

# “TOWARDS AN INDEPENDENT ANTHROPOLOGY AT AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES: POSSIBILITIES, CHALLENGES AND TRAJECTORIES”

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Workshop of the Regional Working Group Africa  
of the German Association for Social and Cultural Anthropology (DGSKA)



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## Abstract

Anthropology in Africa has been facing many different challenges: Anthropology in Africa has to fight accusations of being colonialism's handmaiden; it has to emplace its academic status amidst social sciences at African universities. Further challenges include the search for research funding as well as for employment for young scholars.

To a certain extent, African anthropologists have been able to overcome some of those challenges such as the problematic reputation anthropology has had amongst social philosophers, political scientists and African nationalists. This has offered new opportunities for African anthropologists in the field of consultancy for governments and development agencies. As Mwenda Ntarangwi et al. (2006) argue, consultancies bear the risk of confining intellectual production to routine reports, hence sacrificing scholarly creativity to survival necessities.

Another challenge echoes calls for decolonization of school curricula: African anthropologists in recent years have been able to develop intellectual agendas, working practices and international collaborations (Ntarangwi et al. 2006). Forging an own identity of anthropology in Africa remains complex since many of its proponents have been trained in traditions of scholarship at institutions in the Global North. Additionally, African anthropologists seek to escape the academic treadmill engaging with theoretical debates mainly taking place in Europe and North America. The goal here is to develop precise and committed analyses addressing realities in their countries.

However, development imperatives and funding opportunities are scarce and inhibit African anthropologists from affording pure research. Some scholars argue that applied anthropology is an inevitable option for African anthropologists working in Africa (Nkwi 2015). Others see pure and applied anthropology as complementing one another, and that data from applied anthropology can be used in theory-building. A last group thinks that the pure/applied dichotomy is not suitable for the African context, where the epistemological demands of donors largely influence the nature of anthropological research (Ntarangwi et al. 2006).

Recently, debates on teaching and practice of anthropology have focused on professionalism (Nkwi 2015). This means that anthropologists should assert their professional identity to minimize the trappings of dependency and to develop methodological and other skills to create jobs for themselves. It becomes obvious that one of the most important solutions to raise the status of anthropology in Africa is to consider teaching and learning (Jegade 2015). Nevertheless, the question remains: What do we teach/learn?

**GOALS:**

- a) Connect anthropologists from African and German universities (and neighboring countries of Germany) to discuss the relevance, challenges and potentials of anthropology as a discipline at African universities.
- b) Recognize and valorize both theoretical and methodological innovations developed by anthropologists based at African universities.
- c) Share experiences and identify promising areas of teaching collaboration on MA/PhD level.

**WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS:**

- o 3 panels will be held in total
- o Each panel includes 3-5 presentations, 15-20min each and ends with a plenary discussion

**PANEL 1: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT, INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

- Which incisive landmarks can be identified for the historical and institutional development of anthropology in your country/at your university? For example regarding (geo-)political / economic / ideological shifts, changing (inter)national funding opportunities etc. Do you expect new landmarks in the future?
- What is the status of anthropology as a discipline in the humanities or social sciences in your country? Has anthropology been able to overcome its problematic reputation as colonial handmaiden? What does it stand for today?
- What is characteristic of the curricular and thematic/sub-disciplinary development of anthropology in your country? Which are the main challenges you are facing today? Could you envision a global anthropology curriculum?

**PANEL 2: TEACHING AND RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS WITHIN AND BEYOND AFRICA (PART I & II)**

- What is the role and responsibility of cooperation partners? What are the goals? Which are the basic requirements?
- What are your experiences with international cooperation with partners in the Global South and/or Global North? Are cooperation partners in the Global North still needed or wanted?
- How does the source of funding affect/shape the collaboration?

**PANEL 3: STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN 'PURE' AND 'APPLIED' ANTHROPOLOGY AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

- How do you define 'pure' and 'applied' anthropology in Africa? Are these definitions also applicable in the Global North?
- How can theory-driven research become practically and socially relevant? How can 'applied' anthropology contribute to theory development?
- Which are job opportunities for African anthropologists beyond the development sector?

## WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 10 JANUARY 2019

09:00 – 9:15 | Welcoming and Opening Speech by Michael Bollig and Michaela Pelican

### PANEL 1

09:15 – 12:30 | **Historical Development, Institutional Context and Curricular Development of Anthropology**

09:15 – 9:35 | Isaac Nyamongo | (The Co-operative University of Kenya, Kenya)

09:35 – 9:55 | Gebre Yntiso Deko | (Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia)

09:55 – 10:15 | Munzoul Asaal | (University of Khartoum, Sudan)

10:15 – 10:45 | *Coffee break*

10:45 – 11:05 | Heike Becker | (University of the Western Cape, South Africa)

11:05 – 11:25 | Patience Mutopo | (Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe)

11:30 – 12:30 | Plenary discussion

12:30 – 14:00 | *Lunch*

### PANEL 2 PART I

14:00 – 17:30 | **Teaching and Research Collaborations within and beyond Africa**

14:00 – 14:20 | Ayodele Jegede | (University of Ibadan, Nigeria)

14:20 – 14:40 | Antoine Socpa | (University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon)

14:40 – 15:00 | Michaela Pelican | (University of Cologne, Germany)

15:00 – 15:30 | *Coffee Break*

15:30 – 15:50 | David Bogopa | (Nelson Mandela University, South Africa)

15:50 – 16:20 | Erdmute Alber | (University of Bayreuth, Germany)

16:20 – 17:30 | Plenary discussion

19:00 – 21:00 | *Dinner*

## WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

FRIDAY 11 JANUARY 2019

### PANEL 3

**09:00 – 12:30** | **Striking a Balance between 'Pure' and 'Applied' Anthropology and Job Opportunities**

09:00 – 9:20 | Thomas Kirsch | (University of Konstanz, Germany)

09:20 – 9:40 | Divine Fuh | (CODESRIA, Cameroon)

09:40 – 10:00 | Nikolaus Schareika | (Georg-August-University of Göttingen, Germany)

10:00 – 10:20 | Romie Nghitevelekwa | (University of Namibia, Namibia)

10:20 – 10:40 | Song-Joon Park | (Halle University, Germany)

*10:40 – 11:10* | *Coffee Break*

11:10 – 12:30 | Plenary discussion

*12:30 – 14:00* | *Lunch*

### PANEL 2 PART II

**14:00 – 15:20** | **Teaching and Research Collaborations within and beyond Africa**

14:00 – 14:20 | Gregor Dobler | (University of Freiburg, Germany)

14:20 – 14:40 | Eric Kyoko | (Kenyatta University, Kenya)

14:40 – 15:00 | Michael Bollig | (University of Cologne, Germany)

*15:00 – 15:30* | *Coffee break*

15:30 – 17:00 | Final Plenary Discussion:  
Recommendations and Possibilities towards an Independent Anthropology at African Universities