlich Forschungen zur Nacht? Wird das Nachtleben ethnografisch dargestellt? Wie könnte eine eigene ethnologische Forschung dazu aussehen? Ihre Überlegungen brachte Hanna Lena zu Papier, stellte dies entdeckte Forschungslücke ihren Dozenten vor und so ergab sich schließlich 2015 ihr Promotionsthema „Nacht“.

Die Entdeckung der Nacht

Die eher zufällige (ethnologische) Entdeckung der Nacht war geboren. Nach langen Feldforschungsaufenthalten erarbeitete die Alumna schließlich eine ethnografische Darstellung der Nacht in Nairobi basierend auf Forschungsmaterialien, die sie im Rahmen von Nachtspaziergängen, Beobachtungen, sowie Gesprächen, Interviews und Interaktionen gewonnen hatte. In ihrer Doktorarbeit „Nairobi Nights – eine Ethnographie nächtlicher Atmosphären“ weist sie darauf hin, dass die Nacht mehr ist als nur das Gegenstück zum Tag. Es gibt nächtliche Momente, in denen man sich frei fühlt, ganz anders als am Tag, die Maske fallen lässt. In der Nacht gibt es Schatten, in denen man unentdeckt bleibt. Diese Schatten bergen auch Gefahren, Ängste und Bedrohungen. Den Kontrast dazu liefern luminöse Strahlen, die einen plötzlich in das Rampenlicht stellen. Das Auftreten nach Außen, das eigene Aussehen, Mode, Schönheit, Andersartigkeit gewinnen nachts an Bedeutung und regeln oftmals den Zugang zu nächtlichen Orten. Wer aus der Dunkelheit ins (Rampen)licht tritt, muss glänzen, die beste Version von sich zeigen.

Hanna Lena begleitet nicht nur Nachschwärmer*innen in den Club, sie ist auch bei den Vorbereitungen dabei, wenn zwischen Schminke und Parfüm eine neue Identität mit dem Lidstrich gezeichnet wird; eine Identität; die man morgens vor Sonnenaufgang wieder abwischt und liebevoll verpackt, bevor sie erneut zum Tragen kommt. Doch entgegen vieler Annahmen ihrer Kolleg*innen, Freund*innen und Familienmitglieder, besteht Hanna Lenas Promotionsforschung aus weit mehr als dem nächtlichen Ausgehen und Feiern. In dem Vorwort ihrer Dissertation verweist sie auf die Zerrissenheit zwischen Neugier und Skepsis ihrer Umgebung. Unsere eigene Imagination der Nacht basiert zu großen Teilen auf den persönlichen Erfahrungen, die wir in unserem Alltag machen. Der Großteil von uns führt ein Leben, in dem die Nacht die Zeit der Erholung und des Schlafes ist. Auch wenn wir alle, wie eingangs erwähnt, bereits andere Seiten der Nacht kennenlernten, so assoziieren wir eher Entspannung oder das Nichtarbeiten mit der dunklen Tageshälfte.



Nocturnal Encounter (c) Hanna Lena Reich

Grenzen, Konflikte, Herausforderungen

Hanna Lena schlief während ihrer Forschung in Nairobi vermehrt am Tage, denn nachts lernte sie neue Räume, Narrative und Biografien kennen. Ihre Nachtwanderungen unternahm sie oftmals mit Begleitungen, u.a. mit Ray, der zu einem guten Freund und festen Bestandteil ihres Projektes wurde. Eines Abends wartete sie auf ihn und wurde von zwei Männern angesprochen und gefragt, weshalb sie ganz allein unterwegs sei. Sie schreibt: *„Einer der beiden streicht mir über die Haare und sagt „Hey Blondie, looking for some fun?“. Ich lehne dankend ab und bin erleichtert, als ich Ray auf mich zulaufen sehe (...). Er fragt mich, ob ich bereit sei und warnt mich vor: „Girl, the night in Nairobi ist tough. You better be prepared. You are blonde and white, sure will get some attention“. Ich versichere ihm, dass ich das schon hinbekäme. Er grinst mich an und fügt hinzu: „Well, then follow me and I will show you the dark side of life“.* Diese Passage bringt die Vielschichtigkeit nicht nur der Nacht, sondern auch einer Forschung in einem noch unbekanntem Raum zum Vorschein.

Hanna Lena hat sich einen Ort ausgesucht, wo sowohl der methodische als auch forschungsethische Zugang reflektiert werden sollte. Durch die Zusammenarbeit mit Kenianer*innen, die die Infrastruktur des *„urban jungles“* kennen, konnte die Alumna in Atmosphären eintauchen, die für viele Nicht-Kenianer*innen verdeckt und versteckt bleiben. Ray spricht davon, ihm zu folgen. Das Folgen, das Mitgehen und Entdecken wurde ein wesentlicher Bestandteil von Hanna Lenas Forschung, in der sie neben genannten Clubaufenthalten, vor allem die arbeitenden Menschen der Nacht in den Mittelpunkt rückte. Dabei stieß sie auf Reinigungskräfte, Straßenhändler*innen, Drogendealer*innen oder Sexarbeiter*innen. Vielen Kenianer*innen dient die Nacht nicht zur Erholung, sondern als Möglichkeit Einkommen zu erwirtschaften. An jeder Ecke stoßen dabei unterschiedliche Biografien aufeinander, es entstehen Konflikte, die auch von Hanna Lena beobachtet wurden.

*„Eine Nacht besteht aus mehreren Facetten. Ein Streit in einem Club stellt die Gegenüberstellung von zwei Welten (z.B. Feiern und Arbeiten) sehr gut dar, da hier unterschiedliche Wahrnehmungen aufeinandertreffen. Da ist einerseits das Feiern und das boomende Nachtleben mit Nachschwärmern, die unterwegs sind, z.B. ein junger angetrunkener Mann. Die Kellnerin andererseits symbolisiert die Nachtarbeit, da viele Kenianer*innen Probleme haben andere Jobs zu finden. Beide sind in einen Konflikt gekommen, weil er ihr vorgeworfen hat, dass sie Sachen auf die Rechnung gesetzt hat, die er gar nicht bestellt hat. Leicht angetrunken hat er eine Debatte angezettelt und die Mitarbeiterin beleidigt, was ein anderes großes Thema in der Nachtforschung aufgreift, nämlich dass sich viele Leute, die nachts arbeiten von den Menschen, die nachts feiern, nicht respektiert fühlen.“*

Dieser Kontrast zwischen Arbeit und Freizeit ist ein Zugang, wie man Nacht denken könnte – hier trifft Nachschwärmer*in auf Nachtarbeiter*in. Beide nehmen die Nacht in Anspruch. Einerseits als Raum der Freiheit, geprägt von Spaß, Loslassen und auch Macht, denn hier bestehen finanzielle Spielräume, von denen die Nachtarbeiter*innen abhängig gemacht werden. Für sie ist die Nacht ein Ort des Zwangs, der Frustration und auch der Angst.

Atmosphäre fühlen - Atmosphäre darstellen

Es wird deutlich: die Nacht ist emotional aufgeladen. Aus diesem Grund hat sich Hanna Lena dafür entschieden diese atmosphärisch zu beschreiben. Für Hanna Lena sind diese Atmosphären sowohl praktisch als auch theoretisch schwer zu greifen. In ihrer Dissertation betitelt sie das Kapitel zu Atmosphären als **„Nichts und doch nicht nichts“**, was die Ambivalenz des Atmosphärenbegriffs aufzeigt. Wie kann man etwas greifen, das jeder und jede von uns auf eine andere Art und Weise spürt und in sich aufnimmt? Bei der konzeptuellen Darstellung dessen stößt auch bei Hanna Lena an ihre Grenzen.

In ihrem Kapitel **„Nächtliche Atmosphären“** beschreibt sie zunächst eine Atmosphäre am Beispiel eines plötzlich eintretenden Regenschauers. Durch einen Wetterumschwung kann sich auch die Stimmung ändern und somit auch die Atmosphäre, in der wir uns befinden. Entgegengesetzt der Annahme, dass Regen die Stimmung drückt, beobachtet Hanna Lena, wie die Menschen ausgelassen im Regen tanzen, sich gegenseitig unterstützen, Schutz bieten und eingehüllt von einer lauwarmen Nässe gemeinsam auf das Versickern der Tropfen warten.

Die Alumna diskutiert einige theoretische Annäherungsversuche an den Atmosphärenbegriff und erarbeitet für sich schließlich ein Konzept, welches von subjektiver Stimmung, äußeren Gegebenheiten und dem kulturellen/sozialen Kontext abhängen. Alle drei Sphären treten in Einheit, um eine gewisse (hier: nächtliche) Atmosphäre zu schaffen. Trotzdem bleibt eine Empfindung durchweg ungreifbar, nicht zuletzt, weil Atmosphären nicht isoliert existieren, sondern sich überlappen und stetigem Wandel unterworfen sind.

Durch den Kontakt zu einigen Fotografen, die sich primär für die Nacht in Nairobi interessierten, merkte Hanna Lena, dass die bildliche Darstellung von Momenten zumindest ausschnittsweise Atmosphären greifbar machen könnte. Das geschriebene Wort - auch wenn es ethnografisch und detailliert zu Papier gebracht ist - erreicht eine Grenze, die Fotografien überwinden können. Das Zusammenspiel von Farben, Schatten, Formen, Blickwinkeln, Belichtungen, Ausdrücke von Menschen oder Objekten, bringt den Betrachter*innen eine Situation näher, macht sie nicht nur greifbarer, sondern auch fühlbarer und verständlicher.



Versteckte Atmosphären (c) Msingi Sasis

So kam es schließlich dazu, dass die Fotografie nicht nur ein methodischer Zugang zum Feld wurde, sondern auch Gegenstand der Analyse und zur Darstellung von Forschungsergebnissen genutzt wurde. Neben eigenen Fotografien sind es vor allem Aufnahmen von Msingi Sasis, Trevor Maingi und Peter Ndung'u, die später in einen Bildband flossen.

Dieser Bildband, der zur gedruckten Dissertation angefertigt wurde, besteht aus über 70 Seiten, die geschmückt sind von vielen Fotografien und zahlreichen Beschreibungen und Zitaten. Mit der großen Unterstützung eines guten Freundes - Michael Steffen - designte sie einen greifbaren Einblick in ihre Forschung. Auch das Bild „Nocturnal Encounter“ findet seinen Platz im Fotoband. Ein weiteres Foto bildet einen Nachtwächter ab, der allem Anschein nach ruhig und zufrieden eine Zeitung liest. Hanna Lena beschreibt:

„Ich mag dieses Bild total gerne, es strahlt Ruhe aus, der Nachtwächter sieht entspannt aus und man würde eigentlich denken, dass hier eher eine Atmosphäre der Ruhe und Entspannung herrscht. Aber ich weiß auch, was hinter der Ecke stattfindet. Dahinter ist ein großer und bekannter Drogenumschlagsplatz, wo sich viele Junkies treffen, Heroin nehmen und verkaufen... das macht aus dem Ort eher eine Atmosphäre der Bedrohung“.

Sie ergänzt: „*Ich finde jedes Bild ist eine Momentaufnahme und man schaut es an und es suggeriert einem etwas. Jeder sieht etwas anderes. Deshalb ist es wichtig jedes Bild auch in Kombination mit dem Text zu sehen. Atmosphären können schnell wechseln, man läuft von der einen in die andere, hinter der Ecke wartet etwas auf dich und das was da kommt, kann etwas anderes in dir hervorrufen, genauso wie der Blick auf ein Bild. Auch hier wird beim Betrachter und der Betrachterin eine gewisse Atmosphäre hervorgerufen.*“

Folgt den Nachtschwärmer*innen

Obwohl die Zusammenstellung des Fotobuches viel Arbeit kostete, war es Hanna Lenas Anliegen ihre Promotionsforschung durch eine bildliche Darstellung zu ergänzen. Der Zugang zu ihren Daten, den Beschreibungen ihrer Beobachtungen sowie der ihrer Nachtschwärmer*innen wird so auf eine atmosphärische Art und Weise erzeugt. Die Nacht kann bedrohlich, intim oder frei sein – doch das, was sie immer ist, ist lebendig, auch wenn sie noch so ruhig erscheinen mag. Vieles bleibt uns verborgen, doch einiges tritt ins Licht und wird von Hanna Lena Reich spürbar gemacht.

Die Absolventin hat uns mitgenommen in die Nacht Nairobis: *“We meet these sleepless souls in parking lots, taxis, bars and clubs, in dark alleys, on the street, in matatus and soon we realize that the night is everywhere, ready for the show. We can't look away. This beautiful night is both, frightening and thrilling at once.”*

Das Fotobuch „Nairobi Nights“ kann bei Interesse von Hanna Lena erworben werden.
(Kontakt via E-Mail: lenareich2308@web.de)



Zur Alumna: Hanna Lena Reich arbeitet aktuell bei der Gesellschaft Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in einem Projekt zur Überwindung weiblicher Genitalverstümmelung in Ostafrika. Wir freuen uns weiterhin von Hanna Lena zu hören und ihren Reisen zu folgen.

GEMECHU ABESHU RECEIVES “PREIS DER STADT BAYREUTH”

by Dina Sodjadan (November 11th 2020)



(c) Gemechu Abeshu

Gemechu Adimassu Abeshu completed his doctoral studies at BIGSAS in 2019, after four challenging years. He is now a policy consultant working in Canada on several projects. He shares his experiences in Bayreuth and beyond during a demanding time of research, activism and family separation.

It was during a visit in Kenya in 2014 that Gemechu heard about the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies from Prof. Dr. Dereji Feyissa Dori.

The professor, who also pursued his doctoral degree at a German university and is closely linked to Prof. Dr. Georg Klute (Gemechu’s supervisor), suggested Bayreuth as a place for Gemechu’s future in academia. It was then in April 2015 that he was admitted to BIGSAS and started his PhD.

Soon Gemechu started to engage in the student and Junior Fellow life in Bayreuth, attending weekly meetings, such as the “Ethnologie Kolloquium” (Anthropology Colloquium) at Iwalewahaus. The ongoing encounters supported the dedicated doctoral student from Ethiopia in following his research titled “New Forms of Power in the Afar Region of Ethiopia: The Rise of Big Men near the Ethiopia and Djibouti Border”. With a master’s degree in Governance and Development from the University of Antwerp Gemechu conducted research on emerging forms of political power in the Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti Border Triangle Area in combination with anthropological perspectives and methodologies.

“BIGSAS brings together Junior Fellows from multitude of African (and beyond) countries which make Bayreuth a preferred learning hub for scholars interested in African Studies programmes”.

Bayreuth is a quintessential German city which I adored. The annual Bayreuth Festival “Richard-Wagner-Festspiele”, the “Oktoberfest” celebration in Bayreuth which comes with the arrival of fall season, and personally for me, I enjoyed hearing on Bayreuth city buses a chime and a recorded children voice that announces the name of the next stop.

Mastering challenges with a head held high

With moments of achievements and progress there also came moments of setbacks. One of the biggest challenges he was facing during his time in Germany was the separation from his family.

His wife and son had to remain in Ethiopia for the whole course of his studies, even though they applied for a visa in Germany. However, their application was rejected (twice) and Gemechu had to stay in touch with his family through long distance. He is not the only one, who had to study under such circumstances.

Most of us can only imagine the toll it takes on a person, being apart from his/her loved ones, let alone the missing out on each other's lives. As an anthropological researcher Gemechu spent roughly 12 months spread over three years between 2015 and 2018 in Ethiopia. What was also meant to be a time of reunion with his family was challenged by the fact that his fieldwork coincided with a widespread political protest in Ethiopia, which began in his home region of Oromia Regional State and lasted from 2014 to 2018. While the protests led to the removal of the previous regime, Gemechu, as well as his wife, were both detained on several occasions. With such confrontations happening in his home country and being apart again when travelling back in Germany, one can only wonder how much strength a person must have to carry a burden like this.

Starting a new chapter

After Gemechu defended his excellent dissertation in October 2019, he moved to Canada to reunite with his family. After coming to Canada, he worked as a policy consultant, editing and publishing articles (e.g. "This Conflict is new to us: conflict in the Borderlands of Ethiopia and Djibouti", forthcoming article on the Journal of Modern Africa Studies) and recently started a role as Research Assistant (Co-op) at Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services on researching on a project titled "impact of family loss and separation on refugee children and youth (CYRRC)" in Toronto.

His hard work is honoured with "Preis der Stadt Bayreuth"

Even if the years of separation cannot be reversed, Gemechu receives this year's "**Award of the City of Bayreuth**" as a distinction and recognition for his outstanding doctoral thesis. In the end, his diligence and hard work under extraordinary circumstances has been honoured and he thanks his family and his doctoral supervisor for their support.

"I am honoured and humbled to be selected for the "Preis der Stadt Bayreuth". I would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof. Dr. Georg Klute at the Department of Anthropology in Bayreuth University, for his support and advice as a supervisor-father throughout the course of my PhD project. His sharp comments and suggestions were extremely instrumental in shaping the arguments and format of my thesis which led to the very selection of my dissertation for this award. It would be a discredit on my part if I fail to pay accolade to my wife - Biftu Haile by at least saluting the long and enormous sacrifices she made in terms of, not only of waiting for the husband to complete his studies and come home, but also for raising our son Naol alone as well as her relentless support and encouragement".

We congratulate Gemechu Adimassu Abeshu on receiving this award and wish him and his family all the best for the future.

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A CONTRIBUTION TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CALLS FOR BOYCOTT IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

by *Andreas Wüst (November 23rd 2020)*

Many in the West may rub their eyes in astonishment: in the Islamic world, thousands of people are currently taking to the streets and calling for a boycott of the products of the very country that (at least in Europe) is mostly perceived as a frontrunner for democratic rights and freedom of expression in particular ever since the French Revolution of 1789. The stumbling block: old caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed, which had been republished a few weeks earlier by the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and for the discussion of which the history teacher Samuel Paty, in the exercise of his educational duty, was cruelly executed by a monster, shouting the words "Allahu Akbar" into the world. The current protest against France in its anger rarely makes a distinction between the editorial board of a private magazine, who is responsible for the publication of the caricatures, and the state, which protects the publication rights of this magazine as a guarantor of free speech and *laïcité* - regardless of the individual attitude of state actors to the cartoons themselves.

Once again, the gap between worldviews seems impossible or difficult to bridge, the Clash of Civilizations so famously dubbed by Samuel Huntington many years ago appearing to be more real than ever.

Indeed, the republication of the Muhammad cartoons is perceived by many Muslims around the world less as an expression of the sublime right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press, but more as another moment of humiliation that must be viewed separately from the related murder of Samuel Paty .

Muslims of this world may be quarrelling with one another and years of feuds and deep enmities may divide the ummah, that Muslims so often refer to - but many Muslims of all streams still agree on one thing: Allah and his prophet Mohammed are inviolable and a vilification or mockery equal a sacrilege.

The reactions of defiance in view of this sacrilege are reflections of the pride in the old Islamic culture that was once characteristic of large parts of the world from Baghdad to Fez, from Sudan to Andalusia.

A son may, to the chagrin of his father, have neglected all Islamic duties all year round, a young woman may have alienated herself from her ancestors' religion to the displeasure of her mother; but at the moment when this feeling of holiness of God and his prophet, which is deeply anchored in the souls of many people, is challenged, son and daughter stand united with their parents on the street to protest against this deeply felt injustice.

The case of the French Muhammad cartoons is perceived as just another in a long series of humiliations, both large and small, that the Muslim soul has endured for many generations.

Many may roll their eyes, but yes, the Crusades are often still viewed as a collective trauma. Likewise the colonial times, in which the French occupation, for strategic reasons, played off Berber-speaking and Arabic-speaking parts of the population of North Africa against each other, the great powers France and Great Britain divided up the Middle East under the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the British brought Baghdad and Cairo, two important centers of the Islamic culture, under their control and transported the riches of the Islamic world to Europe via Aden, the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea. For many, the founding of Israel was tantamount to a perpetuation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement under international law and thus colonial claims to power in the Middle East. And even those (and there are many) who believe in a peaceful coexistence between Jews and Muslims, Israelis and Palestinians, cannot and do not want to understand why the State of Israel allows and even promotes that religious zealots and fanatics with ever new settlements are violating the contractually fixed borders between Israel and Palestine while referring to the biblical promise of salvation and taking advantage of Israel's duty to protect its citizens and in the awareness of the stark power imbalance between the Israeli army and Palestinian forces.

Yes, there is no other country that is the subject of more United Nations resolutions than Israel, but Israel can ignore them with impunity thanks to its potent partners on both sides of the Atlantic. It should come as no surprise that many supporters of the Palestinian cause see Israel's acts or omissions as planned state terrorism.

Even if many Muslims, due to ideological or religious differences, distance themselves from the guerrilla-like and bloody counter-attacks by Hamas or the baring behaviour of Hezbollah, they feel solidarity across borders with the often precarious situation of the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, who are often referred to as brothers and sisters.

Furthermore, when the global war on terror was proclaimed in the wake of the terrible terrorist attacks of 9/11, which were also condemned in the Muslim world, many Muslims felt they had been placed under general suspicion and held under group liability. The subsequent invasion of Afghanistan or the attack on Iraq, justified on the basis of false evidence, together with the terrible bombing of Baghdad, an historical centre of Islamic culture, were and are felt to be disproportionate and deeply unjust.

All the more so since many (mostly secular) despots in the Arab world like to use the war on terror as a pretext to control and suppress the people of their countries - and especially practicing believers. And they do so with the help of their Western partners even more than before. Just a few days before Ben Ali was overthrown in Tunisia, France, for example, had promised to deliver tear gas to the dictatorial regime in North Africa in order to bring the protests against state violence and arbitrary rule to their knees.

Even today, Germany, France, Great Britain and the USA still deliver weapons and heavy war equipment to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. And with this war material the despots of these states are covering an entire country - Yemen - with war, terror, hunger and death in the name of peace and justice.

These and other events in history give many Muslims a feeling of generalized injustice, frustration and powerlessness - not only in view of Western hegemony and arrogance, but also with regards to the opportunistic leaders of their own countries who often sympathise and cooperate with the West. Knowing about this feeling may help explain what is currently happening in much of the Muslim world. Many people there cannot avoid making the fatal mixture of western greed, hypocrisy, ignorance and unscrupulousness responsible for the suffering of large parts of the Muslim world population. More and more often these massive cases are put in relation to the admittedly horrific death of the victims of nevertheless exceptional terrorist attacks in Europe and America. This relationship is often done unconsciously, but is increasingly being made explicit (at least behind the scenes).

The point is not to justify the recent terrible attacks in Nice, Paris or Vienna, or to legitimise the calls for boycotts on French products all over the Muslim world. Some large mosques and Islamic associations in France, as well as many states, have sharply condemned the terrorist attacks and in some cases also the calls for boycotts.

It is also not about trying to evoke sympathy, but about raising understanding. Understanding for why many Muslims or people who feel loosely attached to the Islamic culture, feel offended by the republication of Mohammed cartoons.

Currently, it is actually again Muslims themselves who are being instrumentalized in their anger: For example, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan uses the rage of many Muslims in the face of the caricatures to upgrade a cultural issue to a political one and to present himself as a spearhead of the protests and as a defender of Islamic values. Meanwhile he diverts attention from his massive domestic political and above all economic problems, as Bülent Mumay aptly pointed out in a recent guest contribution for the FAZ.

Erdogan's favorite adversary, French President Emanuel Macron, himself however did not strike the right tone in his speeches also published on the Arab broadcaster Al-Jazeera after the terrorist attacks in France. He did not manage to bring back the famous fraternité (unity) to the deeply divided, multicultural French society, let alone to pacify international protests.

In the transnational solidarity, Islam manifests itself less as religion than as a still-lived cultural system. It functions to a certain extent as - admittedly somewhat crumbly - cement between otherwise very different and diverse societies. It may be a vague feeling of belonging together, but strong enough to be effective across national borders. However, it becomes clear to everyone relatively quickly that the feeling otherwise hardly manages to maintain bonds - at the latest when the next tribal disputes, the next fight for raw materials or the next conflict about religious sovereignty make it into the headlines.

In order not to get me wrong: Especially after the unspeakable European experiences with state-enforced anti-Semitism and mass extermination of people who think, believe, love and live differently, freedom of expression and the press as well as the right to freedom of religion must have absolute validity. Kurt Tucholsky's famous answer to the question "What is satire allowed to do?" must remain valid: Yes, satire can do anything.

She must and should be allowed to do anything. And yes, I ask my fellow Muslims to bear it when their prophet is ridiculed, just as I once had to endure when the German magazine Titanic, in the wake of the abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, published drawings of a priest kneeling in a disreputable pose in front of the crucified, apparently blushing and sweating Christ.

I demand from Islamic associations as well as from the Christian churches, Jewish communities, political parties and associations that they also take responsibility for radical forces in their ranks and that they check their belief systems for points of reference for extremist tendencies and deal proactively with this problem. It is unbearable to hear that Islamist terrorists have nothing to do with Islam, just as it is short-sighted to say that the Crusades have nothing to do with Christianity or that the construction of settlements in Palestine by fundamentalist Jews has nothing to do with Judaism or right-wing extremism has nothing to do with patriotism.

It is necessary that all worldviews and religions deal with their history, learn where certain radical tendencies stem from, what their causes are. In view of the current protest movements in the Islamic world, such an examination of one's own religious history is also called for by the Tunisian philosopher and Islamic scholar Youssef Seddik in a recent interview with the newspaper Jeune Afrique. He says: Only with a deeper knowledge of one's own religion - and not only their texts and rituals - it is even possible that, as a believer, one no longer feels affected by the blasphemous statements of others.

Because in the end, blasphemy only affects God and the person who commits it. Seddik makes an apt comparison: If someone insults you on the street as a fool, that insult does not make you fool. If you still feel concerned, then apparently only because you (at least secretly) have doubts about your own cognitive abilities.

At the same time, we as a society must pay more attention to the fact that we do not call every terrorist act committed by a misguided person who has radicalized himself alone and without ever having frequented a mosque or even prayed regularly, only with the help of the Internet, as Islamist terror. Because just as there are mentally confused people in all societies in the world, so there are of course also among the up to five million people with a Muslim background in Germany.

I value the principle of the separation of religion and state, the principle of secularism and *laïcité*, I defend the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

But I also don't want a Muslim in Germany to be afraid of going to the mosque for Friday prayers because he or she has to fear getting on the observation lists of the intelligence services. I don't want him or her to be ashamed or even judged for saying the necessary praise to God with the words "Allahu Akbar" when fulfilling the duty to pray. I do not want Jewish citizens not to dare to wear a kippah in public for fear of attacks or to only pray behind police-guarded synagogue doors protected by steel locks. I don't want every AFD supporter to be insulted as a Nazi and every leftist as an anti-fascist terrorist.

What I wish for is a secularization of all religions and worldviews as well as a de-emotionalisation of the discourse about identity – be it of a religious or ideological nature. This requires all of us to be willing to learn from, with and about one another. Transparency must be the top priority. Just as Christian churches (at least in large parts of Europe) are always open to everyone – even at times of prayer and mass – mosques and synagogues should also be accessible to everyone at all times – both in the real and figurative sense. Because only with open gates and with sermons, readings and prayers in German one allows the innate curiosity of every person to develop and thereby mitigates fear of contact.

As difficult as this may seem in terms of practical implementation (especially in the case of synagogues, which – sadly as it is – are still exposed to a particular security risk) I see no way around this approach in times of growing anti-Semitism and islamophobia. Muslims as well as Jews and Christians have to become (again) more visible in society; they have to lose their nimbus of linguistic and ideological incomprehensibility and inapproachability in order to counteract fears, skepticism and mistrust born out of ignorance. To this end, imams and rabbis must be trained in Germany, under state supervision and with the involvement of the respective communities' religious representatives, and need to be equipped with the tools necessary for social life in this country.

By these means, I hope that we will grow together to become a society in which we care about one another's feelings, be it as teachers, newspaper editors, politicians – in short: as citizens gifted with reason and empathy. We must learn to show the decency and sensitivity to formulate critique around certain sensitive topics in a manner that avoids provocation and offense for the sake of provocation and offense.

It is true that the line between respect for others and self-censorship is sometimes very fine and in a democracy this line has to be negotiated over and over again. But this strenuous and sometimes painful act of self-questioning is necessary to obtain peaceful coexistence in our society.

To put it again in the words of Kurt Tucholsky: Yes, satire is allowed to do anything. But I ask myself, does it have to do everything that is legally allowed?

About the Author

Andreas Wüst (Political Science), joined BIGSAS in April 2019. His expertise lies on Democratic transition, regime consolidation, cultural policies, identity building and nationalism in post-Arab Spring countries. He is BIGSAS Junior Fellow Representative and an Expert at Africa Politicum.



(c) Andreas Wüst

TEACHING IS HIS PASSION - MEET THOKO KAIME

by Dina Sodjadan (December 3rd 2020)

The Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies provides an interdisciplinary research setting, where doctoral students from all around the world can gain and further their knowledge in African Studies as a broad field of research. More than 80 students from 26 countries are currently pursuing their doctoral studies in various scientific fields, such as arts, political science, linguistics, geography or legal studies. With Thoko Kaime, new chair holder of the African Legal Studies Chair at the University of Bayreuth, students pursuing their interest in law can attend classes concerning the African continent.

Thoko Kaime is a Malawian lawyer by training, who specializes primarily on public international law. His research interest concerns international environmental law and international human rights, with a focus on sustainability and governance as well as on children's rights. His current projects are highly relevant both politically and socially. Thoko Kaime is not only a passionate lawyer, but also a dedicated teacher. Although he has worked in a consulting firm in London in the past, he found his passion in teaching. His passion motivated him to join academia, ultimately leading him to the University of Bayreuth.



(c) African Legal Studies
University of Bayreuth

"The first duty of a professor is to teach"

Studying law does not only mean to read a lot of books or run across the hallway of a law firm for 80 hours a week - let's put aside the clichés - law permeates all spheres of our lives and can be linked with a multitude of perspectives in an interdisciplinary way. The interdisciplinary character of legal studies is one of the reasons Kaime came to Bayreuth. The Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence enables him to participate in interdisciplinary discussions as well as to use multiple methodologies. Approaching legal studies from a multidisciplinary point of view is a privilege Kaime is enjoying - ***"I am humbled to be in a space like that, where African scholars and Africanists can connect and work together"***.

His chair is a platform which allows him to reach out to those who have little knowledge of African legal systems, but are pursuing a degree in legal studies. He wants to highlight the relation of both, focusing on issues such as human rights, sustainability and governance. By implementing an English Legal Curriculum students get the chance to participate in classes that deal with "domestic jurisdictions as well as examine international legal order" (from the ELC Website). Furthermore, a series on Human Rights took place in the last weeks (read more here), with a lot of different topics such as social (in-)justices or human dignity. The resonance is great. Many students, but also colleagues in and outside of Bayreuth, appreciate the work of the Chair of African Legal Studies. Besides his teaching activity, Thoko Kaime deals with many other pressing issues. Especially elements of energy justice and the access to it is an important matter which he pays attention to.

Why is it so important? Many children don't receive adequate education, because they don't have access to energy and consequently also not to health services: ***"health workers can't provide their service, because there is no electricity"***.

"Energy access is a human rights issue and energy justice is a key part of that"

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic many human rights are threatened. Working with Martin Schmidt-Kessel on contracts and Covid-19 on the one side, the access to energy is also an area where national African governments need to take responsibility. Let's take one example: students who are forced to study from home, because their learning institutions shut down, need access to electricity in order to follow their studies. However, mobile data for example is quite expensive in many states. Kaime suggests that a regulatory framework must be put in place, to access the teaching material for free or a very low cost. This issue interferes with contracts that one country makes with (foreign) investors and institutions. However, the government needs to regulate their relations and manage licences.

"We are living in quite exceptional times and there is need for some drastic measures, and those drastic measures do guarantee the continuing enjoyment of certain rights and governments should do that. Choices made by African states in relation to investment should be determined by the priorities by those African countries".

Have African countries trusted international players long enough? Are foreign companies really supporting African economies or only their own interest?

Kaime identifies the problem in the capitalist system, where everything is based on competition. Placing trust in foreign companies often misses the point. The only development that can be observed at this point is the economic upswing of the investors themselves, but less so of the projects or governments on-site. Kaime argues that the government itself must be held accountable and presents the example of regional integration. Why, for example, does the European Union enjoy better trading terms with South Africa than Zambia or Malawi?

With a view to regional integration, Kaime again takes up the example of energy supply. Since 1992 there has been an energy shortage in Southern Africa, although the Democratic Republic of Congo (and its Grand Inga Dam) has the possibility to produce enough energy with hydropower to cover 120% of the energy needs in Southern Africa. So why don't the states join as one region? For the lawyer and professor, the answer lies in the competition between the countries and the investment in projects that are supposed to remain independent. The Southern African Development Community offers an institutional framework but is currently unable to establish a sustainable connection to the region. A connection can only be initiated with a civil society which shakes up the elites of each state. For Thoko Kaime, the University of Bayreuth is the perfect place to uncover and question connections, links and intersections, and to engage in further thinking with colleagues.

The Chair of African Legal Studies is thus a place of critical thinking, where many students enjoy an education, which leads them to be ambitious thinkers themselves.

A CONTRIBUTION TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CALLS FOR BOYCOTT IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

by Abu Baker Ahmed Abdel Rahman Al Hadi & Dina Sodjadan
(November 23rd 2020)

The luminous orange is a real eye-catcher. A bright colour that helps you to find your keys among books and documents, before leaving your house.

There are many different BIGSAS merchandise items - the aforementioned key chains, but also luggage straps or magnets and stickers. At conferences, you always have them on you: BIGSAS pens and notebooks. BIGSAS material is a great companion, not only in Bayreuth, but all around the world.

BIGSAS can also be found in Sudan. Alumnus Abu Baker has sent us the following photograph and describes:

"The lady who uses this key chain is a relative. She has seen one of these BIGSAS key chains at my home. She was impressed by the quality and the colour.

She said: *"Please bring me one of these key chains. I liked it because I threw my keys everywhere at home and I lose it and I start searching for it. This happens to me everyday. To find it easily, please give me one. I can see or find this colour at any time which saves much of time".*



Photograph of key chain as a protector in Sudan (submitted by Abu Baker)

Evil eye can affect everyone, according to the belief. To protect the house, people hang a protector in the house. This protector is known as hafiza (in Arabic, literally charm of protection). Hanging keys besides the hafiza protects the keys and everyone enters the house will see it. It is beautiful and shining. Not one else in our residential or the town has this key chain except me and this lady".

Dr Abu Baker Ahmed Abdel Rahman Al Hadi completed his doctorate "Reproductive Dilemmas in the Pro-natalist Sudan: Perceptions of Causes, Treatment Practices, and Consequences of Female Infertility in the Town of Tamboul" in 2018. He currently works at the University of Bahri, Khartoum, as an assistant professor in anthropology.

We are happy that our merchandise does not only have practical use, but comes in many different dimensions. It is very impressive to see that BIGSAS is home all around the world, in the hands of many people. BIGSAS materials show that we are all connected.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY MEETS “WEIBERFASTNACHT”

by Dina Sodjadan (March 4th 2020)

While in many German cities the carnival season kicked off on Thursday, February 20, 2020, the Representatives of the Junior Fellows organised their own small celebration that took place at BIGSAS. Whether dressed up in carnival costumes or in a cultural folklore outfit - more than 20 JF, BIGSAS employees and the extended BIGSAS family circle came together to celebrate, dance and eat. A special buffet provided the chance to taste delicacies from different parts of the world.

Dumplings from China, beans and chapati from Tanzania, cake from Germany and Jollof rice (vegetarian friendly!) from Nigeria. The get-together was not only a culinary highlight. The Reps thanked BIGSAS for the successful cooperation and they were happy to see Dean Martina Drescher at the event. Their musical playlist varied - from North to South, East to West, paired with some German carnival hits.

The get-together was meant to be a chance for new JF to get to know other students. But often it's just nice to spend a few colorful hours together, hence the S17 was also colorfully decorated! Thanks to Dandara Maia, who arranged the seminar room in a very beautiful way. And whether carnival or not - at gatherings like this, fun and joy are always present. Additionally, all BIGSAS family members, friends and visitors are always welcome. We are looking forward to the next party!



Happy faces during pre-Corona times (c) Gbeognin Mickael Hounbedji

WELCOME TO A NEW SEMESTER!

by *Dina Sodjadan (November 19th 2020)*

Many of you had wished that you could get back to a normal everyday life. But after a longer lockdown earlier this year, we are currently facing our everyday life with further 'Corona-measures'. The 'new normal' continues to make encounters, research and networking difficult and many students have had to reorient their research approaches in a methodical way in order to adapt them to the worldwide pandemic. While the university attempts to keep up 'business as usual', we at BIGSAS also try to provide the Junior Fellows with as much presence as possible. An example of this was the Welcome Seminar, which took place last week from Monday to Wednesday.

After a quiet start on Monday with only two new doctoral candidates (general information about BIGSAS were shared by Dr Christine Scherer and a small hello from the Junior Fellow Representatives followed), the seminar picked up speed in the afternoon. Dr Christine Vogt-William, Director of the Gender & Diversity Office of the Cluster, and Dr Aminata Mbaye, Deputy Director of the Gender & Diversity Office of the Cluster, spoke about Intersectionality and Critical Diversity Literacy Approaches.

On Tuesday morning, the Junior Fellows were introduced to Research Data Management, led by Dr Petra Steiner, data curator in the Digital Solutions portfolio in the Cluster. Later, the participants gained further insights into the BIGSAS structure, such as research funding and other administrative aspects. Wednesday morning provided a chance to answer individual questions. Considering the fact that currently only a maximum of eight people is allowed to sit in the seminar room at the same time, one can say that the events were well attended. We especially welcome the Junior Fellows who came to BIGSAS this year and started their journey to Germany and Bayreuth under difficult conditions.

The Dean and the Deputy Head of BIGSAS are also pleased to welcome new junior researchers. Additional Docs & Deans meetings offer a chance start a conversation with the Dean and Deputy Head as well - new meetings will be published on the BIGSAS website. In addition to the Welcome Seminar, we would like to share some information about Professor Dr Martina Drescher (Dean of BIGSAS) and Professor Dr Martin Doevenspeck (Deputy Head of BIGSAS), in order to give a face to the management of BIGSAS. The Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) is represented by Professor Dr Martina Drescher (Dean) and Professor Dr Martin Doevenspeck (Deputy Head). They are part of the BIGSAS management and members of the Steering and Executive Committee.

One of the main tasks of Professor Drescher is the representation of BIGSAS interests and concerns within the framework of the Cluster of Excellence Africa Multiple, on whose committees (Management Board and Academic Committee) she is a permanent member.

BIGSAS, as an older and well-established institution, has recently been integrated into the new framework of the Cluster. An expression of these efforts is, on the one hand, the revision of the BIGSAS Regulations, which were adopted in summer of 2019, and on the other hand the revision of the Doctoral Regulations, which were approved by the Steering Committee of BIGSAS in October. The discontinuation of the previous Research Areas and the employment of doctoral candidates into Cluster projects brought changes to the admission procedure. At the same time, the Dean endeavoured to firm up already existing formats such as the BIGSAS Colloquium and to improve regulations concerning the doctoral examination procedure such as an extension of time for the inspection of the expert opinions.

Within BIGSAS, Professor Drescher chairs the above-mentioned committees (EC and SC). These committees decide on matters that directly affect BIGSAS. The Steering Committee is responsible for far-reaching decisions such as the admission of new Junior Fellows (as well as Senior Fellows). The EC serves primarily to handle day-to-day business, such as applications for research or conference trips, printing subsidies, or granting scholarships such as the transitional funding.

At a graduate school like BIGSAS, it is of course essential that everybody works together to provide the doctoral students with the best possible resources. For Professor Doevenspeck, it is above all the teamwork that motivates him to continue as Deputy Head of BIGSAS - even if it entails lots of communication and a not inconsiderable expenditure of time. After the former Dean Professor Dr Dymitr Ibrizimow resigned from his duties in BIGSAS in 2018, the two former Vice Deans took over the management of the graduate school. However, the other employees, including Dr Christine Scherer and Juliane Fender, as well as the administrative assistants Anette Volk and Sabine Wagner, continued to back the Deans, to the best of their abilities.

“The excellent team has been very supportive and helped us to grow quickly into the new position”. - Professor Drescher

Despite having all the support of this team, even the Deans often reach their limits, especially by holding several positions at the University of Bayreuth and beyond. Professor Doevenspeck is Head of the Geography Department and spokesperson for the Mobilities Research Section in the Cluster. “You need discipline, good time management and you need to be efficient”, notes Professor Doevenspeck. He only gets impatient when it comes to small things that end up on the table of the SC or EC due to a lack of research in some applications. He says: “I would like to call on the BIGSAS family: find out about the processes, submit your applications timely and ask if anything is unclear. The team will always give you competent advice”.

After all, it is primarily the BIGSAS administration team that can answer the questions of everyday concerns. The Deans jump back and forth between committees and meetings, which can lead to conflicts in schedules and interpersonal relationships. Professor Drescher says:

"We have all been particularly stressed since the beginning of the Corona pandemic, which has had a profound impact on our everyday life and our working environment, for example through the fact that video conferences have replaced real encounters. In addition, the current situation has also had and continues to have serious financial, social and psychological consequences for many JFs, for example, because they have been unable to leave the country after completing their doctorate, or have been unable to begin their field research, have to forgo conference trips or have to modify the topic of their dissertation."

As part of the BIGSAS family, you are never alone, and the entire team is committed to find solutions for any arising problems. The exchange among each other is extremely important, says Professor Doevenspeck. Unfortunately, he himself often finds very little time to interact with Junior Fellows. His priority is to maintain active contact with his own doctoral candidates, whom he regularly meets in the Geo building. But he is always delighted when he 'runs into' one or the other Junior Fellow in the city or at (digital) events. Professor Drescher would like to see the Junior Fellows become more involved within BIGSAS. After all, it is not only the contact between the administration and the doctoral candidates that needs to be maintained, but above all the contact between one another. Junior Fellows should see events such as the Welcome Seminar outlined above as an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas. It is understandable that everyone has little time, but the joint activities among the Junior Fellows strengthen the team spirit and show that there is mutual support - an incredibly important message especially in challenging times like these.

As a father of three children, Professor Doevenspeck also knows that it is important to structure his day diligently in order to keep an overview, especially because breaks and rest periods are also important. He himself likes to go hiking or jogging - activities that are luckily compatible with the current situation.

In the end, the Deans encourage the doctoral candidates not to lose focus: ***"Stay healthy and optimistic, take care of others, consider immobility a privilege, adjust the research design if necessary in close exchange with the supervisor, think about what the pandemic means for your topic and read and write a lot"***.

Professor Dr Martina Drescher is holder of the Chair of Romance and General Linguistics at the University of Bayreuth. Her research interests include Health communication and language variation with a particular focus on French in Africa. She is Vice Dean of Early Career & Equal Opportunity as well as Member of the Research Section "Moralities".



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Professor Dr Martin Doevenspeck Professor of Political Geography at the Department of Geography. His research interests lie at the interface of Political Geography and Social Geography in developing countries. His work covers three main areas: migration, society-environmental relations and risk and conflict. He is also a Member of the Board of the Institute of African Studies Bayreuth.



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CALL FOR PARTICIPATION / CONTRIBUTION

Dear Junior Fellow, dear Alumni, dear BIGSAS family,

You want to speak out about your research? You want to take a stand on an important event or a debate? You want to give insights into your work, your career, your experiences? Then use the BIGSAS blog to raise attention and highlight the diversity of the field of African Studies and beyond.

Contributions to the BIGSAS blog can be published in **German, English and French.**

The format is oriented towards journalistic styles, away from academic publication, towards a more accessible writing.

An article should not exceed four word pages (*standard formatting, e.g. Times New Roman, 11 + 1.15 line spacing*) and should include (sub)headings.

Copyright is required for all submitted photos, suggestions for keywords can also be included.

The thematic range covers several categories, **from scientific research, volunteering, food, family, to socio-political debates.** Artistic contributions are also welcome, e.g. poems, photographs, drawings or similar.

If you are interested, please contact us at **bigsas-projectsupport@uni-bayreuth.de** - we look forward to hearing from you!

PS: You even want to become part of the editorial team? We would also be very happy about that. If you have some time for a few months, if you enjoy coordinating, interviewing and writing, and if you know how to use WordPress or want to learn how, then The BIGSAS World is the right place for you!



THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

First of all, I would like to thank BIGSAS for allowing me to contribute my own ideas to the administrative work during my time as a student assistant as well as a part-time academic assistant. As a media studies graduate with many years of journalistic experience, I was keen to use my passion for writing in a visible manner. My time at BIGSAS has made me realise how every single research, every single fellow carries an immense portfolio of ideas, expertise and stories. At the same time, one is constantly struck by all the networks that make up the **BIGSAS family**. There were numerous moments, also mentioned in some interviews, where newcomers to BIGSAS heard about Bayreuth from alumni of the African Studies here. How can other people, outside BIGSAS, the university, Bayreuth learn about the work of our PhD students? How can Africa-related research be made more tangible, more accessible; reach a group that does not necessarily have a connection to higher education? The idea of a blog was born - a link travels faster (not least in Corona times) than a printed brochure. An article that provides an insight reads quicker than a whole dissertation.

Hanna Lena was saying: *"I can now share the printed article with my grandmother, and she enjoys understanding a little bit more about my research and my time in Bayreuth and Kenya."*

The exchange among academics is important, but the exchange with non-academics is equally significant. And that is why the blog and all the contributions published there have always been dear to me. However, the whole project would not have been possible at all if I had not received support from numerous people. In addition to the BIGSAS admin team, from which **Juliane Fender** in particular provided advice in the initial phase, it was also **Sofie Reinl** who became part of the editorial team in December 2020 and enriched the blog with her contributions. For French translations or corrections, I thank my husband **Yao Sodjadan**, who passionately worked on the right expressions. I thank the BIGSAS representatives, first and foremost **Andreas Wüst and Shaden Kamel**, who included the blog in their newsletter and shared contributions diligently. I would like to thank **all Junior Fellows, alumni and professors** who participated in interviews and also those who expressed their interest to be interviewed in the future. Of more than 15 interviews conducted, the majority took place digitally to adhere to current Corona regulations. Of the 8 interviews conducted 'offline', three were moved to the balcony, the Hofgarten or a café at a time when meetings were also possible at these locations (...and who says you can't combine sunbathing with a great conversation?). My special thanks also go to all the **'guest contributions'** (e.g., on special days or as opinion pieces). The blog thrives on its diversity and serves not only as a platform to present the work of the Junior Fellow and alumni in the form of an interview, but also to offer a space to publish one's own contributions. This enables us all to reflect on experiences beyond the realm of academia and to put them into a different perspective. For the future of the blog, both I and the rest of the BIGSAS team would be very happy to receive more blog entries from all of you. Finally, I would like to thank **all the readers**, all those who clicked on the blog and shared posts, all those who pointed out mistakes or errors and expressed their support and appreciation. It is only through all of you that the BIGSAS blog has come to life and it is also only through you that it will continue to stay alive.

Now it is time for me to say goodbye to the BIGSAS admin team and hand the blog over to my colleagues. Who knows, maybe I might still conduct interviews in the future, as the interaction with each and every one of you has been the highlight of my time at BIGSAS.

Dina Sodjadan

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