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African Present

31.08. / Basel,
2.09. / Switzerland

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Second European
Students' Conference
on African Studies

2022

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Small part of the core organising team in spring 2022
(from left to right) Ellen Sow, Gelila Berhanu, Raluca-Maria Marcu, Xiao Meng, Elisa da Costa.
(photo: *Ivana Kocisova 2022*).

SESCAS 2022

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WELCOME



Dear all,

We welcome you to the 2nd European Student Conference on African Studies. After one year of preparations, we appreciate that you are joining us on this journey.

As you already know, SESCAS is a project developed through joint efforts by students from the Masters of African Studies Programs at the University of Basel and at the University of Geneva. It builds upon the first European Students Conference on African Studies which was held in 2007, and which attracted almost 100 participants from several European universities.

Wa lalaku. Habari. As-salamu alaykum. Grüezi. Coucou. Hello.

Our aim is to encourage connection and development of students within various Masters programs throughout Europe which work directly or theoretically with trends and understandings of Africa.

This year's conference is designed to highlight current research about and on the African continent as well as on the academic «gifts» African Studies has to offer the world. We strongly believe that sharing information and interconnecting widely with the academic community will accelerate international collaborations and help create fruitful connections among Master students and Alumni.

This year's conference is designed to highlight current research about and on the African continent as well as on the academic «gifts» African Studies has to offer the world. We strongly believe that sharing information and interconnecting widely with the academic community will accelerate international collaborations and help create fruitful connections among Master students and Alumni.

SESCAS22 is made possible thanks to the financial support received from the Swiss Academy of the Social Sciences and Humanities, Swiss Society for African Studies, Freiwillige Akademische Gesellschaft Basel, Carl Schlettwein Foundation, Max Geldner Foundation, Centre for African Studies Basel, and the Fachgruppe African Studies.

Many thanks for believing in our project and for your presence. Online or in-person, we are glad to have you here.

XOX SESCAS22 Team



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of Humanities and Social Sciences
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Swiss Society for African Studies
Société suisse d'études africaines
Schweizerische Gesellschaft
für Afrikastudien



Freiwillige Akademische
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seit 1835



CARL SCHLETTWEIN
STIFTUNG



MAX GELDNER
STIFTUNG



University
of Basel
Centre for
African Studies



**Wednesday
31st of August 2022**

08:30 **Welcome Coffee** | ground floor
Participant's Registration (all day)
Volunteers' introduction
∞ Networking opportunities

10:00 **Guided tours**
G1. Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB)
Centre of documentation and expertise on Namibia and Southern Africa
Guided tour offered by: Giorgio Miescher

G2. Basel-City tour
Keep connecting dots, exploring the city's "secrets" and understanding the relations between Basel and Africa
Guided tour offered by: Veit Arlt

12:30
Lunch & swimming in the Rhine

14:00 **Guided tour (for the late arrivals)**
- G3. Basel-City tour
15:30 **Learning to Unlearn Workshop** | room 103
Challenging Internalized Imaginaries in African Studies
Offered by Danielle Isler, PhD student & MASANO Co-Founder
Visual Installation: Reziproker Wissenstransfer | room 104
Offered by the Africa Center for Transregional Research (ACT), ENG/DE

16:00 **Get together and visit the Centre of African Studies, ZASB**
- *Discover the historic premises of a formal textile factory*
17:30 *Learn about the African Studies Program in Basel*
Join us for some refreshments and exchanges

18:00 **Keynote I** | Swiss Efforts to Support some Development Challenges in Africa | room 001
Speaker: **Randin Nicolas**, head of the Analysis and Policy Division in Bern, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

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19:30 **SESCAS
after-hours schedule**

Thursday
1st of September 2022

08:30 **Official Welcome & time for coffee** | ground floor

09:30 **Keynote II**, Born Coloured; not Born-free | room 001

- Speaker: **Benjamin Jephta**, *Musician, Composer and Music Producer*

10:30

Coffee Break

11:00 **Panel I | Moderator: Carole Ammann** | room 001

(Im)Possible Affections: Construction of Non-normative Relations and Critique of Heteronormativity within African Studies

Tabea Richter, LGTBQIA+ Communities in Uganda

Max Fuchs, Creating Spaces - Queer Activism in Namibia under Covid-19

Robyn Agbenu, Exploring the Impact of Ghana's Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values' Bill on its Queer Diaspora

12:30

Lunch

14:00 **Panel II | Moderators: Ellen Sow & Gelila Berhanu** | room 001

- Social Discourses: What Does It Mean to Be a Woman in Today's African Societies?

15:00 **Sabina Morgan**, Examining The Impact of Female Representation in The Governance of Ghana

Mahoula Ndjokwe Rose Nadine, Femmes et métier des armes au Cameroun: contraintes, discrimination et perspectives évolutives

Coffee Break

15:30 **Moderator: Melina Rutishauser**

- **Timothy Castillon & Keneuoe Leballo**, Sex for Water: Assessment of Zimbabwe's water shortage

16:30 **Elisabeth Perra**, Female Hip-hop in the Sufi Community of Taalibe Bay

17:00 **Alternative Events:**

Poster Workshop | room 103

Learn how to present your research in *poster* format.

Offered by Veit Arlt, coordinator of the Centre for African Studies

Quilombo featuring the artist of the Culturescapes movie project | room 105

Introduction by Elisa da Costa & Randy Mwatondange

Visual Installation: Reziproker | room 104

Offered by the Africa Center for Transregional Research (ACT), ENG/DE

17:30 **Living Library Basel** | Library St. Johann JUKIBU, Lothringerplatz 1, 4000 Basel

- Initiative by Manuel Brito

19:30

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Friday
2nd of September 2022 | *part I

08:30 **Welcome Coffee** | ground floor

09:30 **Parallel Sessions:**

10:30 **Panel III | Moderator: Henri-Michel Yéré** | room 103

Africa no longer as the World's Laboratory

Rahel Erhardt, Health Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Eritrean Population in Basel, Switzerland

Vincent Gaspoz, The Impact of Delayed Access to Treatment on Malaria transmission for *P. vivax* and *P. falciparum* Malaria: An evaluation using mathematical models

Panel IV.A | Moderators: Elisa da Costa & Danielle Isler | room 001

Imagination and Artistic Practices: Remedial forms of embodying current debates

Claudine Rakotomanana, Discursive silence: a contribution to the success of migration project for urban youth in Mahajanga

Berenike Eichhorn, Naming Daladala Stops in Urban Zanzibar

Coffee Break

11:00 **Parallel Sessions:**

12:30 **Panel V | Moderator: Luregn Lenggenhager** | room 103

Land Rights, Biodiversity and Ecology within African Studies: Relations between humans and their environment

Ursula Dikamba Mwenda, L'action de la République Démocratique du Congo face aux problèmes environnementaux posés par l'usage des masques COVID-19

Hager Akl, Biodiversity Conservation through Water Governance in Africa

Elynah Besoaminanjara, Death on the Land of the other: Burial rights and contemporary land ownership in South Africa

Panel IV.B | Moderators: Elisa da Costa & Danielle Isler | room 001

Imagination and Artistic Practices: Remedial forms of embodying current debates

Kelvin Acheampong, Old Wine, New Skin: The literary (decolonial) turn in African Studies

Oumou Hani Zakaria, Language and Education in Africa - Togo

Ana-Maria Plumb, The Impact of History on Fiction. The West African postcolonial novel from Chinua Achebe to Taiye Selasi

12:30

Lunch

- 14:00 **Panel VI | Moderator: Lisa Roulet** | room 001
- Revealing and Concealing History: What is (NOT) found in Archival Materials
15:00 **Odunola Oladeji**, The Politics of Decolonization and Inclusive Curation: The case of Benin Bronzes in European Museums
Caroline King, Ghanaian Artisanal Towns and Tourism

Coffee Break

- 16:00 **Parallel Sessions:**
-
17:00 **Panel VII, Moderator: James Merron** | room 001
Africa and Global Geopolitics: Humanitarianism, neocolonialism and the African Union
Emmanuelle Carton, Epistemological Foundations of the French Intervention(s) in Rwanda (1990-1994)
Javier Cantor, From Self-Determination to Neocolonialism.

Panel VIII | Moderator: Raffaele Perniola | room 103
Recollecting African Memories of Resistance
Veronika Blažejová, Narratives of the Herero Genocide of 1904 in Postcolonial Namibia
Guli (Ori) Dolev-Hashiloni, Eritrea: A land that devours its exiles

Coffee Break

- 17:30 **Closing Plenary** | ground floor

- 19:00 **Official Good-Bye** | Verso Bar Basel
& Closing Event with **Benjamin Jephtha** and his **Band**
reflecting on *transformation*, the *coloured identity*, the *coloured mentality*, and the *coloured and black relationship*.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Keynote I

Swiss efforts to support some development challenges in Africa

Speaker: **Nicolas Randin**, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Nicolas Randin joined the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in 1999. He is currently heading the Analysis and Policy Division in Bern, in charge of the medium term strategy of the agency. He worked as a counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations in New York (2014-2018), as Country Director of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and in charge of consular agency in Burkina Faso (2012-2014) and in Niger (2010-2012), Deputy Head of the East Asia Division in Berne, Switzerland (2006-2010), Deputy Country Director in Mozambique (2002-2006) and Water advisor in Peru (1999-2002). He previously worked as a water researcher at the “Swiss Institute of Technology” (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland, 1996-1999). He was posted in Mozambique, Angola and East Timor for the International Committee of the Red Cross (1993-1995) and in a private engineering consultant firm in Switzerland (1991-1992). He holds a Masters in Rural Engineering (EPFL) as well as a Masters in Hydrogeology (Neuchâtel).

Keynote II

Born Coloured; not Born-free

Speaker: **Benjamin Jephta**, artist, musician, composer and producer

The South African bass player, Benjamin Jephta, graduated the jazz program at the University of Cape Town (2013) and the MA program at The Berklee Global Jazz Institute in Boston, USA. With his project called "Born Coloured; not Born-free," he is delving into the experience of being a so-called "Coloured" in post-Apartheid, democratic South Africa.

“

I dissect my experience and created music centred around important themes. These themes included ‘transformation’, ‘the coloured identity’, ‘the coloured and black relationship’ and ‘the coloured mentality’.

My aim is to inspire and create a sense of hope, empowerment and unity in the South African experience, rather than alienating with a radical political approach.

The compositions draws musically from traditional South African styles such as the Ghoema/Cape Jazz and Marabi music as well as modern African music idioms such as Gqom (a style of ‘house’ music), kwaito and hip-hop weaved with elements of Black American Music.



Panel I

(Im)Possible Affections: Construction of Non-normative Relations
and Critique of Heteronormativity within African Studies
Moderator: **Carole Ammann**

LGTBQIA+ Communities in Uganda

Civil Society actors in a country with strong anti queer laws and public

TABEA RICHTER

Uganda used to have one of the strictest laws against Homosexuality and Queer Life in the world (including lifetime prison sentences for “aggravated homosexuality”). Despite this Law which has been ruled invalid by the Constitutional Court, many other laws that effect Queer Life are still in place, including some that are not specifically related to Queer topics but applied to them. E.g. prohibition of same-sex marriages, personation and the obligation of NGOs to apply for registration and to be approved. In addition, the constitution protects people against discrimination due to various reasons, but not because of sexual orientation. Together with the Anti-Queer opinion of the vast majority of the Ugandan population, this leads to a constant threat to the way of life of gender and sexual non-heteronormative Persons.

This is the field of tension in which Civil Society Actors are operating. On the one side the thread against their identity, health, personal freedom and their opportunities for living; on the other side their engagement against discrimination, violation of their rights and for acceptance of non-heteronormativity in the Society.

I argue that NGOs, some religious groups and individual (sometimes well known) persons make a change in the life of queer people and have a small impact on the general public as well. On the one side they are providing spaces for queer individuals where they can express themselves in relative security, to have a social network, to get health treatment and legal support. On the other side they are doing visibility actions (like a queer pride parade or posters) and offer knowledge dissemination about queer rights to both queer persons and the general public, e.g. including police officers. With the spread of information, they try to reduce prejudices as a first step against discrimination and towards acceptance and equal rights. Always risking that their participants are being outed to sympathise with Queer Persons or to be one themselves.

Creating Spaces

Queer activism in Namibia under the Covid-19 pandemic

MAX FUCHS

My thesis entitled *Creating Spaces – Queer Activism in Namibia under the Covid-19 Pandemic* investigated how the current Corona pandemic affects queer life and activism in Namibia. First, my thesis takes a look at the intersection of gender and sexual minority stresses with pandemic-related stressors. The stressors considered are mainly the political homophobia of the governing SWAPO party, queer-hostile violence, the legal status of LGBTQIA+ people in Namibia and their socioeconomic position. In doing so, I come to the conclusion that the pandemic and executed measures to contain the spread of SARS-Cov-2 worsened the living situation of queer Namibians. Shutting down the informal sector and thus losing income, pushing some LGBTQIA+ into criminalized and unsafe sex work, locking them into homes where they often are rejected, face discrimination and physical violence for their identity, expression or sexual desire as well as isolating them from their community and peers have great consequences for their mental health.

In the second part of the thesis, I describe and analyze spaces which were created by queer Namibian activists to cope with the pandemic, bring the community together again, and feel safe. I consider especially the newly founded event series of Drag Night Namibia and Pride Pop-Up as well as the many queer protests in Namibia in 2021. During my research, I found a contradiction between exacerbated sexual and gender minority stress due to the pandemic, while at the same time queer activism rocketing more than ever in the country. At the end of my thesis, I look at this phenomenon and, referring to my interlocutors, explain why Namibia's queer community felt a "sense of urgency" pushing them to action under Covid-19.

Methodologically, the thesis is based on a ten weeks' field research in Windhoek between July and September 2021. I refer to previous research done on issues of gender and sexuality in Namibia, impacts of the pandemic on queer communities in other regions, e.g. Sub-Saharan or broader Global South contexts as well as on social movements globally. Foucault's concept of heterotopias is of central theoretical meaning for my analysis to describe why the spaces created by queer Namibian activists work differently than the rest of Namibian cis-heteronormative society.

(un)Ghanaian Family Values? Exploring the impact of Ghana's promotion of proper human sexual rights and Ghanaian family values' Bill on its queer diaspora

ROBYN AGBENU

The submission of 'the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values' Bill to the Ghanaian Parliament in July 2021 drew global outrage for its severe repression of members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies in Ghana. The Bill, which has been labelled by some rights groups as 'the worst homophobic document ever' (BBC News, 2021), defines Ghanaian family values as respect for binary understandings of gender and enshrines a heteronormative notion of romantic relationships. It recommends the criminalisation of all actions that 'undermine' these values (Parliament of Ghana, 2021), with convictions resulting in prison sentences of between five and ten years.

Politicians, religious figures and celebrities from countries around the world have condemned the Bill, arguing that it is undemocratic, repressive and threatens to legitimise discrimination and violence against Ghana's LGBTQ+ community. Yet, little has been said of the impact that the Bill has had on Ghana's vast diaspora. In particular, the consequences that the proposed Bill has had on the queer Ghanaian diaspora have been ignored. Not only is this a gap in our understanding of Ghana, it also reflects the huge gap in knowledge about LGBTQ+ African diasporic experiences in Diaspora Studies, African Studies and Anthropology.

This paper provides a voice for queer Ghanaian women living in the UK to explore how, if at all, the proposed Bill has changed their relationships with family and friends residing both in the UK and in Ghana. It also considers the impact upon participants' national identities of the Bill's suggestion that homosexuality is unGhanaian. Given the existence of homophobic legislation in countries across Africa, this paper highlights the need for further research into the impact of African homophobia on its queer diaspora's sense of national identity and their relationships with fellow nationals both at home and in the diaspora.



Panel II

Social Discourses: What Does It Mean to Be a Woman in Today's African Societies?

Moderators: **Melina Rutishauser, Gelila Berhanu, Ellen Sow**

Examining The Impact of Female Representation in The Governance of Ghana

SABINA MORGAN

Globally women participation at all levels of decision making is still at its lowest. This can be attributed to patriarchy or male dominance which is a key aspect of the Ghanaian social system. Male dominance is a phenomenon, which is tangible throughout the life – cycle of women in Ghana. Women grow up in homes where the men are touted to be the prime leaders. Thus, they grow up with an unconscious bias, where they attribute superiority in terms of leadership to the male, in most facets of their lives. This research takes a critical look at the impact of female representation in Ghanaian governance. It considers a general overview of the state of female leadership globally and dovetails to the Ghanaian perspectives pre- and post-independence. It employs feminine institutionalism as a lens to understand the framings and conceptualisations of female politicians in Ghanaian Governance. It also identifies culture, type/nature of politicking, socio-economic factors inclusive as key barriers to the realisation of gender parity at the governance level.

According to Brenya et. al (2015), women's leadership and effective participation is increasingly on the manifesto of governments, bi and multi-lateral agencies, and nongovernmental organizations including feminist movements and female rights groups. Evidence from programs and research such as Munemo (2017 p.51) illustrates the crucial role of women as significant decision-makers in the development process in a multitude of areas. However, women's political participation has been curtailed in most African nations.

Overall, this research could inform Ghanaian government and policymakers in concerted efforts to ensure gender parity at higher levels of decision-making in governance. Theoretically the research study will contribute to additional knowledge in the factors that contribute and /or hinder the rise of females to higher levels of leadership. The study helps identify gaps in the policies, the availability of enabling conditions, and processes that may be needed specifically for enhancing this feat.

Also, academic wise, this research adds to the existing literature on the subject matter and will also serve as the basis for further study towards ensuring women's participation and leadership in governance structures as well as the establishment of quotas for women representation at diverse levels of governance. Also, the results of this study can serve as the nod required for the government of Ghana to enact a comprehensive legislative instrument to enforce an Affirmative Action Bill for women representation.

Practically, by recognizing their own capability, women would be expected to aspire to and assume roles of influence and power in society.

Femmes et métier des armes au Cameroun

contraintes, discriminations et perspectives évolutives

ROSE NADINE MAHOULA NDJOKWE

Soixante ans après l'indépendance, consacrant sa souveraineté nationale, le Cameroun vote une loi permettant aux femmes d'intégrer les secteurs de la défense et de la sécurité. Avec cette loi, le domaine de la sécurité nationale devint une affaire de tous. Malgré cela, peu de femmes s'engagèrent dans le métier des armes. Celles qui, nonobstant les préjugés s'y engagèrent avec dévouement déchantèrent très vite face aux tristes réalités du métier des armes. Sous le prétexte de leur féminité, les femmes firent exclues de certains avantages liés à leur cadre professionnel nonobstant les discours encourageant la promotion des femmes dans le métier des armes. La réalité sur le terrain aujourd'hui dépeint un tableau très sombre. Si les politiques de recrutement peinent à intégrer les équilibres hommes-femmes, comment expliquer ce phénomène ? Comment analyser la problématique de la participation de la femme camerounaise dans la sécurisation du territoire national en période de crise ? Quelles sont les perceptions des camerounaises vis-à-vis du métier des armes dans le contexte des tensions récurrentes ? Enfin, comment l'Etat camerounais impose-t-il l'aspect genre dans le milieu sécuritaire et armé ? le dispositif méthodologique devra adopter une pluralité des techniques de productions des données. Outre la lecture d'archives et bibliographiques, la démarche socio anthropologique (Olivier de Sardan, 2008, 2015) sera mobilisée. Cette dernière nécessite des entretiens semi-structurés avec différentes couches de populations et acteurs impliqués dans le secteur de la défense. En plus des observations indirectes, des focus groupes seront mobilisés dans la production des données. Outre l'introduction et la conclusion, ce papier sera structuré autour de trois sections. La première énonce les notions conceptuelles sur les métiers des armes (Debos ,2013) dans le contexte de tensions au Cameroun, le deuxième présente l'état de lieu de la femme dans le secteur de la sécurité, pendant que le troisième présente les études de cas afin de discuter des résultats.

Sex for Water: Assessment of Zimbabwe's water shortage

TIMOTHY CASTILLON AND KENEUOE LEBALLO

Zimbabwe has been experiencing water shortages for decades. In recent years, water shortages have continued to loom with not a clear end in sight. Like many other developing countries in Africa, water shortages impact more women than men. As the primary users, providers, and managers of water, when water sources fall into despair, women are forced to walk for miles to access water. The dominant explanation for this trend is the exclusion of women in decision-making processes in the water sector management, which perpetuated the impacts of the water shortage on women. Previous research has primarily focused on gender mainstreaming in water sector management. With the use of secondary data, this paper critically explores its impact on women's socio-economic activities and health. This paper unravels the effect of water shortages that have also brought sextortion in water allocation, where some women have been forced to use sex to access water. Thus, the paper's main point of argument is that further exclusion of women in decision-making and policy within the water sector will continue to have detrimental effects on women.

Consequently, the commitment by the government to ensure gender mainstreaming in the water sector should not only be reflected in the paper but also in practice. It is clearly shown how the country is far from reaching gender mainstreaming in the decision-making regarding water sector management. There is a need for strengthening institutional policies, strategies, and service delivery arrangements in facilitating the crisis while aligning it to provide equal opportunity to women. As there are so many institutions involved in water provision, the nature and characteristics of the laws and policies governing their operation vary greatly. However, despite these differences, the lack of specific institutional policy and strategy in including women in decision-making is a common constraint. It is therefore recommended that policy should be developed to explicitly endeavor to include women in decision-making. A gender approach is not a one-theme ideology that only works in certain areas; on the contrary, integrating girls and women, and investing in empowering opportunities, can change the world in many facets.

Female Hip-hop in the Sufi Community of Taalibe Bay

Interpretative analysis of the Sufi symbolism and meaning behind two music videos

ELISABETH PERRA

Senegal is a country in West Africa that is 95% Muslim and where Islam is deeply linked to hip-hop music. According to existing academic research, the emerging rappers in the artistic and cultural scene in Dakar are men and belong to the Sufi Taalibe Bay brotherhood, whose founder Ibrahim Niasse (1900-1975) is considered the spiritual leader of the rappers. Through the use of hip-hop, they communicate religious messages and attract many young people to Bay's movement.

My presentation concerns an interpretative analysis of Sufi and Islamic symbolism and the religious message present in two of Aida Sock's music videos: "Road to Redemption" and "The Highest". I study the meaning and Sufi Islamic symbolism of the musical material of a young Senegalese female artist belonging to this Sufi brotherhood, namely Aida Sock. Currently, no academic studies are acknowledging the presence of the female disciples of Bay and how they use hip-hop music as a means of spreading Sufi mystical Islam. I chose to focus on this artist and her videos because of the easy comprehension of the lyrics (both in English) and also because I considered her materials to be rich in Islamic and Sufi symbolism. In addition, the presence of posts on her social media dedicated to Ibrahim Niasse and the community confirmed her affiliation with the movement.

Videos:

(86) Aida Sock - Road to Redemption (Official Music Video) - YouTube

(86) Aida Sock - The Highest (Official Music Video) - YouTube



Panel III

Africa no longer as the World's Laboratory
Moderator: **Henri-Michel Yéré**

Health Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Eritrean Population in Basel, Switzerland

RAHEL ERHARDT

The importance of considering the needs of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants during the corona pandemic has multiple times been underlined. Multiple studies have shown that these minorities are exposed to an increased risk of acquiring COVID-19 and of having a higher risk of hospitalization because of multiple pre-existing risk factors. (1–4)

These risk factors include pre-existing health conditions such as obesity, smoking and preexisting comorbidities. Additional risk factors strongly associated with these minorities are the often present poor living conditions and poor health access. The protective measures taken against COVID-19 very often made the already insecure socioeconomic situation even more unstable and increased the distress experienced by this population group. This causes not only a negative impact on their physical health but also on their mental health. (3,5,6)

Yet there is very little research conducted on trying to identify how these risks groups perceive and deal with COVID-19. Furthermore, little has been done on the impacts of COVID-19 in the field of migration health in Switzerland and specifically on Eritrean immigrants. The aim of this MA thesis is, on the one hand, to find out more about the knowledge and attitude of COVID-19 of Eritrean Immigrants. On the other hand, it is to identify the health impacts of COVID-19 on their physical and mental well-being. Qualitative Interviews with Eritrean refugees and immigrants were conducted to assess the former and the latter.

The Impact of Delayed Access to Treatment on Malaria Transmission for *P. vivax* and *P. falciparum* Malaria

An evaluation using mathematical models

VINCENT GASPOZ

Under the supervision and the help of the Analytics and Intervention Modelling group (AIM) from the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute:

Clara Champagne^{1,2},

Christian Selinger^{1,2},

Maximilian Gerhards¹,

Emilie Pothin^{1,2,3}

1. Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Basel, Switzerland

2. University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland

3. Clinton Health Access Initiative, Boston, USA

Adequate case management is a crucial tool to reduce the malaria burden. One of its components, the time it takes infected individuals to access treatment after the onset of symptoms, impacts the severity of malaria. However, its effect on malaria transmission is still under-investigated. We used two deterministic compartmental models which include case management, one for *P. vivax* and one for *P. falciparum* malaria, to explore how delaying the access to antimalarial treatment influences onward transmission under varying scenarios in low endemic settings. A scenario consists of a unique endemic situation with an intervention that targets delays (i.e. the time until treatment fully clears asexual and sexual parasites) and effective treatment coverage of the blood stage parasite and the liver stage parasite (for *P. vivax* parasite only). Various baseline case management levels were assumed. Malaria transmission was evaluated in each scenario by computing the reproductive number under control (R_c), i.e. the reproduction number during effective case management. The effect of delays in accessing treatment of transmission is modelled by extending the infectious period of treated individuals. This delay must be large enough to overcome the pre-infectious period. For both models, we performed an uncertainty analysis and a sensitivity analysis, computing Sobol indices, in order to explore the variability in R_c values according to varying scenarios. For *P. vivax*, R_c values ranged between 0.1 and 5, with the largest variability in R_c obtained when baseline delays are small and baseline effective treatment coverage (chloroquine+primaquine) is high. In this model, at least 85% of the total variance in R_c is due to effective treatment coverage and 4% to delays with minor changes caused by baseline values. For *P. falciparum*, R_c values ranged between 0.4 and 2.4 and nearly 100% of the total variance observed in R_c was due to effective treatment coverage regardless of baseline values or treatment regimen (ACTs or ACTs+ single dose of primaquine). Regardless of the Plasmodium species and baseline epidemiological assumptions, effective treatment coverage is the most important contributor to outcome variance. For *P. vivax*, treatment delays are an additional factor towards malaria transmission variability.



Panel IV

Imagination and Artistic Practices: Remedial forms of embodying current debates

Moderators: **Danielle Isler, Elisa da Costa**

Discursive Silence

A contribution to the success of a migration project for urban youth in Mahajanga

CLAUDINE RAKOTOMANANA

In recent years, seeing silence as part of the linguistic process awoke the attention of many scholars. Various collections of articles and books demonstrate that silence is not only the absence of a verbal form of speaking (words). The urban setting of Mahajanga is a place of intertwined language repertoires including the discursive form of silence. The youth population of Mahajanga represents people from different language backgrounds but considers silence as one (common) language that explicitly effects every social interaction. By not understanding the dynamics and the powers engendered by silence, an individual encounters the risk of getting his/her agencies and personal opportunities revoked. This research examines the prevalence of the silence strategy regarding the fulfilment of life goals. By drawing a categorization of silence in this context, it is possible to identify which silence influences a specific interaction goal. The present study investigates the effect of silence in the speaker's face during their attempt at mobility. More specifically, it explores the causalities of silence on speakers, in the context of migration discourses: how does silence practice, promote self-esteem or affect interlocutor's agencies? The study is based on theoretical and empirical discussions. Looking at the performative aspects of silence, it focuses on young people aged 15 to 35 years old, regardless of their social status or educational background. Setting this age group limit allows a representative subset of the urban population of Mahajanga. As part of data collection, 20 interviews with open-ended questions (in a form of discussion instead of question-answers) were carried out for this work. Beyond the scope of interviewing, while conducting the research, (non-)participant observation and focus group methods helped a lot to collect data.

Naming Daladala Stops in Urban Zanzibar

Towards a non-representational study of toponyms

BERENIKE EICHHORN

With around 40 bus lines, the daladala system on Unguja island is one of the major means of public transportation. Every day, minibuses run on semi-fixed routes along a number of stops throughout the urban areas of Zanzibar City. To be allowed on the road, the privately owned buses have to be registered and acquire a license from the Ministry of Communication and Transport. But aside from some very few exceptions, this branch of the Zanzibari government does not dictate where a stop is set up, nor how it shall be named.

Following daladala stops throughout urban Zanzibar, I turn towards dynamics around naming and attempt to shed light on practices and performances which constitute the place of the bus stop. Drawing from non-representational theory (Thrift 2008), my thesis turns towards everyday practices and performances in order to find out what each stop reveals when we consider its name to be more than a representation or a symbol for something else. What are we able to see if we look at place names beyond the paradigms of power, resistance, and metaphors of text?

Since the critical turn in the 1990s, toponymy research has tended to consider place names as political symbols and tools of power. Analyses have focused on memorialization and identity politics in light of nation-building, contested ideologies, and the fight for recognition among marginalized communities. Conventionally viewed as signifiers (as a text to be read and deciphered), understandings of toponyms have therefore been deeply rooted in Saussurean semiotics.

However, the names of interest to my thesis have neither been decided upon by an official administrative board, nor did the British colonial presence have any lasting impact on toponymy in Zanzibar. Often-used concepts such as that of the 'city-text' (Duncan 1990) cannot capture the daladala stop names, because due to the lack of an institutionalised authorship, they evade precisely that authority which critical toponymy research places as the centre of its scientific endeavour.

The Zanzibar case allows for a consideration of place names as neither mere representations nor 'cultural' symbols of an abstract social structure. With empirical data acquired during fieldwork in Zanzibar, the thesis aims at demonstrating how the names of daladala stops emerge through relationality and within everyday practices and performances as vital constituents of the places to which they belong.

Old Wine, New Skin

The literary (decolonial) turn in African Studies

KELVIN ACHEAMPONG

The literary turn in African Studies is conceptualized here not as entailing the shift to textual analysis and discourse analysis pioneered by Edward Said, but as how African literary figures have contributed to the advancement of decoloniality and African Studies. Its point of departure is the “decolonial turn”, explicated by Nelson Maldonado-Torres as the “massive theoretical and epistemological breakthroughs in the works of Third World figures.” Although these breakthroughs, as a concerted effort, act as a counterpoint to the “colonizing turn”, the decolonial turn is not a single, univocal or homogeneous movement but a “family of diverse positions that share a view of coloniality as a fundamental problem in the modern age... and of decolonization / decoloniality as a necessary unfinished task.” Because of the vastness of the intellectual and academic productions of African literary writers and scholars, this work is focused on Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Osiris Rising*, Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *The Book of Not* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*, representing literatures from three generations of African literary productions. The ideas of generations and turns in literary studies, in particular, and African Studies in general, are complicated by overlapping ideological dispositions of the writers.

Language and Education in Africa - Togo

OUMOU HANI ZAKARIA

According to the United Nations HDI 2020, the top 10 most underdeveloped countries in the world are all African countries - despite it being a continent full of natural and human resources. Thus, as an African, I have often wondered why a continent, full of human capacity and potential as well as an abundance of natural resources, has been unable to effectively tap into its resources for its own development? As someone who has had the opportunity to travel and live in other countries outside the continent, I have come to the realization that quality education could be and is one of the key answers to sustainable development in Africa. By development, I mean, “a process of expanding the freedoms that people enjoy” as the Nobel-prize winner Amartya Sen puts it (Frankema, 2018). By quality education, I am referring to language policies in classrooms. Various academic research on the topic of language politics in education traverses from debates on the problems of using former colonizers' languages as official languages in Africa, to the necessity of promoting learning in African languages. The latter offers more hope to some Africans as a way of truly feeling independent; but, the approach of African language implementation in education has proven difficult due to challenges associated with lack of support from the state, and the insistence of parents about the importance and benefits of those (European) languages on the international arena.

As a child growing up in Togo, I had to learn French at the age of six. In a classroom designated for only French-speaking and learning, I struggled having to juggle three other languages I had acquired through my parents and community prior to attending school. Based on this experience along with findings from studies on language policies in classrooms, I have come to some conclusion that the actual problem is not the choice of languages themselves; instead, the gap that limits students' capacity and potential (on the continent) are the policies around them in these different spaces.

For example, in the classroom, you are not allowed to speak a local language. At home you cannot speak French. With your community and friends, you have to constantly navigate between the two. Additionally, drawing from my experience of learning English, as my fifth language, at the age of sixteen as an immigrant in a school in New York further supports the theory that the best approach is bringing together languages without any restrictions. This allows students to tap into their full linguistic repertoires, a practice some scholars refer to as “translanguaging”.

Therefore, for my master's thesis, I have decided to focus my research on classroom practices in Togo. I have conducted field research in an elementary school in Lomé and observed the teaching practices of teachers, in terms of how they sort out their teaching materials and teach young children a foreign language. My aim was to understand if translanguaging occurs; and to explore the possibilities and limitations of translanguaging within those particular classrooms, including how they can be made visible to the state. I hope my findings offer possible approaches that allow for a compromise between education stakeholders, parents, teachers, and students.

The Impact of History on Fiction

The West African postcolonial novel from Chinua Achebe to Taiye Selasi

ANA-MARIA PLUMB

In this study, I present a perspective on West African postcolonial literature, regarding two novels: *Things fall apart*, by Chinua Achebe, *Ghana must go*, by Taiye Selasi. In the first part of the paper I explain the context in which we may discuss this type of literature – exposing the beginning of the postcolonial novel, and referring to the historical, socio-economic, political and cultural context, with the aim of transposing the metamorphosis of the literature of ideas into the literature that counters them. In this section I have highlighted the aspects that I considered significant in the process of deconstructing the colonial literature and creating the postcolonial one.

First of all, there are a series of important events and personalities from Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things fall apart*, in which a traditional Nigerian community has undergone radical transformations that have taken place with the arrival of Europeans on the African continent. Later, I illustrate the effects of the interaction between West African and Western men in the contemporary world as represented in Taiye Selasi's novel, *Ghana must go*.

I also present the evolution of the literary themes encountered in the two postcolonial novels. In two ways, the impact of the appearance of the white men becomes evident: at the administrative level, by imposing a Western model of organization and at the level of the collective mentality, by changing the system of values and principles of functioning within the traditional West African community.

For this study, I analyzed various sources of documentation (such as: biographies, literary texts, universal literature histories, media materials, etc.) and compared a novel by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, published in 1958 to one published in 2013, by a contemporary author, Taiye Selasi, in order to observe the correlation between history and fiction, and to outline a diachronic perspective on the West African postcolonial novel.



Panel V

Land Rights, Biodiversity and Ecology within African Studies: Relations between humans and their environment
Moderator: **Luregn Lenggenhager**

L'action de la République Démocratique du Congo Face aux Problèmes Environnementaux Posés par l'Usage des Masques COVID-19

URSULA DIKAMBA MWENDA

L'apparition de la maladie à coronavirus (COVID-19) dans le monde a nécessité des mesures de riposte sans précédent visant à protéger la santé individuelle et publique. C'est ainsi que les Etats, membres ou observateurs de l'OMS, ont, pour riposter contre la pandémie de Covid-19, imposé le port obligatoire de masque.

En RDC, l'usage obligatoire des masques par des millions des Congolais entraîne des répercussions environnementales évidentes. Il y a une augmentation des déchets résiduels notamment dans les rues, les installations médicales, les rivières, et près des sources d'eau potable. Ces problèmes constituent une menace à la pleine jouissance du droit à un environnement sain garanti par les instruments tant nationaux qu'africains du droit environnemental (droit continental africain, droit national des Etats membres de l'Union africaine et droit coutumier des différents peuples africains).

En effet, le droit à un environnement sain et la protection de la nature contre les atteintes environnementales sont garantis par la Constitution congolaise (art. 53, 47, 48, 58 et 59 Cst.) et plusieurs lois de mise en œuvre du droit à un environnement satisfaisant et global notamment la loi n°11/009 du 09 juillet 2011 portant principes fondamentaux relatifs à la protection de l'environnement, loi n° 15/026 relative à l'eau, loi n° 011/2002 du 29 août 2002 portant code forestier (art. 47 al. 2, 48, 2ème phr., 54-56, 122 et 123 Cst.). De même, la Charte Africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples, incorporée dans l'ordre juridique congolais et appliquée en vertu des articles 215 et 153 al 4 de la Constitution, garantit un droit à un environnement sain en ses articles 24, 16 et 21.

Face à ces problèmes environnementaux posés, nous devons parallèlement, tout en essayant de contenir les menaces que fait peser la Covid-19 sur notre santé publique, notre humanité, notre sécurité collective, notre bien-être, notre prospérité, lutter contre la dégradation de la planète, en recourant à des modes de consommation et de production durables, en assurant la gestion durable de nos ressources naturelles, de nos déchets, afin de répondre aux besoins (lutte contre la Covid-19) des générations actuelles et futures (vivre dans un environnement sain).

Biodiversity Conservation through Water Governance in Africa

HAGER AKL

The African continent is heterogeneous. Countries have their own history, cultures, traditions, social norms, and political interests that shaped their interpretation of the world. Therefore, water is a complex dynamic; the transboundary of water shared among the riparian states created social, political, and economic tensions (Schmeier et al., 2019). As an example, the discourses of water sharing, allocation, and management among the states have created disputes (Jungud, 2021). Such complicated dynamics have challenged global institutions' abilities to create regional or global scale agreements to govern different water dialogues. Water is a scarce resource, with 70% of water coverage worldwide, only 3% of that water is fresh (USBR, n.d.). However, 2.5% of that freshwater is unreachable as it is locked down in glaciers or is just not accessible, so the world is only left with 0.5% of freshwater (USBR, n.d.). Such a fact can be seen as threatening and yet water management and governance schemes are weak and not prioritized (United Nations Water, n.d).

Water is an important component of any ecosystem, and for that reason it needs to be discussed in the context of biodiversity and wildlife (Sarkar, 2020). All living organisms need water to grow and survive. Therefore, the protection and conservation of the biodiversity and wildlife of Africa are strongly impacted by access to freshwater. However, freshwater resources in Africa are under pressure from anthropogenic threats like land degradation, pollution, and overexploitation (United Nation Environment Programme, 2017).

These issues have caused changes in water quality and rainfall patterns which threaten the survival of many species. Healthy African ecosystems are crucial for food, water, energy, health, and livelihoods. In Africa's rural areas more than 62 percent of the population rely on services provided by ecosystems (United Nation Environment Programme, 2017). Natural resources also contribute to economic and social development. A holistic interpretation of ecology and wildlife conservation is required to tackle the issue from the core while maximizing the benefits.

Death on the Land of the Other

Burial rights and contemporary land ownership in South Africa

ELYNAH BESOAMINANJARA

Burial rights have always been intrinsically linked to land rights. Countries have adopted different approaches concerning these two rights. This study aims to demonstrate how broad conceptions of the notions of “occupant” and “resident” can reconcile traditional stances on burial rights with the land owner’s rights. In doing so, particular attention will be given to South African jurisprudence following the Land Reform Act of 1996.

South Africa’s post-apartheid land reform Act led to extensive recognition of traditional land tenure and land occupancy rights. Furthermore, judges have adopted generous jurisprudence extending the notion of “occupant”. A broad conception of the notion of “occupant” favours traditional land tenure. Such an approach challenges exploiter’s rights while enabling completion of traditional rites. The choice of privileging this conception contrasts with a predominant approach favouring the effective residency criterion.

Restraints on burial rights often pertain to land availability and the problematics related to urbanisation. As rural exodus becomes more frequent, redefining the notions of “occupant” and “resident” seems necessary. African towns are growing larger and larger. Therefore, adopting an appropriate burial rights approach is paramount. South Africa’s approach appears as an ideal, as it balances freedom of religion and land ownership. However, it triggers investors’ hesitation as security of land ownership can be jeopardized by exploitation. Moreover, as burial rites vary among tribes, the question of the extent of the recognition of rights arises. Consequently, this study aims to analyse the decision process concerning burial rites among kinship as well. The case of a widow’s place in the decision process is examined as a possible representative of the dynamics within groups and will therefore serve as a point of analysis. In this matter, South African judges have adopted a viewpoint privileging compliance with international human rights commitments. In that lies the stakes of a coherent reform concerning burial rights.



Panel VI

Revealing and Concealing History: What is (NOT) found in Archival Materials

Moderator: **Lisa Roulet**

The Politics of Decolonization and Inclusive Curation

The case of the Benin Bronzes in European Museums

ODUNOLA ALEXANDER OLADEJI

This essay inquires into the very populist notion of decolonization emboldened in global discourses, delineating the scope of the focus to the longstanding home of artworks and artefacts. In another vein, inclusivity is another premium that is supposed to consolidate decolonization and outplay the tokens of power structures particularly in the institutions of ethnographic museums. While these parlances are vastly gaining traction in the interest of revisiting the past and righting the present, the aim of this essay is to equate the buzz around decolonization and inclusive curation with real and tangible complementary evidence. In the course of achieving this, the focus is on the highly placed and controversial Benin Bronzes of the then Benin kingdom (now in modern-day southern Nigeria) in European museums. This work, beyond the conjectures of good interests, draws upon existing scholarship to walk the path of history, inquires into the dynamics of decolonization, and appraises the efforts of ethnological museums in Europe on the ongoing decolonization agenda.

Ghanaian Artisanal Towns and Tourism

CAROLINE KING

This Master thesis takes a closer look at the artisanal towns Bonwire, Pankronu and Ahwia, located outside of Kumasi in the Asante region of Ghana. The towns focus on Kente cloth weaving, pottery and woodworking and are considered the origin places of their respective trades, which they have been able to preserve throughout colonial rule up to today. Touristic interest in these traditional works have led to a revival and increased economic interaction in these villages. By taking a closer look at how history and the role of memory is perceived and used for tourism, I have gained insights into changes that occurred in the towns over time and what has influenced these changes. The historical narrative was reconstructed through archival materials and Thomas Bowdich's travel journal, retelling his experience while traveling from Cape Coast to Kumasi in the 19th Century. The perception of memory today is reconstructed through interviews in the towns. I am particularly interested in how people have learned about their history, how it is retold and how the trades in their respective towns have preserved the memory of the town. Furthermore, I am interested in how people perceive the impact of tourism on their towns and what they think of their communities and if there is anything that they would change. The interviews were analyzed and compared. Since the towns are not equally popular among tourists and produce products that are used in various contexts, their answers to questions about touristic impact and community infrastructure might vary. This comparison also illustrates if and how tourism has impacted artisanal work, what kind of people are involved in the process and if the process has changed in recent years.

The analysis of these artisanal villages in the context of history, memory, and tourism will on the one hand demonstrate how history and memory is passed on through generations and craftsmanship, and on the other hand will illustrate the impact of tourism on artisanal villages and their ability to utilize this new and growing market.



Panel VII

Africa and Global Geopolitics: Humanitarianism, neocolonialism and the African Union
Moderator: **James Merron**

Epistemological Foundations of the French Intervention(s) in Rwanda (1990-1994)

EMMANUELLE CARTON

When the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), composed of Tutsi refugees in exile, invaded Rwanda on October 1, 1990, a French military intervention was launched to support President Habyarimana against the attack. Following this event, France remained in Rwanda, to support the regular government in its fight against the RPF. After Habyarimana's plane was shot down on April 6, 1994, a genocide took place resulting in the death of 800,000 to 1 million Tutsi and Hutu moderates. Many scholars, activists, and journalists have dedicated their research to the historical dynamics and motives for France's support to the Rwandan standing regime.

This work attempts to discuss the epistemological foundations of the intervention(s). It will illuminate the process of the French 'racist ethnic politics' through the understanding French actors had of the Rwandan conflict. Furthermore, the research illustrates how French decision-makers justified the interventions. Their discourses followed an idea of interventionism to implement democracy, human rights, and peace in Rwanda, which dismissed the existence of the hyper ethnicized Rwandan regime which based its discourse on ethnic hatred, including Hutu supremacy against the Tutsi minority. My work critically engages in researching the way France saw itself and the African 'Other' at the time of the intervention. Based on an epistemological exploration, the way France understood the Rwandan conflict was viewed as being a politics of "epistemic ignorance" (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007).

This research follows a fieldwork collection of data analysis in France and Rwanda. The conceptual and the empirical data are able to inform the analytical part that discusses the epistemological foundations of the French intervention in Rwanda. This research reveals a political decision-making matrix situated in a specific context, time, and place and inevitably highlights a crucial lack of fine analysis on African politics in 1990, far from being freed from a matrix of knowledge inherited from French imperialism.

In the process, this research challenges the Eurocentric theoretical perspectives underlying the normative engagement of, on the one hand 'democratization' through interventionism, and on the other hand, 'ethnicity' within the French political and culturalist arenas of presenting ethnicity as "retrogressive and divisive" (Mhlanga, 2013). It is further argued that the scarcity of the French conflict analysis lens - stepping out from a complete understanding of the roots, triggers of the Rwandan conflict, the ideologies of the RPF - has thus led France to engage in a logic of intervention, directly embedded in Neocolonialism.

From Self-Determination to Neocolonialism

The development of political thought of Kwame Nkrumah in exile:
London (1945) Nueva Guinea (1966)

JAVIER CANTOR

Nkrumah, was the president of the first sub-Saharan colony to emerge from European colonial rule and one of the first leaders in the colonies who forged independence, anticolonialism, anti imperialism and Pan-Africanism. He went from being an advocate of the pacific way to achieve independence to being one of the supporters of violence. Furthermore, he lived on three different continents as a migrant and exile and transformed from being a useful ally of the Western powers to one of its most bitter critics. Particularly remarkable in the early stage of his career was his use of concepts such as self determination and human rights. Such concepts were frequently used by all the groups involved in the decolonization war with different agendas and different meanings that overlap each other. Due to this conceptual fuzziness, some questions arise. For instance, whether the rhetoric of self determination was only a façade used by the colonial powers to exert control and domination, through more subtle and paternalistic ways. On the other hand, we can also argue that self determination was an important victory for the anticolonial movement, since they were able to appropriate the term and broaden its significance to make it also valid in non-western scenarios.

Thus, in the course of this paper I explore ways in which Nkrumah's thought interplayed with the concept of self determination during the period 1945-1966 by exploring not only his books and speeches but how they interact within the new constellation of ideas regarding human rights. Finally, the conceptualization of neocolonialism is relevant today as it reflects the many forms of domination, and the ways in which colonialism can morph and mask itself. Thus, even the rhetoric of human rights, as a discourse that draws on the fragility of third world countries, serves as a means to assure the geopolitical pursuits of economic interests of western countries with international acceptance.



Panel VIII

Recollecting African Memories of Resistance
Moderator: **Raffaele Perniola**

Contradictions and Challenges in Representing the Past

Narratives of the Herero Genocide of 1904 in Postcolonial Namibia

VERONIKA BLAŽEJOVÁ

In contrast to other African countries, Namibia is often considered a success story, especially when it comes to relative social stability and racial peace. However, a closer critical perspective reveals a whole host of issues linked primarily to the continued centralization of power, and the subsequent marginalization of the political opposition since the country's independence of 1990. As elsewhere in the region of Southern Africa, SWAPO is the national liberation movement which gained control over the political sphere and managed to consolidate its dominant position. Moreover, in pursuance of their nation-building ambitions, SWAPO shaped public discourse within Namibian society to a considerable extent. The impact of the continued domination by the ruling SWAPO party is salient in particular in relation to memory politics concerning the Herero-Nama genocide of 1904.

This lecture focuses on the politics of remembering and forgetting in Namibia. It argues that despite the creation of new postcolonial public remembrance, legacies of colonialism are not subject to intense memory work in Namibian public and political discourse. By and large, the official memory politics shaped by SWAPO is restricted to the frame of reference of the armed struggle. In contrast to the highly selective remembering promoted by SWAPO which presents a homogeneous and exclusive account of the colonial history of Namibia, there is a number of relatively small groups of Herero activists indirectly challenging the power of SWAPO by presenting a counter-narrative of the country's anti-colonial heroes. Using a notion of a mnemoscape, including intangible aspects of the remembrance of collective experience (Kossler 2012), and a memory landscape, i.e. the concrete shaping and transformation of the landscape by memory politics. Our research focuses on memory discourses and practices among the Herero in the urban environment of Windhoek, with Okahandja as the Hereroland centre. The lecture seeks to answer the following questions: How is the official memory dealt with in present day-remembrance policies and practices? How is the politics of remembering within a nation-building project challenged by Herero political activists? What are the discourses and practices of Herero political activists regarding Namibian mnemoscape?

Eritrea

A land that devours its exiles

GULI (ORI) DOLEV-HASHILONI

Against the backdrop of Eritrea's ongoing migration crisis, I wish to present a paper I recently published in the Hebrew academic journal Hagira (migration). Seeking to conceptualise the political behaviour of antebellum (before the war) Eritrean refugee communities, I argue that during the last decade a fundamental change had occurred in the way these diasporic communities perceive Eritrea. This shift has clear organisational implications, manifested in a structural change in the relations between Eritrea and its diaspora, and in new forms of Eritrean resistance.

In order to understand the connection between the Eritrean government's handling of the refugee exodus and the diasporization processes of Eritrean expatriates, I built on Frederick Cooper's model of the Gatekeeper State and Martin Plaut's model of the Mafia State. I claim that alongside long-term attempts to restrict the escapees' flow from Eritrea, the Eritrean government is simultaneously actively involved in the emigration, from which it profits. The worldwide persecution of Eritrean expatriates serves as a form of engagement of exiles with their past regime, which leads to a bifurcated behaviour: paying a 2% tax to the Eritrean government alongside disproving two foundations of the Eritrean political culture. Those two are the Eritrean national identity, which is being replaced by ethnic and religious identities as defining political categories; and the Eritrean ethos of underground resistance, replaced by non -armed parties and human rights NGOs that refute violence.

The article expands existing generational definitions of the Eritrean diaspora – namely Generation Nationalism and Generation Asylum, and explores the changes experienced by the Generation Asylum. Elaborating on the case of an African state that gained independence in the 90s following an armed struggle against Ethiopia – another African state, I mark the exceptionality of a national economy that highly relies on human trafficking and on its diaspora, chiefly through sowing fear in its expatriates. While doing so, I also refer to the way the Eritrean embassies persecute exile communities in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, thus making the Eritrean refugees eternal prisoners of the regime they fled. My research, conducted in 2018-2020, is based on an analysis of international reports, secondary literature review and interviews with human rights activists and leaders of the Eritrean community in Israel.

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Thank you!



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