

Newsletter 1/2025



Swiss Society for African Studies
Société suisse d'études africaines
Schweizerische Gesellschaft
für Afrikastudien



IMPRESSUM

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La Newsletter de la SSEA est publiée avec le concours de l'Académie suisse des sciences humaines et sociales. Les articles et informations publiés, tout comme les opinions qui y sont exprimées, sont sous l'entière responsabilité de leurs auteurs, et ne sauraient être considérés comme reflétant l'opinion de la SSEA.

Der Publikationsbeitrag der Schweizerischen Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften sei dankend erwähnt. Die Verantwortung für die Inhalte der veröffentlichten Beiträge und Informationen liegt bei deren Autoren. Die darin enthaltenen Standpunkte decken sich nicht immer mit jenen der SGAS.

Cover: The intersection of African Studies with Science and Technology Studies is the object of the cooperative research project *Grounding Crop Monitoring in Ghana* presented on pages 27–29. Inspection of a faulty sunshine recorder at Yendi Meteorological Station (picture: James Merron 2024).

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ÉDITORIAL • EDITORIAL

■ HENRI MICHEL YÉRÉ, CO-PRESIDENT

As the Swiss Society for African Studies, we are still carried by the wind of our 50th anniversary celebrations, which took place this past October 2024 during the Swiss Researching Africa Days, in Bern. Whilst celebrating the history of our society, we are not blind to the tensions of our time, and we are happy to put forward in this issue of our Newsletter some of what confirms the relevance of our approach as African Studies in Switzerland.

In this issue, we invite you to discover the breadth of perspectives that our work encompasses. Let me highlight some of them. We come to learn how Paul Jenkins, as head of the Basel Mission Archives (1972–2003), put the wealth and the richness of the photographic archive of the Basel Mission on the map. At the same time, some encouraging news came through the recent appointments of Alice Hertzog as Head of the Ethnographic Museum in Zurich and Friedrich von Bose as Director of the Museum der Kulturen in Basel. These appointments symbolise a generational shift in the approach to museum work, as they put an even greater focus on the questions of restitution and provenance research, which represent some of the most innovative practices in the field of African Studies as it exists in Switzerland.

An insight into contemporary research projects informs us of how literature seizes hold of political and economic questions: poet Samy Manga's reading of his book *Chocolaté* reminds us of the critical connections that exist between scholarship, politics and economic inequality.

In celebrating its 50th anniversary this past October 2024, we convened a panel composed of past presidents and board members of our Society, including one of its founding members, Ambassador Jacques Rial. He was 92 years old at the time he spoke to us. Jacques Rial's vivid style and presence at this event gave our celebrations real depth, because it enabled us to truly understand the different evolutions that the Society took, and with it, the scholarship on Africa in Switzerland. Unbeknownst to us, this was to be Jacques Rial's last appearance in our midst, as we came to learn of his passing in February 2025. Idrisse Désiré Machia A Rim pays a beautiful tribute to him in this issue of our Newsletter.

Basel, 10.06.2025

COMMUNICATIONS DU COMITÉ • MITTEILUNGEN DES VORSTANDS • COMMUNICATIONS

HOMMAGE A JACQUES RIAL (07.01.1932–09.02.2025)

■ IDRISSE DÉSIRÉ MACHIA A RIM

Une dizaine de semaines après sa présentation sur la période fondatrice et la première décennie de la Société suisse d'études africaines, Jacques Rial, membre fondateur de la société, est décédé à Zurich. Un hommage par Idrisse Désiré Machia A Rim.

En février 2025, j'ai contacté l'ambassadeur Jacques Rial via son adresse électronique pour lui redemander son numéro de téléphone. En effet, durant mon séjour suisse en 2022, il m'avait fait l'honneur de me rencontrer à la gare de Berne pour un tête à tête envisagé depuis 2016. Notre dernière conversation concernait le déménagement de sa bibliothèque et le sort réservé à ses nombreux livres. L'ayant informé de mon idée

de création d'un Centre de recherches sur les relations africaines de la Suisse (CREAS) au Cameroun, il m'encouragea, allant même jusqu'à me promettre une partie importante de sa documentation lors de mon prochain séjour suisse. Je reçois un message bref de Jacques : « Voici mon no WhatsApp 41 79 ... 86. à bientôt ». Je ne pouvais jamais imaginer que je venais de recevoir son dernier signe de vie à mon endroit car il décède le 9 février 2025. J'apprends la triste nouvelle à travers une annonce de la SSEA. J'ai connu Jacques dans la recherche à partir du Cameroun et nous avons gardé jusqu'à sa disparition une relation particulière. Je n'aurais jamais de paix intérieure véritable sans lui rendre ce dernier hommage.

UN EXCELLENT DIPLOMATE EN MISSION AU CAMEROUN

Né en 1932, Jacques Rial travaille de 1970 à 1976 en tant que Secrétaire Général de la commission nationale suisse pour l'UNESCO. C'est dans cette perspective qu'il se rend à Lagos au Nigéria en 1971, à la première conférence des commissions nationales africaines pour l'UNESCO. Il fait ensuite un détour au Cameroun voisin pour rendre visite à son ami Charles Bébbé, Secrétaire Général de la commission nationale camerounaise. Ils conviennent de mettre sur pied une coopération entre la Suisse et le Cameroun au sein de cette organisation internationale. Ayant précédemment servi à Londres et à la Haye comme conseiller d'ambassade, il est nommé ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire de la Suisse au Cameroun le 1^{er} septembre 1983. Le 3 novembre 1983, il présente ses lettres de créances au Président Paul Biya. Durant son séjour, Rial supervise la mise en œuvre des projets de coopération technique, le Cameroun étant depuis 1961 une zone de forte concentration de la coopération suisse au développement. Il vit un moment dramatique de l'histoire politique du Cameroun à savoir le coup d'État manqué d'avril 1984. Son rôle consiste d'après ses propres dires à sécuriser les intérêts et ressortissants suisses. À la question de savoir si des suisses avaient perdu leurs vies

Jacques Rial lors de la 50^e assemblée générale de la Société suisse d'études africaines le 25 octobre 2024 à Berne, entouré par Beat Sottas et Anja Soldat (photo : Veit Arlt).



au vu des nombreuses pertes enregistrées sur le plan humain, il me révèle en août 2016 ceci : « Non il n'y a pas eu de victimes dans la colonie suisse. Mais naturellement, l'événement a laissé des traces. Nous en parlons encore en famille ... Le toit de notre chancellerie, située sur la route du Mont-Fébé, a été touché et a dû être réparé... ». Par ailleurs, Jacques Rial avait pris pour habitude de visiter les projets de coopération suisse au Cameroun en compagnie des membres de sa famille. C'est le cas du pont de l'enfance inauguré en 1979 et construit sur le fleuve Sanaga. L'ambassadeur Jacques Rial arrive en fin de séjour le 21 février 1988. Il bénéficie pour la circonstance, d'un diner d'adieu au Sofitel Mont Fébé offert par Philippe Mataga, ministre des affaires étrangères du Cameroun. Ce fut un excellent diplomate dont les prouesses resteront à jamais gravées dans la mémoire collective au Cameroun. Il mérite la reconnaissance et le respect du peuple suisse.

UN INFORMATEUR DE QUALITÉ

Lorsque je débute mes recherches doctorales sur la coopération bilatérale entre la Suisse et le Cameroun de 1961 à 2013, je suis confronté à une insuffisance criarde de sources sur le plan local. L'ambassade de Suisse qui ne dispose pas d'archives pour les usagers m'invite tout de même en 2016 à rencontrer son ambassadeur Claude Altermatt pour un échange sur les contours de mon sujet. Ce dernier me remet au terme des discussions une liste de ses prédécesseurs avec leurs contacts. Durant l'exploitation de ce fichier, je constate que la majorité des ambassadeurs suisses ayant servi au Cameroun sont décédés à l'exception de Jacques Rial. Saisi par message et malgré son âge avancé, il s'engage à répondre à mes questions. Je lui ai souvent adressé plusieurs questionnaires relatifs à l'objet de ma recherche. Je n'ai jamais attendu plus d'une semaine pour recevoir des réponses à des dizaines de questions sur une histoire sensible, brûlante et passionnante comme celle des relations diplomatiques entre la Suisse et le Cameroun. Il prenait en plus le soin de bien les saisir. J'ai toujours été impressionné par la clarté de ses idées, la sérénité du personnage, sa fermeté et son humour.



L'ambassadeur Jacques Rial sur le pont de l'enfance (à gauche avec son fils, à droite avec son épouse Christine Rial-Barbey), fruit de la coopération Suisse-Cameroun (source : archives privées de Jacques Rial).

Durant mon séjour suisse de 2017 à 2018 en tant que boursier d'excellence de la Confédération, nous n'avons pas pu nous rencontrer en dépit des efforts réciproquement consentis. Néanmoins, Jacques continuait d'apporter avec gentillesse des réponses à mes préoccupations et me faisait même parvenir de précieux documents d'histoire diplomatique à travers la poste lausannoise. Il n'oubliait pas de mettre à ma disposition certains contacts utiles d'anciens diplomates et coopérants suisses ayant séjourné au Cameroun. À sa demande, je lui ai fait parvenir le manuscrit de ma thèse de doctorat en 2021. Jacques était très content de revivre cette coopération sur écrit et de réaliser que j'avais su exploiter à bon escient le produit de ses témoignages à mon endroit. Ma défense de thèse sanctionnée par la mention très honorable, Jacques n'a pas hésité à m'adresser ses chaleureuses félicitations. J'étais vraiment impressionné par la simplicité et la disponibilité de cet homme si bien que j'ai commencé à me demander comment pourrais-je lui exprimer ma reconnaissance profonde au-delà du simple « Merci » classique. Le projet de publication de ma thèse sous forme

de livre devient donc la réponse à ma préoccupation. En effet, je prends la résolution de mettre en vitrine l'ambassadeur Jacques Rial en première de couverture de mon livre à travers l'image de la cérémonie de présentation de ses lettres de créances au Président Paul Biya. La mesure est prise de manière unilatérale. Il est question de lui faire une agréable surprise. C'est pour moi un beau cadeau qui marquerait pour toujours l'histoire de son passage au Cameroun.

UNE BELLE AMITIÉ

Mon amitié et ma complicité avec Jacques Rial s'intensifient lorsque je l'informe du projet de publication du livre. D'emblée, il me suggère de le publier à L'Harmattan, arguant que ses prix sont abordables. En plus, il met à ma disposition les contacts des maisons d'éditions suisses probablement intéressées par le sujet du livre. Je retourne en Suisse en mai 2022 dans le cadre d'une bourse postdoctorale de l'université de Fribourg pour un séjour de trois mois. Dès mon arrivée, je cherche de nouveau à rencontrer Rial car j'ai conscience qu'au vu de son âge avancé, il pourrait à tout moment briser sa pipe. Et tout bon jeune africain sait en outre qu'on apprend généralement pas mal de choses excellentes auprès de certaines personnes âgées de qualité. En vérité, elles constituent une source précieuse de sagesse. Cependant, la publication du livre étant déjà achevée par l'éditeur Peter Lang que j'avais finalement retenu, j'évite stratégiquement d'en reparler à mon ami de manière régulière. Après un premier rendez-vous manqué à Zurich, Jacques m'a clairement expliqué sa situation par message et n'a pas hésité à me questionner au sujet du projet de publication de la thèse un 25 juin 2022 : « Cher Monsieur, Merci de votre message et pardonnez mon retard. J'ai en effet été mal occupé ces temps. Vous voilà donc pour quelques temps à Fribourg. Mon problème est qu'avec les années ma vie a changé : j'habite Zurich dans une colonie d'appartements pour personnes âgées, je n'ai plus de voiture et je marche difficilement et avec une canne. Tout est donc devenu compliqué. Mais donnez-moi encore quel est votre emploi de temps ? Cela me permettrait de voir s'il y aurait une

possibilité de nous voir. Et dites-moi aussi qui est votre coach et si votre thèse a été publiée ? Je vous souhaite un bon séjour à Fribourg, une ville intéressante. »

Mon coach ou superviseur des travaux qu'il connaissait d'ailleurs bien est le Professeur Claude Hauser. Je confirme ensuite la publication de la thèse sous forme de livre et lui fais parvenir la première de couverture. Il était très content. Cependant, deux éléments ont particulièrement attiré son attention à savoir : sa photo mise en première de couverture et le prix du livre qu'il a trouvé très onéreux. Au sujet de la couverture, il m'a avoué être « touché » même s'il a toujours privilégié la discrétion et m'a néanmoins félicité pour avoir su utiliser à bon escient le matériel mis à ma disposition notamment les images privées qu'il me fit parvenir. Je rencontre finalement mon grand ami le mois de juillet 2022 à la gare de Berne. Très bien vêtu, arborant un chapeau sur sa tête et se déplaçant à l'aide d'une canne, il me dit : « Jeune homme, vous voici enfin ». Il y avait beaucoup d'émotions dans l'air. Je n'arrivais pas à croire qu'il avait fait le déplacement pour venir à ma rencontre. Nous avons parcouru quelques ruelles de Berne à pied. Il en a profité pour me raconter les histoires impressionnantes du Canton Bernois. Il m'a aussi invité à manger dans un restaurant célèbre de la place. Jacques me parlait avec nostalgie de son séjour au Cameroun et de sa passion pour le tourisme. Il m'a même demandé si le Président camerounais à qui il avait remis ses lettres de créances en 1983 était encore aux affaires. J'ai répondu par l'affirmative à sa surprise générale car ils étaient tous les deux issus de la même génération avec juste une différence d'âge d'une année. Pour ma sécurité, Jacques a souvent refusé de me révéler certaines informations liées à sa carrière de diplomate. Il était donc protecteur tel un père. Durant nos échanges, il m'a encouragé à persévérer dans l'effort et à poursuivre mes travaux sur les relations africaines de la Suisse. Il a toujours pensé qu'en dehors de mon profil de chercheur, j'en ferai un bon diplomate, raison pour laquelle il m'appelait parfois « cher collègue ».



Déjeuner entre Jacques Rial et Idrisse Désiré Machia A Rim dans un restaurant de Berne en 2022 (image : Idrisse Désiré Machia A Rim).

Je retourne au Cameroun en août 2022 et continue de converser avec mon ami via WhatsApp. Nos échanges sont malheureusement interrompus en novembre 2024 avec la perte de mon portable. Jacques me recontacte en février 2025 pour me redonner son numéro de téléphone. Malheureusement, il décède le 9 février 2025. Je n'aurai plus jamais de ses nouvelles.

Excellence, cher Ami, il est écrit dans les Saintes écritures que : « Les jours de nos années s'élèvent à soixante-dix ans, et, pour les plus robustes, à quatre-vingts ans... ». Tu t'en vas à l'âge de 93 ans, signe d'une haute bénédiction divine. Que ton âme repose en paix, que tes œuvres pieuses te suivent et que l'Éternel miséricordieux soulage les cœurs meurtris par ta disparition. Tu étais adorable !

Merci pour TOUT Jacques !

Idriss Désiré Machia A Rim est un ancien boursier d'excellence de la Confédération Suisse et de l'Université de Fribourg. Spécialiste des relations africaines de la Suisse après la décolonisation, il est actuellement enseignant vacataire au département d'histoire et de la conservation du patrimoine de l'Université d'Ebolowa au Cameroun. Depuis 2018, il occupe le statut de correspondant au sein de la SSEA et est en outre membre du Centre Suisse d'Études sur le Québec et la Francophonie (CEQF).
Contact : machiadesire@yahoo.fr.

STRENGTHENING PROVENANCE RESEARCH IN THE ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM WORLD

■ ANJA SOLDAT

2025 is a hopeful year for African material heritage in Swiss museums. Alice Hertzog and Friedrich von Bose, two provenance researchers, have been appointed museum directors. Alice Hertzog will start as director of the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich (UZH) on 1 August 2025 and Friedrich von Bose will take over as director of the Museum der Kulturen Basel on 1 November 2025.

Alice Hertzog, a long-standing member of the Swiss Society for African Studies, was previously a project researcher at the Benin Initiative Switzerland (BIS), responsible for provenance research at the Ethnographic Museum UZH and co-curated the exhibition *Benin Dues. Dealing with Looted Royal Treasures*. Her position as director entails an assistant professorship with tenure track for ethnology at the Department of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies. Friedrich von Bose, for his part, as former Head of Research and Exhibitions at the three ethnological museums of the State Ethnographic Collections of Saxony, also has proven experience in provenance research and in conducting restitution negotiations.

Provenance research is the study of the historical context in which material artefacts were acquired. Provenance researchers conduct research in archives, but also use oral history interviews to gather information on the place, date, and circumstances of the change of ownership of single object and entire museum collections. This research is crucial for artifacts from African countries, as the majority of objects were exported from Africa during colonial rule in the 19th and 20th centuries. Today, an estimated 90



Alice Hertzog is the new director of the Ethnographic Museum UZH, where she recently co-curated the exhibition *Benin Dues. Dealing with Looted Royal Treasures* (Benin verpflichtet) (picture: Marc Latzel 2025).

to 95 percent of African cultural heritage can be found in major museums outside the continent and therefore also in Switzerland. Not all of these artifacts were stolen from their former owners. However, all objects acquired on the African continent during the colonial era were acquired in a context of injustice. Even supposedly 'voluntary' sales were often subject to financial pressure or other influence by foreigners; for example, taxes had to be paid to the colonial administration and missionaries urged people to give up supposedly dangerous 'cult objects' in the name of the Christian God.



Friedrich von Bose intends to position the Museum der Kulturen Basel as a site of lively dialogue and mutual learning in the cityscape (picture: Museum der Kulturen Basel 2025).

Provenance research attempts to uncover these facts with the help of historical and ethnological research methods. In recent years, this has increasingly been done in cooperation with universities and museums on the African continent. However, as African material heritage in Swiss museums is often poorly documented, the first step in many projects is to determine the origins of the objects. This is because cooperation and the resulting restitution (i.e. the return of objects to their original and rightful owners) can only take place if a museum knows what it actually houses and who needs

to be contacted. For many scientific and museum institutions with African cultural heritage, this task has only just begun.

The Board of the Swiss Society for African Studies is delighted that the appointments of Alice Hertzog and Friedrich von Bose have strengthened provenance research in the ethnological museum world and wishes them all the best for their new positions.

Anja Soldat is a doctoral candidate at the University of Zurich and board member of the Swiss Society for African Studies. Contact: anja.soldat@gmail.com.



The question of provenance and restitution is also the topic of the volume *Benin Heritage in Swiss Museums*, published earlier this year and co-edited by Alice Hertzog (see Publications, page 51).

LAUNCH OF A NEW JOURNAL: AFRICAN LANGUAGES FIND THEIR PLACE AGAIN ON THE SWISS ACADEMIC LANDSCAPE

■ NATALIE TARR

With the retirement of Thomas Bearth in 2004 from his post as professor in general linguistics and African linguistics at the University of Zurich, African languages and linguistics/sociolinguistics related to Africa were no longer taught at Swiss universities. In fact, only a handful of scholars in Switzerland conduct research on topics related to African languages and linguistics, language use, language politics, and language policy. Now, a new journal dedicated to African languages has been launched and baptized *Language Policy in Africa* (LPIA).

The journal was conceptualized jointly by scholars at the Universities of Edinburgh and Bern and is made possible through the efforts of the Edinburgh Circle on the Promotion of African Language (ECPAL) and the Centre for the Study of Language and Society at the University of Bern, promoted by the Initiative Afrique at the same university (see Newsletter 1/2024).

All contributions go through a double-blind peer-review process. There are no article processing charges and the journal will initially be published twice a year open-access.

The editorial board is composed of:

Djouroukoro Diallo, Senior Editor, University of Bern, Switzerland

Lynn Kisémbé, Moi University, Kenya

Taiwo Oloruntoba-Oju, University of Ilorin, Nigeria

Bert van Pinxteren, Leiden University, The Netherlands

Addisalem Yallew, Stellenbosch University, South Africa



The inaugural issue and information for authors are available on the journal's website.

Link: <https://bop.unibe.ch/LPIA/index>



ENGAGEZ-VOUS AU SEIN DE L'ÉQUIPE DE RÉDACTION !

Nous recherchons 1 à 2 membres qui souhaitent s'engager dans la planification et la rédaction des contenus de notre newsletter semestrielle. Les compétences linguistiques, la maîtrise du style, la systématique et l'œil pour les détails sont demandés. L'évaluation du contenu peut, si nécessaire, être confiée à des tiers choisis en fonction du thème. Vous êtes intéressé(e) par une collaboration régulière ? Dans ce cas, veuillez vous annoncer auprès de Natalie Tarr (newsletter@sgas-ssea.ch).

JOIN OUR NEWSLETTER TEAM!

We are looking for 1–2 members to assist planning and editing the content. Linguistic competence, stylistic confidence, a systematic approach, and an eye for detail are required. However, if need be, the content can also be assessed by third parties selected for specific topics. Are you interested in becoming a regular contributor? Then please contact Natalie Tarr (newsletter@sgas-ssea.ch).

MITARBEIT IM REDAKTIONSTEAM

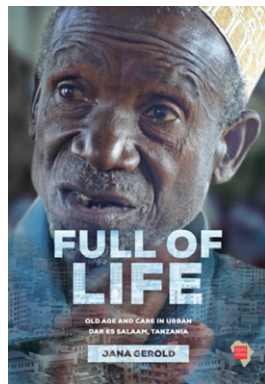
Wir suchen 1–2 Mitglieder die sich bei der Planung und Redaktion unseres halbjährlichen Newsletters engagieren. Gefragt sind Sprachkompetenz, Stilsicherheit, Systematik und ein Auge fürs Detail. Die inhaltliche Beurteilung kann bei Bedarf auch durch themenspezifisch ausgewählte Drittpersonen erfolgen. Sind Sie interessiert, regelmässig mitzuwirken? Dann melden Sie sich bitte bei Natalie Tarr (newsletter@sgas-ssea.ch).

PUBLICATION OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS

The series *Schweizerische Afrikastudien / Études africaines suisses* (Lit publishers) is open for doctoral theses from Swiss universities that have earned the grade 5.5 (insigni cum laude) or in French "mention très bien".

The supervisors of the thesis must submit the assessments of the examiners to the board of the Society, and confirm in writing that all stipulated amendments have been effected, that the text has been fully edited and that it is ready for publication.

Since the Society at this stage cannot introduce a special publication board and peer review process it neither offers financial support for the publication nor engages in editorial tasks. Both are the sole responsibility of the author and supervisors.



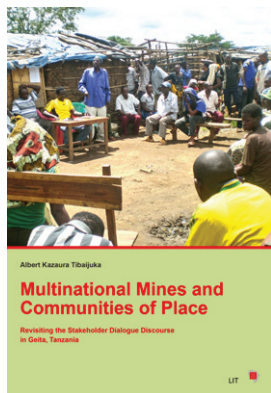
Jana Gerold: *Full of Life. Old Age and Care in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania* (Schweizerische Afrikastudien – Études africaines suisses, Vol 11). Münster 2017 (Lit-Verlag).

PUBLIKATION VON DISSERTATIONEN

Die Serie *Schweizerische Afrikastudien* beim Lit-Verlag ist für die Publikation von Dissertationen schweizerischer Universitäten geöffnet. Diese müssen die Mindestnote 5.5 (insigni cum laude oder «mention très bien») erreicht haben.

Die Betreuer der Arbeit stellen dem Vorstand die Gutachten zur Arbeit zur Verfügung und bestätigen schriftlich, dass alle Auflagen zur Überarbeitung erfüllt wurden, das Manuskript vollständig redigiert wurde und zur Publikation bereit ist.

Finanzierung und Realisierung der Publikation liegen in der alleinigen Verantwortung der Autoren und Betreuer. Zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt kann und will der Vorstand keine Publikationskommission und Prüfverfahren einführen. Die SGAS kann folglich weder einen finanziellen Beitrag leisten, noch Redaktionsarbeiten übernehmen.



Albert Kazura Tibaijuka: *Multinational Mines and Communities of Place. Revisiting the Stakeholder Dialogue Discourse in Geita, Tanzania* (Schweizerische Afrikastudien – Etudes africaines suisses, Vol. 16). Münster 2020 (Lit-Verlag).

PUBLICATION DE THÈSES

La série *Études africaines suisses* chez Lit-Verlag est ouverte aux thèses doctorales inscrites dans une université suisse et ayant reçu la mention « très bien » ou « insigni cum laude » soit, au minimum, la note de 5.5.

Les directeurs de thèse mettent à disposition du comité le rapport des membres du jury ou des experts, accompagné d'une déclaration écrite stipulant que l'ensemble des modifications a été effectué et que le manuscrit est complet et prêt à être publié.

Il est à noter que la SSEA n'offre aucun soutien financier ni service pour la publication de thèse. En effet, la mise sur pied d'un comité de lecture, exigée pour toute évaluation d'un manuscrit, n'est pas prévue, ni réalisable pour l'instant.



Pascal Schmid: *Medicine, Faith and Politics in Agogo. A History of Health Care Delivery in Rural Ghana, ca. 1925 to 1980* (Schweizerische Afrikastudien – Etudes africaines suisses Vol. 13). Münster 2018 (Lit-Verlag).

ÉVÈNEMENTS • VERANSTALTUNGEN • EVENTS

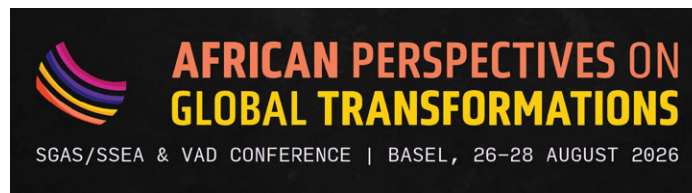
CALL FOR PANELS: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONS

BASEL, 26.–28.08.2026

In August 2026, the Swiss Society for African Studies (SGAS/SSEA) and the Association for African Studies in Germany e.V. (VAD) will jointly hold their respective biennial conferences in Basel, Switzerland. The conference hosted by the ZASB Research Network Africa at the University of Basel connects scholars based in Europe, Africa, and beyond and welcomes participants from all career levels. The conference theme *African Perspectives on Global Transformations* proposes a framework that responds to increasingly urgent calls for decolonization, epistemic justice, reparations, climate justice, and restitution. It brings together approaches to examine past, present and future global transformations from a broad spectrum of disciplines and thematic areas.

CONFERENCE THEME

Africa has been playing a central role in processes framing the globalized world. These processes take the form of the movement of people, the expansion of trade through the exploitation of human and natural resources, resistance against, and adoption of, colonial invasion and religious imposition, and the circulation of knowledges about the world, among others. A critical approach towards past, current, and future global transformations, therefore, is one crucial way to define the intellectual agenda of African Studies—especially of African Studies outside Africa. Amid current challenges bearing on marginalized groups' struggles for rights and self-determination, a shifting geopolitical landscape, the global rise of authoritarianism at the expense of democratic values, as well as the climate crisis and environmental degradation, African Studies, as the academic field that draws from the engagement with African experiences, conditions and agency, can make an indispensable contribution to making the world we live in more intelligible.



To confront critical perspectives on global transformations, the conference proposes a framework that responds to increasingly urgent calls for decolonization, epistemic justice, reparations, climate justice, and restitution, under the conceptual header of planetary health and cosmopolitan flourishing. Planetary health attunes us to interdependencies between human and non-human wellbeing, by insisting on the importance of social relations, equity, and justice at planetary scale, beyond the mere management of the physical world. Cosmopolitan flourishing opens up to the development of alternative futures born out of painful historical experiences of ethnocentrism, a world made safe for difference, which respects planetary boundaries, with wellbeing for all. Taken together, these two notions point to the potential of African Studies to develop conversations about the world we live in, its path-dependencies, and its possible futures.

Based on this framework, the conference will bring together approaches to examine past, present, and future global transformations from a broad spectrum of disciplines and thematic areas. We especially welcome panels that stress the interrelatedness of historical, cultural, and regional contexts as well as the intersection of social, political, economic, and ecological issues. Panels should allow for contributions engaging with global transformations from different disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives as well as non-academic approaches (artistic, activist, or entrepreneurial, among others).

THEMATIC STREAMS

Panel proposals may be submitted under the following thematic streams:

1. Studying Africa, understanding the world
2. Diaspora, cosmopolitanism, and African identities
3. Politics and governance
4. African positions in changing world orders
5. Planetary health, urbanization, and natural resources
6. Technology and digitalization
7. Lifeworlds and sociality
8. Arts, language, and cultural expression
9. Memories, histories, archives, museums

PANEL SUBMISSION

Please submit your panel proposition via the conference website before **31 July 2025**. Besides the classic panel format, propositions for roundtables and workshops are acceptable. The result of the review process will be announced on **1 October 2025** and the call for papers will be launched on **15 October 2025**.

Link: www.africanperspectives.ch



ORGANIZATION

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CONFERENCE: GREEN COLONIALISM? LITHIUM, THE ENERGY TRANSITION, AND ITS COSTS

BASEL, 20.09.2025, 9:00AM–4:00PM

The technologies driving the green energy transition and rising energy demands, such as electromobility and AI, require large amounts of so-called “critical” raw materials. Often mined in countries of the Global South, the increasing demand for metals not only harbours economic opportunities, but is frequently overshadowed by severe social and environmental impacts. As a result, local communities rarely benefit from the energy transition. Instead, colonial structures are perpetuated, with economic gains and socio-environmental costs distributed unevenly.

Mineral resource-rich Zimbabwe has in recent years experienced a veritable lithium boom. Particularly driven by electromobility and the increasing need for batteries, the growing demand for lithium has led to an expansion of the mining sector. In Zimbabwe, this development is highly politicised and carries far-reaching consequences for the local population.

While technologies like electro mobility are becoming more common in Europe, many Zimbabweans face a different reality: access to electricity is not a given, owning a car a luxury, and driving an electric vehicle almost utopian. The increasing demand for raw material caused by technology, economic growth, and consumption in the Global North continues to uphold colonial patterns and the exploitation of the resource-rich Global South—this time under the guise of climate protection.

This year’s KEESA conference will address the broader question of the consequences of our energy transition, which through lithium supply chains stretch all the way into the daily lives of people in Zimbabwe. Together with speakers from Zimbabwean and



Unpaved road leading to the Sabi Star Mine in Buhera, Zimbabwe (picture: Centre for Natural Resource Governance 2024).

European civil society, we will explore questions of justice, global inequalities and enduring colonial power structures. The event aims not only to raise awareness of these pressing issues, but to foster solidarity-based, transnational cooperation among civil society actors.

Venue: Centre for African Studies Basel

Link: www.keesa.ch



RESEARCH REPORT: GREEN TRANSITION – AT WHOSE EXPENSE?

Together with the Zimbabwean NGO Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG), the Swiss Apartheid Debt and Reparations Campaign (KEESA) has initiated a study on the impacts of lithium mining in Zimbabwe. The report documents the serious social and environmental consequences of Zimbabwe's expanding lithium industry. In the mining regions of Buhera, Bikita, and Mberengwa, conflicts, displacements and human rights violations have occurred, and the expansion of mining has led to relocations, environmental destruction, and health risk, for instance, due to contaminated drinking water and noise pollution. Moreover, the report shows how the destruction of culturally significant sites places an additional burden on local communities. The full report in German is available via the KEESA website.

Link: <https://keesa.ch/2025/03/09/forschungsbericht-lithiumabbau>



EXHIBITION: UGANDAS PFLANZENHEILKUNST IM WANDEL – UGANDAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN TRANSITION

BOTANICAL GARDEN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH, 05.06.–15.10.2025

■ THOMAS LAELY

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Uganda's public healthcare system struggled more than ever. As a result, more people became interested in traditional herbal medicine. The World Health Organization, WHO, encourages African countries to support traditional medicine as an integral component of their healthcare systems. However, in Uganda, traditional medicine is at risk because natural resources, cultural heritage, and knowledge are being lost. Action is needed to secure its future and further development as an important part of healthcare and cultural heritage. Together with local museums and researchers, the project aims to raise awareness. The exhibition at the Botanical Garden Zurich is accompanied by several artistic activities and interventions.

PRINTED REMEDIES: RECIPES OF CARE

On the first day of the exhibition, the artist and curator Maria Nakato (Uganda) invited participants to explore the healing power of plants in a participatory workshop. Recipes from Swiss herbalists were gathered, reflecting on their ingredients and preparation methods. Participants were encouraged to bring their own recipes and dried plants. They were set in dialogue with Ugandan recipes and printed on fabric using cyanotype. The resulting works now form an installation in the Botanical Garden.

BOTANICAL MEMORIES: A PERFORMANCE SERIES

In collaboration with the art institution WE ARE AIA | Awareness in Art, the Botanical Garden of the University of Zurich presents *Botanical Memories: A Performance Series*. At the heart of this collaboration lies the central question: What knowledge about medicinal plants—shaped by people, place, and tradition—should be remembered and passed down? In the midst of the new and old botanical gardens Zurich, various performances and workshops will take place, followed by art and science talks. The performance series promotes public exchange about healing, and the history and properties of plants.

Together with healing practitioners and ethnobotanists, artists will examine how art can raise public awareness of alternative healing methods and the connection with nature. The series invites visitors to discover artistic practices and experience alternative healing methods.

Link:

www.weareaia.ch/de/botanical-memories-a-performance-series



Thomas Laely is a cultural anthropologist and has worked for the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia and the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich. Since 2020, he has been working on the SNSF-funded project *Traditional Medicine in Transition. The role of museums as agents of change for sustainable knowledge transfer in Uganda*. Contact: thomas.laely@uzh.ch.

Medicinal garden in Mpigi, Central Uganda (video still: Martina Rieder 2024).



COMPTE-RENDU: CHOCOLATÉ. LE GOÛT AMER DE LA CULTURE DU CACAO. UNE LECTURE-PERFORMANCE AVEC SAMY MANGA (ESPACE HELD, LAUSANNE, 13.05.2025)

■ JEHANNE DENOGENT

Dans le cadre d'une semaine d'ateliers pour le projet de recherche *Configuration EthoSpatiale*. Pour une nouvelle histoire littéraire subsaharienne de langue française, soutenu par le FNS et dirigé par Christine Le Quellec Cottier à l'Université de Lausanne, nous avons accueilli nos partenaires scientifiques. Ils/Elles sont venu.e.s d'Afrique du Sud, du Bénin, du Cameroun, de Côte d'Ivoire, de France et du Sénégal. Lors des ateliers, l'éco-poète Samy Manga a présenté, avec le soutien de la SSEA, une lecture-performance autour de son récit *Chocolaté. Le goût amer de la culture du cacao* (2023) le mardi 13 mai à la Fondation Held à Écublens, un espace culturel et une galerie d'arts d'Afrique, partenaire de l'Unil.

S'accompagnant de musique, il a interprété plusieurs passages de ce récit dans lequel souvenirs personnels et données factuelles se mêlent pour une critique puissante et incarnée de la surexploitation du cacao. Alors que les pays africains fournissent plus de deux tiers de la production mondiale cacaoyère, ils ne touchent presque aucun bénéfice, tout en subissant les coûts sociaux et écologiques de cette surexploitation. Cette réalité, révélée sur scène par l'engagement lyrique et politique de l'écrivain camerounais, ne peut manquer de frapper un public suisse, grand consommateur de chocolat, car elle montre l'envers du discours marketing des marques qui ont fait la réputation du pays.

C'est d'ailleurs sur ce contraste dérangeant et très problématique que repose l'efficacité du film projeté dans la seconde partie du spectacle : à la pauvreté des producteurs, au travail forcé des enfants, aux pesticides utilisés répondent les sourires éclatants et



blancs des emballages de chocolat, soigneusement alignés dans les rayons des supermarchés européens. Pour éveiller les consciences face à cette chaîne de production invisible, Samy Manga conjugue donc images, mots et musique, invitant le public à entonner avec lui un chant camerounais qui, ce soir-là, a trouvé du répondant grâce au public camerounais présent. Une manière à la fois poétique et percutante de faire ressentir, à chaque carré de chocolat croqué, le poids de son origine.

Jehanne Denogent est postdoctorante dans le projet FNS *Configuration EthoSpatiale* : Pour une nouvelle histoire littéraire subsaharienne de langue française à l'université de Lausanne. Contact : jehanne.denogent@unil.ch.

RESEARCH • RECHERCHE • FORSCHUNG

CLOTURE DU PROJET AFRICAN CITIES LAB FORMER UNE NOUVELLE GÉNÉRATION DE PROFESSIONNELS POUR CONSTRUIRE LA VILLE AFRICAINE DURABLE DE DEMAIN

■ JEROME CHENAL, VIRGINIE TORRENS, ARMEL KEMAJOU

En décembre 2024, l'EPFL a clôturé la phase initiale du projet *African Cities Lab* dont l'objectif est de renforcer les capacités des acteurs du développement urbain en Afrique, afin de leur permettre de faire face aux défis croissants en matière de résilience climatique et d'amélioration des conditions de vie. Le projet, lancé en octobre 2021, a ainsi développé une plateforme d'éducation numérique inédite, offrant le libre accès à une vingtaine de cours en ligne (MOOC), en anglais et en français, sur des thématiques clés de l'urbanisme durable en Afrique. Des formations continues ont également été organisées pour les professionnels en activité et les décideurs locaux, afin d'accélérer l'amélioration des pratiques et inscrire les villes africaines dans des trajectoires de durabilité. Cofinancé majoritairement par le Secrétariat d'État à l'Économie Suisse (SECO), l'African Cities Lab a été mis en œuvre de manière conjointe par l'EPFL et six institutions africaines : l'Université Mohammed VI Polytechnique au Maroc, Sèmè City au Bénin, the African Centre for Cities (ACC) de l'Université du Cap (UCT) en Afrique du Sud, l'Institut Supérieur des Technologies de l'Environnement de l'Urbanisme et du Bâtiment (ISTEUB) de l'Université de Carthage en Tunisie, the University of Rwanda, et the Regional Transport Research and Education Centre (TRECK) de Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) au Ghana.

FORMER MASSIVEMENT DES PROFESSIONNELS POUR CONSTRUIRE LES VILLES AFRICAINES DE DEMAIN

Les villes africaines sont confrontées à un double défi : d'une part, la nécessité d'offrir à leurs populations un accès de qualité aux infrastructures et services essentiels, et d'autre part, l'urgence de trouver des solutions pour atténuer les effets du change-

ment climatique, qui les affecte bien davantage que les villes des pays industrialisés. Cette réalité étant d'autant plus préoccupante que 900 millions d'habitants supplémentaires occuperont les espaces urbains en Afrique d'ici 2050. Le projet se base sur l'idée que le défi de construire des villes africaines durables et capables d'offrir à leurs populations des conditions de vie satisfaisantes, ne sera pas relevé sans une formation suffisante, en qualité et en quantité, de ceux qui en ont la charge.

UNE PLATEFORME D'E-LEARNING PAR L'AFRIQUE ET POUR L'AFRIQUE

La mise en place de la plateforme a commencé par l'identification des thématiques prioritaires par un comité scientifique qui s'est appuyé sur une enquête auprès des professionnels, décideurs, et chercheurs, dans différents pays africains. Un appel à propositions a ensuite été lancé pour sélectionner des projets de MOOCs à développer. Les critères de sélection incluaient, entre autres, la qualité académique des contenus proposés, leur alignement sur les besoins des professionnels et des acteurs locaux de l'urbanisme, et leur impact potentiel sur le terrain. Une douzaine de MOOCs ont été retenus et financés à la suite de ce premier appel, portés par différentes institutions et universités :

- African Urban Economic Development in the Context of Climate Change : UM6P
- Articulation Urbanisme & Mobilité pour une ville soutenable : Urbaplan-Transitec
- Digital Governance for inclusive and sustainable African cities : UN-Habitat
- Habitat résilient : ISTEUB, Université de Carthage
- Introduction to New Sanitation Systems, Economies & Markets : Water Research Commission (WRC)
- La fabrique urbaine collective : idées et outils pour co-produire les villes africaines : Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques (GRET)
- La gestion des données urbaines : clé du développement de villes africaines plus intelligentes : UM6P

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Le solaire photovoltaïque et ses applications au profit du développement...

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Articulation Urbanisme - Mobilité pour une ville soutenable
urbaplan-transitec

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 Starts: Nov 13, 2023

- Le solaire photovoltaïque et ses applications au profit du développement urbain : UM6P
- Making housing markets work in African cities: understanding the role and opportunity of finance : Centre for Affordable Housing Finance in Africa (CAHF)
- Neighbourhood Development in African Cities : University of Rwanda
- Urban AI for Sustainable and Equitable Smart African Cities : Smart & Future Cities Laboratory (SFCL), Ain Shams University

L'EPFL a accompagné ces institutions tout au long du processus de développement de ces MOOCs et ce sur les plans technique et pédagogique. Son expérience en matière d'éducation numérique et de formation continue a complété la maîtrise thématique des experts et jeunes chercheurs des différentes équipes. Les MOOCs sont proposés en anglais ou en français et sous-titrés dans l'autre langue. En accès complètement gratuit, ils donnent droit à un certificat de réussite. Environ 700 certificats ont été délivrés jusqu'ici.

Le déploiement de la plateforme s'est fait en parallèle de l'élaboration des MOOCs par une équipe conjointe de l'EPFL, de l'UM6P, et de Sèmè City. La plateforme développée avec OpenEdX et hébergée sur un serveur cloud, a été lancée en octobre 2022. Disponible en ligne et en accès libre, elle permet la consultation gratuite de tous les MOOCs qui y sont hébergés. Environ 10 000 utilisateurs sont enregistrés à ce jour, un chiffre en croissance constante.

FORMER ÉGALEMENT SUR LE TERRAIN, AU PLUS PRÈS DU BESOIN

Pour renforcer l'offre pédagogique disponible en ligne, le projet a également appuyé l'organisation de formations continues sur le terrain pour les professionnels et les déci-

La plateforme e-learning sur le site web de l'African Cities Lab rassemble 22 cours (capture d'écran 2025).



Phase présentielle de la formation hybride de Nouakchott, Mauritanie, en octobre 2024 (image : African Cities Lab).

deurs africains. Organisées par les universités partenaires du projet, elles ont permis d'ancrer les connaissances dispensées par les MOOCs dans les pratiques quotidiennes des apprenants. Cette approche hybride s'articulait en deux temps : la finalisation d'un MOOC sur la plateforme suivi d'une seconde phase dispensée en présentiel par l'équipe pédagogique du MOOC dans la ville bénéficiaire.

Huit sessions de formations hybrides ont au total été organisées en Tunisie (octobre 2022) par l'ISTEUB - Université de Carthage sur le thème de l'Habitat résilient, au Ghana (janvier, février 2024) par le centre TRECK – KNUST sur la mobilité urbaine durable, et en RDC (mars 2024), au Cameroun (avril 2024), au Maroc (Mai 2024),

au Togo (juin 2024), et en Mauritanie (octobre 2024) par l'UM6P sur l'utilisation des données numériques pour optimiser la planification et la gestion des espaces urbains. Plus de 200 praticiens ont ainsi été formés par le projet.

La diversité de leurs profils a non seulement enrichi les échanges pendant les sessions, mais a aussi permis de toucher des acteurs à différents niveaux : responsables des administrations centrales, des services municipaux, du secteur privé, chercheurs et étudiants, personnel des ONG et membres de la société civile.

Le succès de ces formations hybride témoigne d'une part de la pertinence de l'approche utilisée, permettant une meilleure flexibilité pendant la phase en ligne pour les apprenants, l'optimisation du temps en présentiel, un apprentissage et des interactions plus efficaces, et la réduction des coûts logistiques. D'autre part, ce succès confirme malheureusement l'immensité du défi à relever en matière de renforcement des capacités locales en urbanisme durable.

Un programme de master exécutif a également été développé par l'UM6P sur le thème de la Smart city africaine, ainsi qu'un Certificate of Open Studies sur la gestion et la planification urbaines en Afrique par l'EPFL.

Disséminer les bonnes pratiques en matière d'urbanisme durable et mettre en réseau les acteurs clés dans différents pays faisait également partie des objectifs de l'African Cities Lab. Le projet visait non seulement à renforcer les collaborations entre les institutions partenaires, mais également à créer des liens entre universitaires, décideurs politiques, personnels des administrations nationales ou locales, professionnels du



« Datafication » était le thème du ACL Summit à Cotonou & Benguerir en mai 2023 (image : African Cities Lab).

secteur privé et jeunes professionnels en formation. Des activités spécifiques de dissémination ont ainsi été organisées, telles qu'une conférence internationale (African Cities Lab Summit) sur le potentiel des données numériques pour l'Afrique urbaine en mai 2023, une masterclass de haut niveau pour les maires et gouverneurs de grandes villes en novembre 2024, une série de webinaires sur les thématiques des MOOC, et un concours vidéo et photographique pour étudiants et jeunes professionnels en février 2024.

RÉSULTATS MAJEURS ET PROCHAINES ÉTAPES

Pour résumer, les trois principaux résultats de l'African Cities Lab sont, à ce jour, les suivants :

- Une plateforme de formation continue en ligne, en libre accès, bilingue (français et anglais), conçue pour renforcer les capacités des professionnels du développement urbain en Afrique. Il s'agit de la première initiative de ce type, pensée par et pour l'Afrique.
- Des connaissances utiles en matière d'urbanisme en Afrique ont été développées et partagées à large échelle par une communauté d'enseignants, de chercheurs, et d'apprenants. Un réseau d'institutions et de professionnels engagés pour la durabilité des villes est en création.
- Un accès plus démocratique des professionnels du développement urbain en Afrique à des formations continues de qualité, pertinentes, et à jour. Environ 8'000 inscriptions à la plateforme, 10'000 participations aux MOOCs, et 700 certificats d'achèvement délivrés. 200 participants aux formations hybrides et au programme de master exécutif.

Le défi principal est de maintenir la plateforme opérationnelle au terme du projet. Un modèle financier et de gouvernance à long terme reste encore à finaliser. Cepen-

dant, le transfert continu des capacités techniques de l'EPFL vers les équipes des universités partenaires et leur forte implication comme copropriétaires de l'initiative devrait faciliter le retrait de l'EPFL et du bailleur financier principal.

Jérôme Chenal est architecte et urbaniste spécialisé dans les villes africaines. Il est actuellement directeur du Centre Excellence in Africa (EXAF) et de la Communauté d'études pour l'aménagement du territoire (CEAT) à l'EPFL. Il est également professeur affilié à l'Université Mohammed VI Polytechnique (UM6P) au Maroc.

Contact : jerome.chenal@epfl.ch.

Virginie Torrens est spécialiste en éducation numérique, chargée de projet au centre EXAF à l'EPFL. Elle a accompagné le développement pédagogique et technique des MOOCs de la plateforme African Cities Lab. Elle a la charge de son opération et sa maintenance. Contact : virginie.torrens@epfl.ch.

Armel Kemajou est architecte et urbaniste, spécialiste des villes africaines. Il a actuellement la charge du projet African Cities Lab au centre EXAF de l'EPFL.

Contact : armel.kemajou@epfl.ch.

Lien: <https://africancitieslab.org>



DIGISEN: ANALYSER LES USAGES DU NUMÉRIQUE PAR LA JEUNESSE AU SÉNÉGAL À TRAVERS LES INÉGALITÉS D'ACCÈS AUX TECHNOLOGIES

■ PABLO DE ROULET, JÉRÔME CHENAL, JEAN-CLAUDE BARAKA MUNYAKA, DERGUENE MBAYE, MADOUANE R. SEYE, MOUSSA DIALLO, MAMADOU LAMINE NDIAYE, DJIBY SOW, DIMITRI SAMUEL ADJANOHOUN, TATIANA MBENGUE, CHEIKH SAMBA WADE

Comment les jeunes utilisent-ils les technologies de l'information et de la communication dans le cadre de leur participation à la gouvernance des villes moyennes au Sénégal ? Le projet de recherche *DigiSen* a débuté en octobre 2023. C'est une initiative pluridisciplinaire qui analyse l'usage du numérique par les jeunes dans les villes de Saint-Louis et Ziguinchor. Le projet bénéficie des financements de la Fondation Botnar et fait partie du programme *TYPCities*. DigiSen est un consortium réunissant des chercheurs de la Communauté d'Études pour l'Aménagement du Territoire (CEAT) de l'École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne en Suisse, de l'Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis et de l'École Polytechnique de Dakar au Sénégal.

Le projet de recherche DigiSen se base sur l'étude des données qualitatives et quantitatives. Il cible les jeunes âgés de 18 à 24 ans dans les villes moyennes. Le projet analyse notamment les inégalités d'accès aux technologies de l'information et de la communication, ainsi que les différents modes d'intervention et d'intégration des jeunes dans la vie sociale, culturelle et économique au Sénégal.

MÉTHODES MIXTES POUR ÉTUDIER L'USAGE DU NUMÉRIQUE DANS DEUX VILLES MOYENNES DU SÉNÉGAL

Les terrains de l'étude, Saint-Louis et Ziguinchor, sont deux villes moyennes d'environ 250 000 habitants chacune. Entre elles, on observe cependant un contraste notable



Le lancement du projet en janvier 2024 a permis de réunir experts techniques, juristes, administration et associations de jeunesse autour des questions d'accès égalitaire au numérique (images : DigiSen).

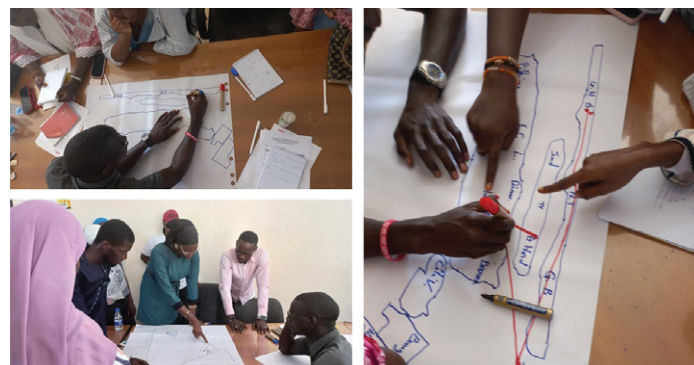
concernant l'accès aux technologies de l'information et de la communication au Sénégal. Ce qui reflète des disparités régionales et une marginalisation historique de Ziguinchor et la Casamance. Malgré les différences entre les quartiers, l'accès aux outils et infrastructures numériques est plus développé dans la ville de Saint-Louis. En revanche, celle de Ziguinchor, plus éloignée de Dakar et des grands centres urbains, est longtemps restée en marge des grands projets nationaux de développement numérique. Pour comprendre ces dynamiques, l'analyse des inégalités sociales et économiques se fait à l'échelle des quartiers et des individus autant que des disparités régionales. L'équipe du projet maintient des interactions continues avec la jeunesse urbaine via des forums publics et les réseaux sociaux.

Le projet développe des méthodologies combinant données quantitatives et qualitatives avec de l'analyse spatiale. Depuis un an, notre équipe de dix chercheurs collabore pour croiser les approches en ingénierie et en sciences sociales. Les données collectées sont analysées conjointement et les résultats obtenus sont diffusés dans des revues scientifiques et lors des conférences et forums ouverts au public sénégalais.

Le projet DigiSen a été lancé en janvier 2024 en présence de représentants des principaux acteurs du développement numérique au Sénégal. Des experts juridiques, ainsi que des représentants des administrations publiques, des autorités locales, des ONG et des jeunes y ont notamment participé. Le projet a débuté, par coïncidence, à un moment de transition politique profonde au Sénégal. En effet, une nouvelle formation politique prônant la réduction des inégalités et revendiquant la souveraineté du pays, a remplacé le parti politique qui exerçait le pouvoir depuis une décennie. Une forte mobilisation, portée par la jeunesse sénégalaise, a favorisé cette alternance politique. Lors des mouvements de protestation, le gouvernement sortant avait restreint l'accès à l'internet mobile pendant quelques jours pour tenter d'enrayer la mobilisation politique. Ces événements illustrent l'interaction entre les activités politiques, les technologies de l'information et de la communication. Ils démontrent aussi l'importance que revêtent les plateformes en ligne comme catalyseurs de la mobilisation politique.

FORUMS, QUESTIONNAIRES, CARTOGRAPHIE PARTICIPATIVE

Nous avons organisé un premier forum à Saint-Louis en mars 2024. Il a permis de recueillir les représentations que les jeunes se construisent sur les opportunités, les limites et les risques liés aux technologies de l'information et de la communication. En même temps, nous avons mené une enquête auprès de 500 jeunes afin d'analyser les inégalités d'usage des outils et infrastructures numériques. Nous avons étudié en particulier les facteurs relatifs aux conditions sociales et aux équipements électroniques, ainsi qu'à l'accès à l'Internet et aux réseaux sociaux.



Les ateliers avec des jeunes urbains permettent de mettre en lumière les pratiques spatiales liées au numérique (images : DigiSen).

Nos résultats intermédiaires montrent que l'accès au numérique est influencé par le niveau d'éducation, le genre et la situation économique. Pour une vue d'ensemble, nous utilisons des outils comme l'analyse linguistique des réseaux sociaux et la cartographie collaborative de la qualité de l'Internet mobile. Pour pallier le manque de données officielles, le projet a développé une application expérimentale permettant aux utilisateurs de mesurer la qualité du réseau mobile. Testée à Saint-Louis et Ziguinchor, elle met en évidence les variations de vitesse et de connectivité selon l'heure et le lieu.

EXPLORER LES LIEUX NUMÉRIQUES

Où et comment les jeunes urbains accèdent-ils à Internet ? Nous menons des transects exploratoires en ville pour cartographier les points de connexion, cybercafés, boutiques de téléphones, accès privés ou publics. Ces observations nous aident à

comprendre comment le numérique s'intègre dans l'espace et l'économie locale. Les inégalités socio-économiques et spatiales au Sénégal influencent fortement l'accès des jeunes aux technologies numériques. Les quartiers populaires aux revenus faibles ne bénéficient pas autant que les autres de l'extension de ces technologies. La 4G est accessible mais coûteuse, limitant l'usage pour les jeunes sans WiFi à la maison. Les avancées de connectivité des jeunes urbains ne suffisent pas pour résorber une importante fracture numérique.

Les technologies numériques jouent un rôle majeur dans la mobilisation politique et citoyenne, notamment à travers les réseaux sociaux. Elles facilitent les initiatives locales dans des domaines cruciaux tels que l'environnement, l'éducation et la sensibilisation sociale. Au Sénégal, les autorités administratives et politiques reconnaissent l'importance du numérique en matière de gouvernance, ainsi que pour la communication avec les citoyens. Elles adoptent souvent des mesures visant l'amélioration de l'accès aux technologies de l'information et de la communication. Ces initiatives sont

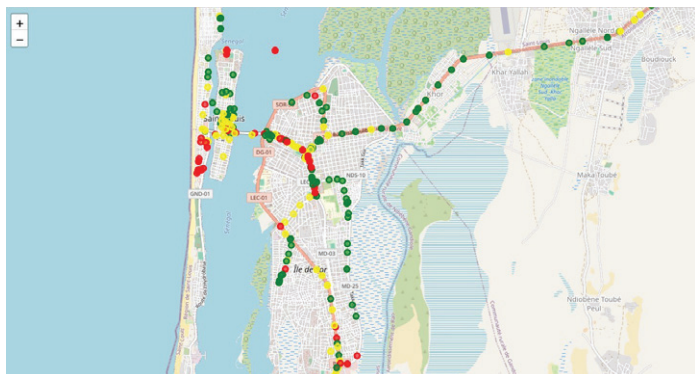
prises tant au niveau local que national. C'est le cas du « New Deal Technologique » officiellement lancé en février 2025. Ce plan d'action vise à positionner le Sénégal comme leader africain dans le domaine numérique pour l'horizon 2034. Il repose sur le développement des infrastructures numériques, la formation, l'innovation, l'entrepreneuriat, la fourniture des services publics numériques et la sécurité numérique.

LES PERCEPTIONS DU NUMÉRIQUE PAR LES JEUNES ET LES REPRÉSENTATIONS DE LA JEUNESSE

La plupart des jeunes perçoivent les technologies de l'information et de la communication comme un levier d'émancipation. Les outils du numérique constituent également un médium d'expression fort à travers duquel la jeunesse manifeste ses vœux de participation active aux politiques de gouvernance urbaine. Mais, les jeunes relèvent les risques liés à leur usage comme l'addiction, en particulier en relation avec les jeux et paris en ligne, ou encore le cyber-harcèlement. La dimension du genre se distingue aussi. En effet, la parole des jeunes femmes sur les thèmes politiques demeure souvent limitée.

L'équipe de recherche bénéficie ainsi d'un intérêt social et politique significatif au Sénégal, pour la contribution que le projet pourrait apporter à la compréhension des dynamiques sociales et techniques derrière le développement du numérique. L'équipe du projet travaille à affiner ces analyses en croisant différentes analyses intermédiaires, notamment des cartes, statistiques, et analyses de perceptions citoyennes. L'espace urbain devient ainsi une grille de lecture pour décrypter les dynamiques du numérique et formuler des recommandations pour une inclusion équitable.

Saint-Louis, Sénégal : La collecte de données sur l'Internet mobile illustre des disparités de qualité à l'échelle des villes et des quartiers (carte : DigiSen).



Les travaux de recherche nous permettent également de découvrir de nouvelles approches de la question du numérique, celles des légendes urbaines en particulier. Un mythe persistant évoque, par exemple, le piratage par les jeunes des WiFi installés à domicile, reflétant une connaissance technique limitée et des perceptions exagérées sur les compétences numériques des adolescents. Les récits sur les jeunes capables de pirater les réseaux WiFi de leurs voisins sont largement répandus au Sénégal et reviennent fréquemment dans les échanges avec les autorités administratives, les ONG et de nombreux jeunes eux-mêmes. Toutefois, ces affirmations semblent davantage relever d'exagérations et d'une méconnaissance des systèmes de sécurité des réseaux que d'une pratique réelle. Malgré cela, l'idée que les enfants et adolescents contournent ces protections reste ancrée dans les perceptions collectives. Face à cette croyance persistante, l'équipe du projet inclut désormais cette notion de légendes urbaines et des représentations collectives autour des jeunes comme une problématique propre de l'appropriation sociale des technologies de l'information et de la communication au Sénégal.

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HOLDING IT TOGETHER: WHAT CLIMATE TECHNICIANS IN GHANA TEACH US ABOUT THE GLOBAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF CLIMATE DATA

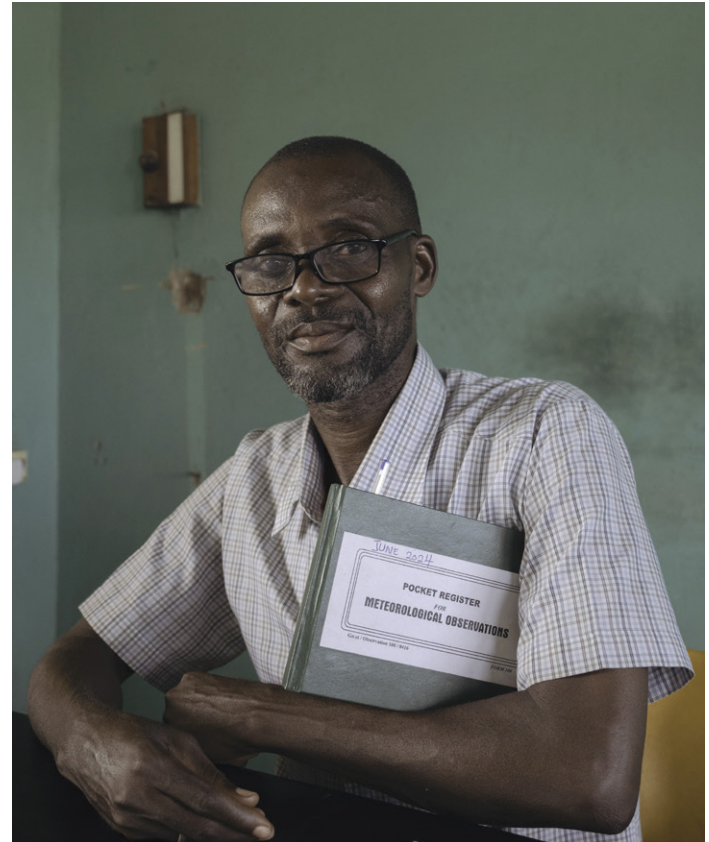
■ JAMES ZIMMERMANN MERRON, EMMANUEL PROVEN-ADZRI, KOFI ASARE, CHARLES TETTEH, MUSTAPHA MOHAMMED

In a modest weather station tucked in Ghana's northern region, technicians walk a careful line. Each day, they calibrate decades-old instruments, jot down temperature readings by hand, and—when the internet cuts out—send official meteorological data to Accra using WhatsApp.

Our interdisciplinary team—comprising researchers in physics, remote sensing, and sociology—visited the Yendi Meteorological Station as part of a collaborative project between the Centre for African Studies Basel, the Ghana Space Science and Technology Institute, and the Ghana Meteorological Agency. Funded by the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SERI) via the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) as the Leading House Africa, we set out to understand how climate-monitoring infrastructure in Ghana operates on the ground. What we found was not a failure of infrastructure, but a lesson in how it is made to work.

In Ghana, as elsewhere, climate data is essential for everything from farming to disaster preparedness. But the systems that produce it are not always shiny, seamless, or automated. They are often held together by what we call *relational labor*—the daily work of technicians who translate global standards into local practice, repurpose materials when supplies run short, and negotiate the friction caused by unreliable power

Mustapha Mohammed, technician at the Yendi Meteorological Station with his logbook (picture: James Merron 2024).





Maintenance worker Henry Ayuk removing beehive at Tamale Airport Meteorological Station (picture: Emmanuel Proven-Adzri 2024).

Our project showed how Ghana's climate technicians operate within a *double infrastructure*—a nominally digital system that still relies on analogue tools for reliability. Within this infrastructural context, the Yendi station, like many others in the Global South, exists in a hybrid zone where standardization and improvisation meet. While digitization holds promise, it is the older, manual instruments—and the people who keep them going—that ensure climate data remains usable and credible.

In Yendi, technicians are praised for keeping systems operational. But this comes at a cost—unacknowledged labor and infrastructural precarity that are normalized through their daily efforts to hold things together. Technicians 'stand in' for absent or decaying systems not out of heroism, but because there is no viable alternative. This perspective tempers the ideal of 'infrastructural care' by emphasizing how repair may

grids and encroaching vegetation. They build their own rain gauges. They move wind vanes from ground level to rooftops. They substitute filtered rainwater for distilled water. They improvise so that the data meets international standards.

To make sense of this complex reality, we turned to concepts from Science and Technology Studies (STS). Using the lens of *assemblage*, we viewed climate infrastructure not as a singular system, but as a patchwork of people, devices, standards, and environments, all temporarily aligned to keep data flowing. This also meant embracing the idea of *seamfulness*, coined by STS scholar Janet Vertesi, which invited us to pay attention to points of breakdown, overlap, and friction. These are not signs of failure. They are where the work happens.

Inspecting faulty sunshine recorder at Yendi Meteorological Station (picture: James Merron 2024).



serve to obscure enduring inequalities in transnational governance and scientific collaboration (see also Calkins 2021). Repair, in this light, becomes a mode of endurance rather than transformation.

Yendi's technicians do not simply maintain infrastructure—they assemble it. In doing so, they inhabit a precarious zone of improvisation, where the ideal of seamless data production collides with the material realities of everyday breakdown. At the shifting boundary between analogue and digital, their work is not merely about technical fixes but about negotiating fragility—what Fernando Domínguez Rubio et al. (2025) describe as a situated response to systems always on the verge of coming undone.

This is not just a story about Ghana. It is a story about the future of climate governance and about whose work counts in the making of global climate knowledge. As the race to digitalize accelerates, we must confront the limits of technological fixes and workarounds. Fragility cannot be engineered away and sometimes moving forward means going analogue, not out of nostalgia, but in recognition of the labor that quietly sustains the system.

Note: Thanks to Alena Thiel for putting our attention on the article by Sandra Calkin *Toxic Remains: Infrastructural failure in a Ugandan molecular biology lab* (2021, *Social Studies of Science*, 51(5), pp.707–728) and the volume *Fragilities: Essays on the politics, ethics, and aesthetics of maintenance and repair* edited by F. D. Rubio et al. (Cambridge 2025, MIT Press).

James Merron is a research associate of the Centre for African Studies Basel, where he earned his PhD in 2017. His research is concerned with the interface of Science and Technology Studies and African Studies. **Contact:** james.merron@unibas.ch.

The project *Grounding Crop Monitoring in Ghana* was led by James Merron, Emmanuel Proven-Adzri, and Henry Agbor Ayuk (picture: James Merron 2024).



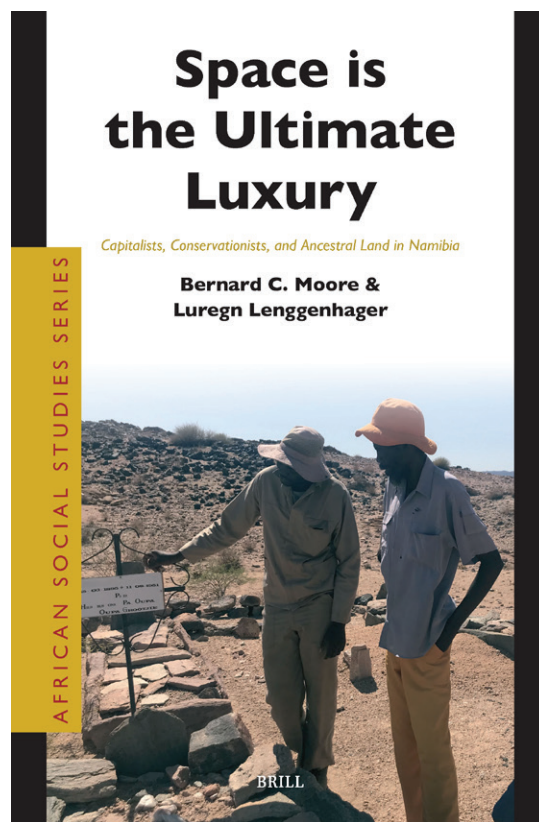
CURATED ESCAPES AND DERELICT LANDSCAPES IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE (SNSF STARTING GRANT)

■ LUREGN LENGGENHAGER

The Starting Grant project *Curated Escapes and Derelict Landscapes in Times of Climate Change* (CEDEL) investigates where the wealthy are retreating from the consequences of the climate crisis. Far-reaching environmental changes caused by climate change are leading to land degradation. Some areas are becoming increasingly uninhabitable. At the same time, the elite are creating exclusive escapes for themselves, from private islands and wildlife sanctuaries to virtual worlds. Starting 1 September 2025, the team will analyze the colonial-historical and racial-ideological origins of such escapes. The researchers want to explore the significance of such places for social inequality and the political consequences of climate change.

Dramatic ecological shifts not only give rise to 'Derelict Landscapes' where human life can barely subsist; they also lead to the creation of new landscapes—often envisioned and curated by powerful elites as exclusive escapes. These 'Curated Escapes' can take various shapes and serve various purposes. Some of these escapes function as safe havens for the wealthy seeking to flee climate-related distress, temporarily or permanently. These escapes can be located in private luxury wildlife estates or conservation areas in Africa, private islands, or off-grid, self-contained refuge in Antarctica, with some even aspiring for outer space. Alternatively, curated escapes can also be visions for saving entire populations fleeing rising sea levels or environmental collapses, such as the establishment of a new partly-virtual nation of Tuvalu.

Postdoc Bernard Moore and PI Luregn Lenggenhager already published an edited volume on the research theme (see Publications, page 50 in this newsletter).



This ground-breaking project will show that such curated escapes are not only elite fantasies. Rather, they need to be understood alongside land that is defined as—or will soon be—uninhabitable. Such derelict landscapes include: islands facing imminent flooding, such as the coast of Sierra Leone; areas becoming simply too hot to sustain livelihoods; or areas facing other environmental issues like desertification or biodiversity loss, such as parts of southern Africa. While increasing expanses of land are being declared—whether scientifically or merely rhetorically—derelict, not all of these landscapes will be completely uninhabitable, and some of them are being targeted as curated escapes for the elite.

The project investigates the long-standing political and ecological histories of both the creation and the curation of landscapes for elite escape in a number of selected sites, and it investigates how areas are rhetorically defined as inhospitable. This historicises curated escapes and the rhetoric of derelict landscapes, revealing how each is rooted in longstanding, racialised ideologies of settler colonialism, apartheid, and capitalist custodianship. Colonial aesthetics and imaginaries of nature shape contemporary manifestations and aspirations of elite escape, which were often made real through colonial and capitalist dispossessions. The project proposes that systematically investigating the relationships between curated escapes and derelict landscapes—in the context of past experiments, present endeavours, and future aspirations—can challenge established concepts of territory, statehood, and land rights in the Anthropocene.

Through formulating a comprehensive understanding of curated escapes, their historical roots, and their implications for populations facing climate catastrophe, this ambitious project develops novel and innovative methods and concepts relevant to several

scholarly disciplines. The project employs a bold interdisciplinary approach involving environmental humanities, political ecology, environmental history, and African Studies. This positions it well to understand (1) the dynamics of appropriating land and nature by defining it as uninhabitable for some, while turning it into luxury escapes for others, and (2) the establishment of new, curated escapes intended to save parts of the population from collapsing environments. Researching past, present, and future curated escapes and derelict landscapes not only challenges disciplinary and temporal boundaries, but it also contributes to two of the most pressing societal issues: climate change and social inequality.

Project Team

Prof Luregn Lenggenhager, PhD, Principal Investigator
Bernard C. Moore, PhD, Postdoc fellow
Angelinah Maponya, MA, PhD fellow
N.N.: Student assistant

Duration

01.09.2025–31.08.2030

Luregn Lenggenhager is a historian with a focus on environmental humanities, multi-species historiographies, conservation, land and border studies in Namibia and Southern Africa. He earned his PhD at the University of Zurich and was then Postdoc Fellow in the SNSF Project *Space in Time* at the Centre for African Studies Basel, followed by a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship *Past Natures for Future Conservation* (PANATURE) at the Global South Studies Centre, University of Cologne.
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INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: UNESCO CHAIR IN RESPONSIBLE GLOBAL MANAGEMENT AT THE BERN UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

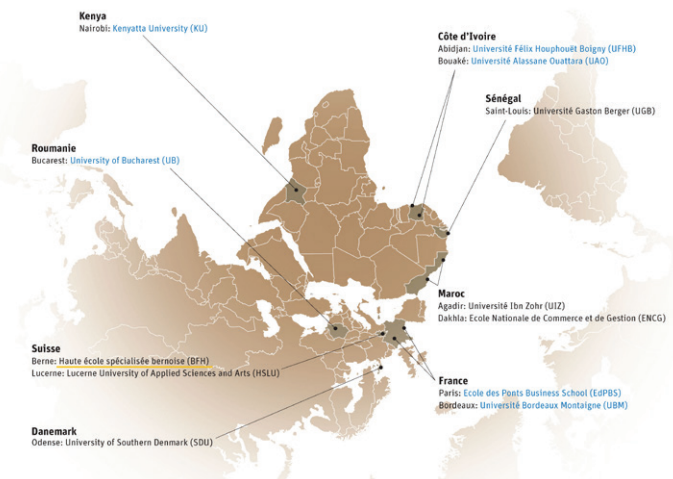
■ THE EDITORS

The Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH) now houses the *UNESCO Chair in Higher Education, Research and Innovation in Responsible Global Management*. In partnership with six African and five European institutions of higher education, BFH seeks to promote scientific insights and practical abilities related to the topic. “The award ... of the UNESCO Chair places the Business School among the ranks of high-profile global players and confers a position of national leadership in global management upon it”, Sebastian Wörwag, president of BFH, commented.

The chair is a key component in the continued development of the University’s Institute for Marketing and Global Management, managed by Christian Hopp. “Global challenges require international dialogue across all levels. The new UNESCO Chair will make an important contribution to the development of interdisciplinary, intercultural competence in increasingly complex fields of work”, said Pia Stadler, holder of the chair.

COORDINATION WITH THE AGENDA 2030 AND SWISS FOREIGN POLICY

Pia Stalder spearheaded the establishment of the chair in close collaboration with UNESCO. It is located at BFH’s Business School, which is headed by Ingrid Kissling-Näf. The chair pursues two major objectives. Firstly, it supports the Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Secondly, it monitors Switzerland’s foreign policy. In



2021, the Federal Council adopted its first Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa. It emphasises the continent’s increasing significance in global politics and the world economy, deeming Africa a ‘part of Switzerland’s broader regional sphere’.

PARTNERSHIP WITH INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA AND EUROPE

The governance of the UNESCO Chair will be coordinated with Professor Malika Abentak (Université Ibn Zohr, Morocco) and Professor Kalidou Seydou Sy (Université Gaston Berger, Senegal). The network of partners also includes four other African (Kenya and Ivory Coast) and five European (Switzerland, France, Denmark and Romania) universities.

APPLIED RESEARCH AND INNOVATIVE EDUCATION

Through its applied research projects and innovative education programmes, BFH participates in the strategic thematic fields of Caring Society, Humane Digital Transformation, and Sustainable Development. Across the University's seven Schools, around 7800 students are enrolled in 38 bachelor's and 48 master's degree programmes.

THE CHAIR

Pia Stalder is Professor for Intercultural Management at BFH and holds the UNESCO Chair for Responsible Global Management. Her research, teaching, training, and counselling activities aim to strengthen the development of interdisciplinary, intercultural, and international communication competences. These competences are key for respectful, peaceful, and thus successful collaboration across physical and mental boundaries. Pia is committed to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, in particular to education, equality, peace, justice, strong institutions, and partnerships. To contribute to the achievement of these goals, she closely collaborates with different partners on the African continent and beyond. She also lectures at the University of Bucharest (Department UNESCO Chair in Interculturality, Good Governance, and Sustainable Development) and at the University of Luxemburg (Master in Learning & Communication in Multilingual & Multicultural Contexts). Recent publications include articles about communication strategies in international work settings and on creativity in intercultural teams.



Prof Pia Stalder holds the UNESCO Chair (picture: BFH 2025).

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ENCOUNTERS • RENCONTRES • BEGEGNUNGEN

PAUL JENKINS, FORMER ARCHIVIST OF THE BASEL MISSION AND LECTURER IN AFRICAN HISTORY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BASEL

■ CLAUDIA HOFFMANN, ANDREAS HEUSER, AND VEIT ARLT

Paul Jenkins, honorary member of our Society, played an important role in promoting African History in Switzerland and beyond. As archivist of the Basel Mission from the 1970s to the early 2000s, he also pioneered the work with historical photographs, establishing them as valuable source for the study of History. Together with Barbara Frey-Näf he made the Mission's unique collection of 30 000 photographs accessible for researchers and the general public worldwide.

Paul Jenkins was born into a liberal protestant setting in England and studied History in Cambridge. In the early 1960s his wife Jennifer, also freshly graduated at the time, landed a teaching job in the newly opened Department of Biochemistry at the University of Ghana. Jennifer was urgently needed, so when the University was reducing the number of British and US staff in the Arts Faculty, Paul was able to keep his post at the Department of History not just for two but short of nine years—an early variant of a trailing husband. The period in Ghana has informed Paul's scholarly journey to this day. In 1972 he was appointed archivist of the Basel Mission and in this function he taught African History at the University of Basel from 1989, introducing young scholars to the field and to the archives, and playing an important role in the foundation of the Centre for African Studies Basel. In 1996 he was awarded the Wissenschaftspreis of the City of Basel and ten years later an Honorary Doctorate by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Basel.

THE SOCIAL HISTORIAN AS MISSION ARCHIVIST

Paul's "conversion" to engaging closely with historical photographs in the 1980s was largely triggered by his encounters with individuals beyond the mission context. In 1990 this led to his first essay on a photograph taken in the Bamum Kingdom of Cameroon. It all began, when during his time at the University of Ghana, Paul spent a sabbatical in the Basel Mission archives, identifying relevant documents for the study of 19th century Ghanaian history. Those early independence years were marked by a harsh critique of the missions, which left Paul uneasy. He sensed that there was more to the encounter between missions and African society than the absolute anti-colonial polemic allowed for. The abstracts of correspondence from the then Gold Coast to the Basel Headquarters, which he produced during his stay, continued the work of the late Hans Werner Debrunner and made key documents accessible to Ghanaian scholars.

Paul Jenkins at the graduate workshop *A Conversation with Theophilus Opoku* on 6 July 2024, the day the edition of Opoku's reports was launched (picture: Veit Arlt).



At the time, Paul was not interested in photographs. This was still the case when he was appointed archivist in 1972. Rather, he was bewildered and scared by the sheer mass of pictures he encountered and which were no longer organised. This changed when the Anthropologist Christraud Geary asked for access to the pictures from Bamum, Cameroon. Geary wanted to build on her already published ethnographic research on the Grassfields and add an original and innovative contribution working with historical photographs. Luckily, Paul was able to locate the images from Bamum. The subsequent work with Geary not only introduced him to working with photographs, but also to the history of Bamum. In the course of WWI, Bamum became a Muslim kingdom and part of French trusteeship. As a result, the kingdom sank into oblivion within the Basel Mission community. Geary pointed to the outstanding photographs by Anna Wuhrmann, a teacher of the Basel Mission in Bamum, who had portrayed Christians and non-Christians before WWI with the same sincere openness, pointing to a fundamental aspect in the contact between missionaries and local societies. The engagement with Christraud Geary, who indeed was key in placing mission photography on the map within Social Anthropology, also made clear that mission history as written by missionary societies or by the churches developing out of these activities tends to be practiced in a bubble. In order to overcome this restriction, it needs the encounter with scholars from History and Anthropology. With his training in Social History from the University of Cambridge, Paul became an important door opener in this respect.

OPENING THE MISSION FOR THE ENGAGEMENT WITH PHOTOGRAPHY

Emblematic for the view on photographs within the institution was the comment by an elderly staff member of the mission who had known the famous Fritz Ramseyer, long-time missionary on the then Gold Coast and a great photographer, personally. When Paul asked his colleague why nobody of her generation discussed Ramseyer's photography, she answered that his photography was not of importance (i.e. conversion and faith must remain at the centre of interest). It was again Christraud Geary

who triggered a change of perception. As curator at the Smithsonian Institution (National Museum of African Art), she organized the loan of the photo albums of Anna Wuhrmann to be exhibited in Washington DC. Suddenly, dusty and side-lined artefacts lying uncatalogued in the mission archive rose to prominence and the pictures of the mission teacher travelled as highly insured objets d'art to the United States. The exhibition solicited great interest and scholars in Switzerland started to take note of the holdings at the Basel Mission Archives. More and more pictures from the Archives were published in academic journals, magazines, and newspapers. This helped to promote the Archives within the institution and also changed the public perception of the mission through its open and active archive policy.

These impulses and the expertise of Christraud Geary provided an excellent basis for soliciting funds for a pioneering project to catalogue and digitise the holdings. The engagements of the Getty Grant Program and the Christoph Merian Foundation (and further donors) were key as was the new interest of the Basel Mission itself. With the social anthropologist Barbara Frey-Näf as leader, the project started in 1990 and was completed in 1998. The project team created an interactive data base seeking to capture the key elements (when, where, what, by whom, and why) of each photograph. Key challenges were the chemical decay, but also the archival rigor within the institution. Once the pictures had lost their operational importance, the archival discipline started to dwindle. Long existing pictures get misplaced, new additions are not properly catalogued and documented. Connecting pictures without information with those still documented was key. The activities in Basel spurred and facilitated similar projects in other mission archives. At the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles, Sociologist Jon Miller initiated the International Mission Photography Archive (IMPA) on the example of the Basel project but as integral part of the digital resources of USC. IMPA has been growing constantly and by the end of 2024, it contained approximately 90 500 pictures from 15 collections.

LEARNING TO SEE – THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN WRITING MISSION HISTORY

Archivist Paul Jenkins was also part of the mission's education team. In this function, he used historic photographs in training fraternal workers, juxtaposing pictures from the mission fields with others from rural Württemberg and Switzerland. This became a very stimulating practice with lasting effects and led to a differentiated view of the "civilising mission". Many of the missionaries came from rural areas, had reservations concerning industrialisation, and their ideals were informed by a pre-industrial, archaic lifeworld. This explains for instance their resistance to the colonial land policies in Cameroon before 1914.

Photographs can tell an important story, when researching the first contact between missionaries and local societies, a story that words at times fail to capture. A telling example is an image capturing a dance in front of a mission house in Cameroon, which was not part of the official collection and which challenges the narrative of the segregated mission compound and the sharp separation of Christian and African culture.



A staff member of the Basel Mission, who had lived in Cameroon, pointed out that the picture might depict the performance of *bornhouse* for the baby of a missionary couple. With this ritual, women from the village support the child's mother by supplying her with firewood, for instance. In this picture, the Basel Mission seems to be an integral part of the society and the mission compound a place, which Africans frequented on a daily basis. Rather than keeping at a distance, the two communities joined hands, supported, and had a genuine interest in each other. The afternoon workshops Paul offered to former mission staff were an important forum to discuss such images and at times could assist in uncovering lost information. For instance, the feedback received from the descendants of Missionary Spellenberg helped to define the place and date of this picture, the infant being Werner Spellenberg.

For Paul, the interpretation of pictures is a creative process which forces us to cope with missing details and to take detours—an interactive process, which might take years. Photographs thus firstly play an important role in visualising the daily life and work of missionaries. Secondly, they also give insights into the daily life of the host societies, which tends to be a much more challenging area for research. And thirdly, as the picture of the *bornhouse* ceremony above demonstrates, they convey information on life and communication at the contact zone.

In another picture, which at first sight blends into the series of pictures of Christian families from the 19th century south-eastern Gold Coast, the unorthodox arrangement of the group revealed hidden knowledge and status. Contrary to the conventions, the wife of the African pastor is positioned at the centre of the picture, whereas

Undocumented picture found on the backside of a portrait of Missionary Ernst Höhmann taken in 1931. The scene with all likelihood shows the *bornhouse* ritual performed for Werner Spellenberg (the baby) and his mother (Basel Mission Archives, QS-30.001.1474.01/R).



"Reverend Koranteng with his family". Akua Oye, the woman in the centre of the picture and wife of Pastor Koranteng (right), was the sister of *Ɔmanhene* Kwame Fori (r. 1880–94) and de facto queen mother (*Ɔhemmea*) of Akuapem (picture: Rudolf Fisch, Basel Mission Archives D-30.11.018).

Reverend Koranteng is sitting on the right hand side, the (grand) children arranged around the woman. Akua Oye was the de facto queen mother (*Ɔhemmea*) of Akuapem at the time and led the destoolment of *Ɔmanhene* Kwesi Akuffo. She was the most powerful woman of the kingdom of Akuapem with its matrilineal social organisation. In terms of succession, she was the dominant figure in the picture. Missionary Doctor Rudolf Fisch attempted to arrange a conventional picture, but obviously had to accept the agency and conventions of his African partners.



"Leopard killed near Abetifi (Kwahu)". A discussion of the picture on site revealed astonishing information on the missionary photographer (picture: Fritz Ramseyer, between 1888–1896, Basel Mission Archives QD-30.041.0049).

The exchange with scholars and lay people in the areas where the pictures were taken is key. It often provides important insight and a stark response to a Eurocentric view. Furthermore, it is important to engage in an open-ended analysis of the picture. A photographic image of a dead leopard in the collection of Missionary Fritz Ramseyer, for instance, revealed the position this stout missionary held in the local society. The animal is arranged as trophy against the backdrop of the picturesque forest scenery of Kwahu in Ghana. When Veit Arlt showed this picture to the elders of Abetifi Kubease,

they pointed to the fact that the leopard was the totem of the royal family and that, in extension, it was also the totem of the missionary, who had been integrated into the structure of that family. So this classic missionary figure with his white beard had actually transgressed a boundary and had “gone native”—or was he, perhaps, not fully aware of his promotion?

In Paul’s view, the access of art historians to mission photographs for a long time occupied too much space in mission historiography. There was a strong tendency to set the photographer at the centre stage of the analysis, thereby emphasizing his agency. The worlds beyond the immediate object depicted (i.e. the backdrop or the margins of the picture) often went unnoticed or were not sufficiently taken into account. Scholars used the photographs to say something about their own context and their interpretations blended in a Eurocentric and anticolonial historiography. Much information is lost when this kind of source is used in a rather reactionary fashion to support a broad consensual opinion.

For a long time, both missions and missiology were not interested in the holdings of historical photographs. The pictures merely served to illustrate. Those who wanted to portray mission in a new way would have preferred to discard all pictorial evidence of an old-fashioned mission practice. This is due to a very narrow understanding of mission in many mission organisations. There was hardly any interest in African history, which could be traced in these documents. Those scholars, who were mainly concerned with the agency, mentality, and life-world of the photographer, did not acknowledge the value of the African life-worlds depicted and their analyses always had a deficit. Instead, a genuine interest in African social structures is required to mobilise the full potential of the pictures also, of course, as sources for the church history in any given language or ethnic group. For Paul Jenkins, the interpretation of photographs opened new avenues for historiography. Importantly, unlike written documents, pictures do not require translation when engaging with people from the regions where

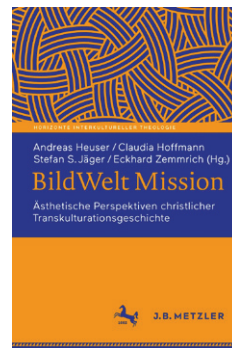
they were taken. However, looking back at the development of the field of mission history, Paul misses the iconic turn he would have hoped for. Such a turn would require reading the pictures to identify the social historical context and to do this with what he calls “there-centricity”, i.e. to place the culture, perspectives, and initiative of the population in the former mission fields at centre stage, in order to gain a better understanding of intercultural dynamics.

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This text is based on an interview conducted with Paul Jenkins by Claudia Hoffmann and Andreas Heuser, published in full length in the edited volume *BildWelt Mission: Ästhetische Perspektiven christlicher Transkulturationsgeschichte* (Springer, July 2025). The text was translated, shortened, and adapted by Veit Arlt.

BENIN BRONZES AND AFRICAN SOCIAL HISTORY

■ PAUL JENKINS

We were lucky when my wife Jennifer and I first went as teachers to Ghana in 1963. Instead of living on a campus we were housed at first in rented accommodation in Accra's suburb Kokomlemle. And in the evenings we would rest on our balcony learning with our eyes and ears to be familiar with our new environment, and its share of the million daily African miracles of people moving from place to place, on foot, balancing loads of all kinds on their heads.

At the end of the day many of these loads seemed to be pots of food being carried by children, adolescents, or young adults. Naïve as we were, we thought that in the capital city there were probably plenty of secondary schools and that pupils from rural areas would be taking street food from the little market up the road to the hired rooms where they slept. (Again, naïve as we were, we had not realised that most academic secondary schools in Ghana were, on the model of the missions, or of British "public schools", boarding schools.)

Being academics, though, we were trying to read about our new environment, and came across a description of the traditional family residence pattern of the native Ga population of Accra. It was centred on the core of the family: the male descendants of a polygamous family founder, a great-grandfather, for example. His male descendants lived together in one men's house or compound. Somewhere in the vicinity there would be a house or compound inhabited by all their wives, their unmarried daughters, and their small children.

We had been puzzling about a large bungalow next door where evidently many women and children lived, but while men visited, no man seemed to be resident. Enquiring, we came to realise that the old pattern of residence was still being practised by our neighbours: they were a traditional Ga women's house for wives of husbands living somewhere up the road. And suddenly our mental understanding of what we had been observing from our balcony over and over again in real time was transformed. Whatever else was happening, many people carrying food up or down the street in the early evening were carrying it from a wife's kitchen to a husband's room in the male house.

This transformation in our understanding of the social world around us sensitized us to the widespread and varied way of organizing marriage under two roofs in southern Ghana—something hardly anyone in a marriage in Europe contemplated then. Today, it is becoming more popular, a form of conjugal living rather different from the western nuclear family ideal prescribed by many missionaries, but still a marriage, based on ideals of reliability and friendliness, as well as sexual appeal and the desire for children. And it was an insight that could be applied to many situations we later observed among people of other ethnic groups. I remember my only long drive overnight through the Ghanaian forest, seeing ghostly couples in the hour before dawn walking between the trees, the man in front, the woman behind, both swathed in cotton cloth against the cool night air. Whatever else may have been happening, many were surely walking from *his* room where they had spent the night together, to *her* kitchen, where she would prepare food for them both, as a start to the day's work.

I was reminded of this experience of transformation when we visited Zurich in February this year to look at the two concurrent exhibitions (in the Rietberg Museum and

Oba Ovonramwen on board of the yacht Ivy being transported to exile
(postcard: Jonathan Adagogo Green, Benin City, Nigeria, published after February 1897 (Museum Rietberg 2020.617.435).

the Völkerkundemuseum) to accompany the return of “Benin bronzes” to that ancient Nigerian kingdom. I found the exhibitions troubling, and was looking for a way to explain this without being struck dumb by the volume and conviction of people writing colonialism critique. And I remembered that old experience of transformation, applied here not to what I was seeing in real time, but to one of the historical photographs on display. Ovonramwen, the last king of independent Benin, was portrayed by an African photographer on board the ship which was taking him into exile in 1897 after the British capture of his capital. He is seated, devoid of his indigenous tokens of power and status, and his expression is hard to read. Behind him as escort are three stalwart African policemen—or possibly soldiers—standing at attention. There is no doubt where decisive power lay—and people sympathetic to Ovonramwen and the stolen bronzes will look with disfavour at these mercenary traitors to the cause of African independence and the cause of upholding its rich and varied cultures.

Some years ago, however, preparing the MS reports of a 19th century African pastor to his Basel Mission employers for publication, I had cause to call up help with understanding what sort of men early indigenous colonial policemen and soldiers in West Africa were. Pastor Opoku had been sent in 1884 to lead a small Christian congregation in the interior of the Gold Coast. Christians mostly lived in a separate quarter of the town, according to mission regulations—a minority in a far larger population of what Opoku called “their heathen brethren”. In his shakedown weeks he was accosted by a critic who asked him (this is the verbatim text of the pastor’s translation into English of what was said):



“Sir, are you the man appointed to have an oversight of these Christians here?” Yes, was my reply. “But I am sorry to tell you that you have come here to have an oversight of policemen, instead of Christians.” How is that, I asked? “How! You will observe it yourself by and by, that they have the character of policemen than of Christians, for their extortion, oppression of the poor who received loans of them, in depriving them of their lands and property, their hard drinking etc have characterized them with the nature of police.”

This is a gem of a passage. It warns us that the political use of the Ghanaian sense of humour ante-dates colonialism. It also reflects the way that southern Ghanaian society in the 19th century was monetarized to a degree. Long before the cocoa boom there was a flourishing trade in palm oil as cash crop, produced and marketed by African farmers. But coinage was short, and many people were forced by circumstance to take up loans—to pay for a big funeral, for instance— for which they offered securities, in this case land and oil-palm farms. Why Christians were especially involved as creditors is not clear, though it probably had something to do with the Basel Mission’s aim, not least through its own trading company, to encourage the development of a prosperous and independent Christian class of indigenous farmers. Clearly there was a broad traditional expectation that default on a debt should be handled mercifully by the creditor—but Christians in this town, like policemen, were liable to enforce sequestration with no mercy if a debt—or a fine—was not repaid on time.

For this essay, however, the more important issue is to wonder about those colonial policemen. How did it come about that they were so little controlled and disciplined? One answer is *obvious*. These were the last years in which tropical diseases were still little understood by western science, and where attempts at treating them were at best hit-and-miss. As a result, at the level of white police officers, there were far too few of them to exercise real control. And in any case they were mostly based in the

coastal towns, a couple of days’ march from the kind of communities in the interior in which Pastor Opoku was working.

But a colleague in San Francisco added a vital insight. British colonial officials in this part of Africa at this time were still finding it difficult to recruit police from the resident ethnic groups in the coastal areas they claimed to control—a form of passive resistance to colonialism, if you will. So many police recruits were former slaves of African masters, born in the savannah north of the forest, who had been captured by African slave traders and brought down to work in the south, been emancipated by colonial courts, or *had* otherwise seized their freedom. Such policemen will have known and given in to the temptation to give representatives of their former master class a hard time, happy to let them suffer extortion and oppression, if they had the chance.

The policemen escorting King Ovonramwen into exile are standing at attention behind him, and their faces—drilled to show no emotion—may well belie emotions of angry satisfaction, as ex-slaves of African masters, that this representative of a powerful slaving system had lost his power over them. This, at any rate, is the mental transformation I propose as a corrective to the troubling impression those Zurich exhibitions had made on me. Benin was, of course, one of the string of great West African kingdoms which had grown rich largely by their involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade—reading from west to east Asante, Dahomey, Oyo, and Benin. Their degree of organisation is highly impressive—they were large kingdoms one hundred percent dependent on oral, and not written, communication. And impressive obviously is their skill in handwork and the arts. But to the end of their independence they remained slave states. And this aspect of their social history before and after the coming of colonialisation was, to put it mildly, very understated in the two Zurich exhibitions we had visited. I only recall one reference to slaves. I was looking for many more. And I had an uneasy feeling that also in the self-presentation by representatives of the Benin and

the Dahomey kingdoms linked to the return of stolen works of art, a discussion of the role of slavery in their old social, economic, and political systems was not yet taking place, and certainly not incorporated in their discourse about the colonial intervention and the fate of treasured and costly objects like the “Benin bronzes”.

Ghana was a lucky choice for us in more ways than one. When we worked there in the 1960s the prevalence of African involvement in slavery and slave-trading in pre-colonial years was so entrenched as part of the propaganda justifying colonialism that it was a taboo subject for our Ghanaian colleagues. They were not prepared to enter into any discussion of indigenous slavery, and attempts to work on oral tradition involving slaves and their emancipation, in my experience, met a wall of rarely broken silence. But over the years, a Ghanaian literature about African slave-trading and slave-holding has developed, initiated by the historian Kofi Baku, who is also a lawyer. He found himself listening to a case in 1995 in Ghana’s Supreme Court, whose judgement, to his surprise, confirmed that a member of a chiefly family, one of whose ancestors was known to have been a slave, was still debarred because of this from holding any of the main traditional offices reserved to that family. Baku is now involved in a campaign to get discussion in public of the Ghanaian involvement in slave-trade going. There is also now a good generalizing monograph on African slavery in Ghana by Akosua Perbi. And consciousness of the indigenous involvement in slavery has also been fired by stories like that of Ekow Eshun, a prominent Ghanaian figure in London’s art scene, who in 2005 visited his family in Ghana, expecting to hear stories of their anti-colonial resistance, only to find that his ancestors had themselves traded in slaves....

The Indian historian and novelist Amitav Ghosh, in his latest critical analysis of capitalism and colonialism, has noticed a parallel between the Atlantic trade in African slaves and his main study of the sea-born opium trade in Asia: “Europeans did not, by any means, invent the opium trade. Rather, *as with the traffic in human beings on the*

Atlantic coast, they took certain pre-existing small-scale practices and transformed them while also expanding them by orders of magnitude” [my emphasis]. The accusation that the Atlantic slave trade cast a pall of violence, cruelty and insecurity over the whole of West Africa is correct, and applies till a degree of colonial order was spread, eventually, in the last years of the 19th century, over the surviving indigenous slave states both in the forest region and the Sahel. In other words, those emancipated slaves in West Africa, acting out their revenge as policemen on their former masters, were part of the evolution and application of a definition of democratic human rights, which—however much battered by despots and frustrated by the unthinking wealthy—still represents a political ideal for which people, initially in the west, have fought for two and a half centuries.

And Ghosh’s “pre-existing small-scale practices”? Veteran Africa historians are not inclined to write a history of a happy and innocent pre-colonial “Merrie Africa”. But take a couple of steps back from the arguments about colonialism: many of the multiple social statuses which are translated undifferentiatedly in European languages by the simple term “slave”, originally had the function of allowing the organized extended family, which is the basic social building block all over West Africa, to expand by incorporating children and adults of other families into its structure. And—because well into the 1960s the search for an advantageous dependence was part of the life strategy of many of the young people with a disadvantaged background whom we met, we can hazard the assertion that becoming a “slave” voluntarily, locally, and without violence, was also part of Ghosh’s “small scale practice” before the Atlantic slave trade. And in the interstices of the broader picture of savagery it is possible that the old socially positive basis of creating new relationships persisted over the generations. Because: when European missionary colleagues of Pastor Opoku were instructed in 1860 by their distant Basel Mission directorate to emancipate all slaves connected to their congregations and put slave holders under church discipline if they did not

cooperate, experienced missionaries protested. Far from being the victims of harsh daily rule as on cotton plantations in the U.S. American South, the “slaves” they knew were treated as members of the family, eating from the same bowl as everyone else. If, for example, they were good at bargaining, entrusted with going to market with the family’s produce to sell or trade. Opoku, appalled at what he saw of the slave trade on a journey outside the Gold Coast Colony in 1877, also recognized the category of the “kind masters” which slaves in the slave market hoped to be taken up by. And in another connection he even gives us a glimpse of a “slave wife” threatening to leave her husband once emancipation was legal, and so negotiating her re-categorisation as a valued full-status wife as a result.

A humanistic social history of slavery before and after emancipation, sensitive to the different grades of “slave” in all the many different ethnic social cultures of West Africa, is still far away. But it is wrong if this aspect of social history, full of agony and emotion, dismay and maybe sometimes fulfilled hopes, is disregarded in the continent’s art history—or remains ignored on the chess-board of competing ideologies about colonialism.

READINGS

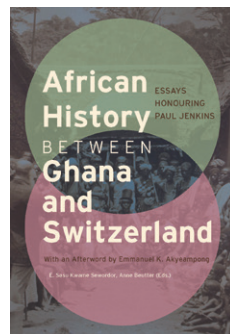
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FESTSCHRIFT FOR PAUL JENKINS



The essays assembled in this book document the formative decades of African history by following the career of Paul Jenkins from West Africa to Central Europe. It retraces his academic path while engaging his curiosities in, contributions to, and impact on the development of African history since the 1960s. The volume reflects on Paul’s academic services at the University of Ghana (1965–1972) and subsequently at the Basel Mission Archive and the University of Basel (1972–2003) in Switzerland as key sites where he established himself as a teacher and promoter of African history. These episodes led to lasting bonds of intellectual friendships between Paul and an array of scholars of Africa, several of whom contributed to this volume. It highlights the importance of resources Paul curated during the early 1970s, notably his *Abstracts of the Basel Mission’s Gold Coast Correspondences*, through which he increased access to the rich collections of the Basel Mission Archive for scholars of Africa.

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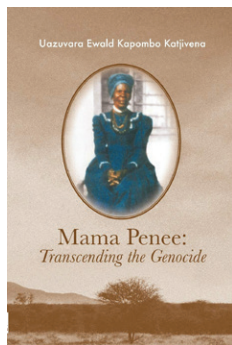
Paul and Jennifer Jenkins (centre) with their daughters Rachel and Susan at the launch of the Festschrift *African History between Ghana and Switzerland* on 8 November 2024 (picture: Veit Arlt).



PUBLICATIONS • PUBLIKATIONEN • PUBLICATIONS

MEMORY, SURVIVAL, AND RESISTANCE

■ NDESHI NAMUPALA



In *Mama Penée: Transcending the Genocide*, Uzuvara Ewald Kapombo Katjivena gifts us a profoundly intimate and historically significant biography that demands scholarly attention beyond its literary merits. Published by the University of Namibia Press in 2020, the book reconstructs the life of Jahohora Inaavinuise, known within her community and family as Mama Penée, a survivor of the 1904–1908 genocide of the Ovaherero and Nama peoples by German colonial forces. But more than a biography, the book serves as a form of historical reclamation, cultural remembrance, and narrative resistance.

That the story is told by one of her own grandchildren, Katjivena himself, a communication scientist, politician, and exilee, adds layers of complexity to the narrative. Born in Namibia in 1941 and now living in Norway, Katjivena is not only a witness to post-genocide generational trauma, but also a product of the values and teachings of his grandmother. It is no coincidence that he attributes his life's path, guided by self-discipline, resilience, and a quiet commitment to peace to her influence. This fact alone positions the book not merely as an act of commemoration but as a lived political and moral inheritance.

What stands out most forcefully in the book is the insistence on centring indigenous female subjectivity in the history of colonial violence. Too often, accounts of the Ovaherero and Nama genocide are mediated through external narratives, those of mis-

sionaries, colonial administrators, or European historians. *Mama Penée: Transcending the Genocide* corrects this epistemic imbalance by making the life of a young Ovaherero girl not a footnote, but the very frame through which we come to understand the genocide's emotional and cultural toll.

The scenes of trauma are stark and unforgettable. As a ten-year-old, Mama Penée witnesses the brutal murder of her parents by German soldiers. She wanders alone in the wilderness, surviving among human remains and vultures. She finds shelter with a Damara chief who risks his life to protect her, and later with her uncle, a former forced labourer. These episodes highlight the fragmentation of familial and social structures caused by genocidal violence.

But beyond survival, it is the theme of dignified resistance that gives the book its moral clarity. The account of Mama Penée burning her own skin with nettles to avoid sexual violence by German men is both horrifying and heroic. "I made an oath that no German man would touch my body," she declared. That her self-inflicted wounds were seen as signs of disease, and thus protected her, is a harrowing reminder of how survival for black women under colonial rule often required unthinkable strategies. This is not simply an anecdote of resistance—it is an indictment of colonial sexual violence and a testament to the creative agency of African women even in the most dehumanising conditions.

Katjivena does not shy away from the emotional implications of recounting his grandmother's story. Nor should he. He writes with a lyrical, almost poetic cadence, and infused with OtjiHerero metaphors and poetry. His biography of his grandmother is

more than a historical account; it is a tribute to a woman who embodied the spirit of a people and a reminder of the human cost of colonial violence. It is also an urgent act of memory, ensuring that Namibia's history is not told only from the perspective of the colonisers, but also through the voices of those who lived, suffered, and resisted.

Equally critical is the book's exploration of cultural symbolism. The ceremonial OvaHerero headgear, burned by a German employer, Frau Kirschner, is not merely an object but a repository of memory and cultural continuity. Its destruction becomes a metaphor for colonial efforts to erase OvaHerero identities. Yet, even in adopting German Victorian-style dress (a colonial imposition), OvaHerero women retained their traditional headgear whenever possible. It is this nuanced layering of adaptation and resistance that the book tries to capture so effectively.

As an opinion piece, *Mama Penée: Transcending the Genocide* offers more than a narrative of past injustice. It is also a meditation on the ethics of remembrance. How do we, as scholars, Namibians and even Germans, honour stories like Mama Penée's? What responsibilities do we bear in amplifying subaltern voices without appropriating them? How might her story inform contemporary conversations about historical redress, trauma healing, and gendered violence?

Katjivena's work prompts us to rethink how we narrate genocide not merely as an event bounded by dates, but as a generational wound carried in bodies, in silences, and in symbols. By placing a woman like Mama Penée at the centre, he challenges us to recognise the many forms of resistance that do not make it into official archives: the burnt skin, the mourning headgear, the quiet raising of grandchildren.

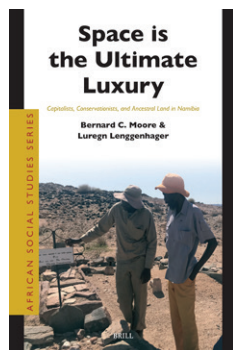
In a time when Namibian and even African histories continue to be contested, erased, or commodified, Mama Penée stands as an urgent act of storytelling. It reminds us that some of the most profound histories are not written in policy papers or monuments, but in the lived legacies of ordinary women and men who refused to be broken.

This book is essential reading for those interested in Namibian and African history, postcolonial studies, memory work, and gendered narratives of survival. But more than that, it is an ethical call to listen more carefully to the voices that history tried to silence.

UAZUVARA EWALD KAPOMBO KATJIVENA: MAMA PENEÉ: TRANSCENDING THE GENOCIDE. WINDHOEK 2020 (UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA PRESS).

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SPACE IS THE ULTIMATE LUXURY



This book explores the history, ecology, and society of a seemingly inhospitable stretch of land along the Orange River in southern Namibia. Here, a group of African farmers have succeeded against all odds to stay on their ancestral homeland through decades of colonialism and apartheid.

The 21st century, however, has brought different people looking to evict them: nature conservationists. These farmers face off against billionaire gemstone mine owners, rhinoceros veterinarians, and carbon finance executives, seeking to prove their legal and moral claims to their ancestral lands. This book reveals how we got here and what is at stake if they fail.

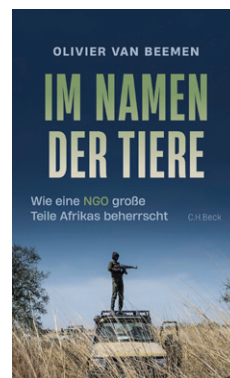
Published as Open Access with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

BERNARD C. MOORE AND LUREGN LENGGENHAGER: SPACE IS THE ULTIMATE LUXURY. CAPITALISTS, CONSERVATIONISTS, AND ANCESTRAL LAND IN NAMIBIA. AFRICAN SOCIAL STUDIES SERIES, VOL. 49. LEIDEN 2025 (BRILL).

Link: <https://spaceistheultimate.luxury/>



A CRITICAL LOOK INTO CONSERVATION IN AFRICA



African Parks is considered a success story in nature conservation. The NGO has taken over full authority from the state in more than twenty African protected areas, controlling an area the size of Britain. Safari tourism and donations from billionaires and Western governments bring the organisation high revenues. At the head of the organisation is a white elite that does everything in its power to present only beautiful images of big game and unspoilt nature to the outside world. Among its donors and supporters are celebrities like Prince Harry, Taylor Swift, and Leonardo DiCaprio, and Swiss philanthropists like Hansjörg Wyss and Claudio Segré. The organization has a fundraising foundation based in Lucerne.

African Parks grants armed forces extensive powers to protect the areas from terrorists, poachers—as well as from the local population. Local people are no longer allowed to enter the land they have traditionally cultivated. In his captivating book, Olivier van Beemen uncovers the state-like structures, the power of the African Parks militias, and the ruthless actions against the local population. Critics speak of “green colonialism”. Or is it the old colonialism in a new guise? And is African Parks’ conservation model—involving mostly white senior management, backed by a military approach—still relevant today?

OLIVIER VAN BEEMEN: IM NAMEN DER TIERE. MÜNCHEN 2024 (H.C. BECK).

BENIN HERITAGE IN SWITZERLAND



This multifaceted reader explores the cultural heritage of the pre-colonial Kingdom of Benin, in the territory of what today is Nigeria. Objects from Benin are held also in Swiss museums and, as in other countries of the Global North, have become the subject of controversial debate. The richly illustrated volume offers new findings on the historical and current significance of artifacts. Moreover, it highlights the current dialogue with partners from Nigeria and the diaspora, reflecting on the methods of cooperative research and the future of the objects currently kept in Swiss collections. Biographies of individual items

and examples of mediation and exhibition practice provide an insight into interwoven histories, the international art trade, and post-colonial reconciliation work between Africa and Europe.

Mobilizing: Benin Heritage in Swiss Museums is published as part of the Benin Initiative Switzerland (2021–24), a project by eight Swiss museums focusing on provenance research on artifacts from colonial contexts. Texts and images invite reflection on art works and values, relationships, and views of history. The close collaboration with representatives from Nigeria and the diaspora enables new forms of knowledge production. This not only sets cultural heritage in motion, but also the museum as an institution itself.

ESTHER TISA FRANCINI, ALICE HERTZOG, ALEXIS MALEFAKIS, MICHAELA OBERHOFER (EDS.): *MOBILIZING BENIN HERITAGE IN SWISS MUSEUMS*. ZÜRICH 2025 (SCHEIDEGGER & SPIESS).

PRIMITIVISME LITTÉRAIRE ET AVANT-GARDES



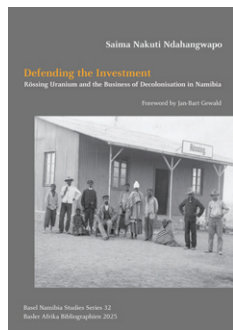
La notion de primitivisme repensée afin de mettre en lumière le rôle du référent africain dans le développement des avant-gardes artistiques et littéraires en Europe.

Alors que le primitivisme est devenu un jalon incontournable des manuels d'histoire de l'art, l'intérêt des écrivains d'avant-garde pour les cultures extra-occidentales a longtemps passé inaperçu. Ce livre s'attache à éclairer un faisceau de pratiques et de réflexions que les avant-gardes historiques ont associées aux cultures africaines dans les années 1901–1924. Le premier quart du XX^e siècle est

marqué en effet par la diffusion d'une culture coloniale en Europe, qui touche les écrivains autant que les artistes. De Guillaume Apollinaire à Tristan Tzara, en passant par Blaise Cendrars, Jean Cocteau ou Yvan Goll, nombreuses sont les avant-gardes à s'intéresser aux arts dits « nègres ». Aucune ne s'est rendue toutefois sur le continent africain. L'Afrique, dans leurs écrits, est une construction textuelle, fabriquée à partir de sources multiples. Cette enquête dégage les différentes strates de représentations convoquées puis transformées dans ce processus de resémantisation, et met en lumière la teneur discursive du primitivisme qui élabore une Afrique palimpseste. Par un examen historique précis et critique, elle révèle la présence d'un moment africain des avant-gardes littéraires francophones.

JEHANNE DENOGENT : *PALIMPESTES AFRICAINS – PRIMITIVISME LITTÉRAIRE ET AVANT-GARDES* (PARIS, 1901–1924). DIJON 2025 (LES PRESSES DU RÉEL).

THE LEGACY OF URANIUM MINING IN NAMIBIA



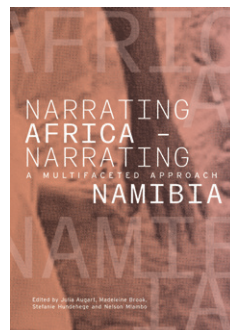
In the 1970s, Rio Tinto Zinc's Rössing Uranium mine became a symbol of injustice for Namibian nationalists and international opponents of South African rule. Yet, counterintuitively, the mine survived decolonisation in Namibia virtually unscathed and was reimagined as part of modern, independent Namibia.

Defending the Investment. Rössing Uranium and the Business of Decolonisation in Namibia explores the development of the Rössing Uranium mine during the colonial and early post-colonial period. The book presents a detailed understanding of the strategies adopted by big business in response to changes in

the political and economic environment in Namibia. It does so through a case study of big business and diplomacy in the establishment and operations of the Rössing Uranium mine under colonial rule and decolonisation. The focus of the book is ultimately on the public relations campaign which was adopted by Rössing Uranium in anticipation of the impending political change in Namibia.

SAIMA NAKUTI NDAHANGWAPO: DEFENDING THE INVESTMENT. RÖSSING URANIUM AND THE BUSINESS OF DECOLONISATION IN NAMIBIA. BASEL NAMIBIA STUDIES SERIES VOL. 32. BASEL 2025 (BASLER AFRIKA BIBLIOGRAPHIEN).

NARRATING AFRICA – NARRATING NAMIBIA



The project *Narrating Africa* began with an international symposium at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach in September 2019 discussing the project and how to narrate Africa from academic perspectives. Scholars from Germany, Switzerland, and Namibia engaged in intense discussions on a wide range of texts, genres, and research methodologies for two days. This book contains some of the papers presented at the 2019 symposium as well as further presentations on narrating Africa. Like the open-space project, this publication does not presume to give an answer to the difficult question of how to narrate Africa, but rather it seeks to offer further insights into the field with a special focus on Namibian narrations.

This book is divided into four different sections. The first part aims to provide an introductory overview to and reflections of the project's main theme, "narrating Africa". In part two, identity is explored and re(considered) along various literary texts and with a particular focus on questions of gender. The third part focuses on oral literature and questions of time and memory. Finally, the last chapters are dedicated to the archive and colonialism, exploring a variety of archive materials in Marbach and in Windhoek and how they take up and shape facts and fantasies of Namibia and Africa.

JULIA AUGART, MADELEINE BROOK, STEFANIE HUNDEHEGE AND NELSON MLAMBO (EDS.): NARRATING AFRICA – NARRATING NAMIBIA. A MULTIFACETED APPROACH. BASEL 2025 (BASLER AFRIKA BIBLIOGRAPHIEN).