



Conceptualising 'Future'.
*Current Debates in Regional and
Systematic Research*

International Conference
of the
Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies

Abstracts

University of Bayreuth

July 4th to 6th, 2013



UNIVERSITÄT
BAYREUTH

Conceptualising 'Future'. Current Debates in Regional and Systematic Research

Bayreuth Academy
of Advanced
African Studies

BA



International Conference of the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies

July 4th to 6th, 2013

Venue: Main Campus, Conference Hall of the *Studentenwerk Oberfranken (SWO)*

Thursday, July 4th 2013

- 14:00-14:30 Opening & Welcoming Addresses: **Achim von Oppen** and **Susan Arndt**, Directors of the Bayreuth Academy
Ministerialdirigent **Dietrich Nelle**, Federal Ministry for Education and Research, Bonn
Stefan Leible, President of the University of Bayreuth
Brigitte Merk-Erbe, Mayor of the City of Bayreuth
Gloria Wekker, Member of the Academic Advisory Board, Utrecht
- 14:30-15:45 **Ottmar Ette** (Potsdam): The Prospective Power of Literature
- 15:45-16:15 Coffee Break
- 16:15-17:30 **Elísio Macamo** (Basel): Accommodating Time. Confidence and Trust in African Everyday Life
- 17:30-19:15 Talk & Images: **Henriette Gunkel** (Bayreuth), **Sam Hopkins** & **Jim Chuchu** (Nairobi): What happened to the Future?
- 19:15-20:00 Reception
- 20:00-21:00 **Spoken Word Performance with New Night Babies**, followed by **DJ Jim Chuchu** (Nairobi)

Friday, July 5th 2013

- 09:00-11:00 **Dirk Wiemann** (Potsdam): What does Time have to do with History? Fictional Representations of Allochronism
Kara Lynch (Amherst, NH): Invisible – a Retro/Future Exploration
- 11:15-12:45 **Petra Schaper-Rinkel** (Vienna): Exploring the future: A European perspective on anticipatory practices, emerging technologies
Andreas Jess (Bayreuth): Global Energy Supply and Demand – Predictions and Visions
Michael Hauhs (Bayreuth): Concepts of Time as Mediators in Science: African Natures from a Modelling Perspective
- 12:45-14:00 Lunch Break
- 14:00-15:00 **Greg Tate** (Providence, RI): The Futurism of Juju
- 15:00-16:00 **V. Y. Mudimbe** (Durham, NC): 'Singular.' On African Practices of Human Sciences
- 16:30-17:30 Talk & Vision: **Ingrid LaFleur** (Detroit) & **Storm Janse Van Rensburg** (Bayreuth): Curating Failed Utopias & Past Futures:
- 17:45-19:45 **James L. Cox** (Edinburgh): The Concept of Time as Seen through Ancestral Traditions
Evelyn Wladarsch (Heidelberg): Time and Future in Health
Emma Hunter (Cambridge): Concepts of Progress in Late Colonial East Africa
Florian Stoll (Bayreuth): Social Milieus and their Use of Time in Recife, Brazil. A Transfer of Bourdieu's Sociology
- 21:00-22:30 Conversation & Sound: **Greg Tate** (Providence, RI) & **Carla Müller-Schulzke** (Berlin): The Sounds of Afrofuturism

Saturday, July 6th 2013

- 09:00-11:00 **Jeanne Cortiel** (Bayreuth): Future Technologies and Risk in American Popular Culture
Joao Paulo Borges Coelho (Maputo): Cidade de Espelhos: Fiction Writing, Mirrors and the Future
- 11:15-12:45 **Sidney Kasfir** (Atlanta): Contemporaneity in African Art as a Dual Problem of Past and Future, Socially Embedded in Time + Space
Fadi Saleh (Bayreuth): Exiled into Cyberspace. Egypt's Gender, Sexual, and Ethnic Minorities and the Internet
Anne Adams (Ithaca): Afropolitanism: A 21st Century Diaspora? Ch. Ngozi Adichie's Americanah and T. Selasi's Ghana Must Go
- 13:30-15:00 **Concluding Discussion** Chair: Susan Arndt & Achim von Oppen

SPONSORED BY THE



Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research

Conference Abstract

“Future Africa – Visions in Change” is the first research theme of the newly opened Academy of Advanced African Studies at the University of Bayreuth (see <www.bayreuth-academy.uni-bayreuth.de>). This project is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. It focuses on conceptualisations of Future that are generated, represented and analysed in Africa and in the African Diasporas, and that are of global relevance just as much as of interest for systematic and comparative perspectives. The “Bayreuth Academy”, as it is called for short, thus engages with a topic that has gained fresh interest in recent academic and public debates. Although visions of Future have, throughout the centuries, been generated around the globe, Western visions have tended to dominate the discourse. More recently, however, new dialogues are being generated that entangle different visions of Future at a wider scale, paying more attention to “non-Western” experiences and imaginations of Future, thus sparking as well as promoting, a renewed attention to this topic. Pivoting on its first International Working Group (May to July 2013), on the same theme, the Bayreuth Academy convenes an Opening Conference on concepts of 'future' in regional and systematic research. The aim is to review debates on this topic over a wide range of disciplines and to provide an opportunity for innovative encounters between different approaches, empirical areas and forms of representation, across Africa, the African diasporas, and other parts of the world. More than 20 scholars, senior and junior, coming from Africa, North America, and Europe, including Fellows of the Working Group and scholars from the University of Bayreuth, will present their perspectives on the Conference theme along a series of key questions, such as:

- Which approaches, paradigms and controversies in current debates are particularly innovative and interesting for a better understanding of Future and its embeddedness in time – not with a view to prognosis, but as vision, projection or representation?
- How and by whom are projections of Future discussed and represented outside the *white* West, notably in the Global South and its diasporas? Which experiences, values and agencies do they address, perform or subvert?
- To what extent and in what ways have “Southern” perspectives entered mainstream debates about future in the “West”?
- What is the theoretical or conceptual thrust of new debates about Future? Is the famous “spatial turn”, for instance, currently giving way to a “temporal turn” which, similar to the former, will help to deconstruct discourses of time and futurity and

hence subvert rigid divisions in knowledge – including those the “area studies” have been built on?

The Conference will start with an opening session, on Thursday, July 4th. Words of welcome by personalities representing the institutions that carry, fund and advise the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies, as well as representatives of the wider public, are followed by two keynote lectures, a talk with audiovisual presentations, a reception and a Spoken Word Performance.

On Friday and Saturday (July 5th and 6th), the programme offers a series of paired keynote lectures, addressing more general aspects, and shorter presentations organised in panels and talks-cum-presentation, focussing on more specialised themes or forms of expression. Much emphasis is given to combining different approaches and views, in order to stimulate the encounters envisaged for the Conference and for the Working Group embedding it. For details, please see the Conference Programme and contact bayreuth.academy@uni-bayreuth.de.

Keynote and Paper Abstracts (in alphabetical order)

Anne Adams, Prof. emer., Africana Studies and Research Center, Cornell University (ava2@cornell.edu):

Afropolitanism: A 21st Century Diaspora? Chimamanda Ngozi ‘Adichie’s ‘Americanah’ and Taiye Selasi’s ‘Ghana Must Go’

The paper will begin by reviewing the theoretical statements on “Afropolitanism,” advanced by Taiye Tuakli-Wosornu (2005), and Achille Mbembe (2007), statements which ask anew the question “Who is African?” Then, the recent novels, *Ghana Must Go*, by Selasi, and *Americanah*, by Adichie, will be discussed from the perspective of an evolving Afropolitan identity and the relationship of Afropolitanism to 21st-century Africa.

Jeanne Cortiel, Prof., Bayreuth Institute for American Studies (BIFAS), University of Bayreuth (Jeanne.cortiel@uni-bayreuth.de):

Future Technologies and Risk in American Popular Culture

This talk explores a particular type of anticipatory consciousness as expressed in popular fictional narrative across media, the anticipation of global technologically induced catastrophe. My focus is on the ways in which risk in fiction generates a specific field of

tension between the dystopian and utopian, the fictional and factual, the realistic and the fantastic modes. While narratives of risk are clearly not limited to science fiction (if these genre categories still hold), the tension between the factual and the imaginary in the fiction of risk does operate on the basis of what Darko Suvin has defined as “cognitive estrangement” for science fiction. This cognitive estrangement in risk narratives makes the inscrutable future productive in the present moment. The paper explores these questions across media through a paradigmatic reading of Francis Lawrence’s film *I am Legend* (2007), Michael Crichton’s novel *Prey* (2002), and Frank Miller’s graphic novel *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986). Each of these texts, I argue, participates in the discourse of global risk in similar ways by anticipating and staging catastrophe, linking global catastrophe to the body of the central character(s), and activating the apocalyptic tradition by reengaging the narrative of redemption. Each of these texts displaces and reclaims the dystopian space by a utopian counter-space, the American pastoral, the heterosexual family home, and the homosocial cave-womb respectively. Neither of these texts are purely science fictional, but they all provide a cognitive estrangement grounded in factual discourse and their fantastic heroes and monsters are direct products of medical and military technoscience

James Cox, Prof., Religious Studies, University of Edinburgh, (J.Cox@ed.ac.uk):

The Concept of Time in Africa as Seen through Ancestral Traditions

J.S. Mbiti’s ideas of *sasa* and *zamani* time, although helpful conceptually, need revising in light of the argument that African Indigenous Religions are defined by kinship relations and thus fundamentally focus on ancestors. This paper re-frames Mbiti’s argument by suggesting that, when subjected to an analysis based on the centrality of ancestors in African Indigenous Religions, past and future actually are experienced as present realities. This transforms Mbiti’s two dimensional description of African time into a one dimensional framework, with past and future making sense only as they impinge on the present – both communally and individually. Examples are presented from field research conducted by the author in Zimbabwe. Implications of ancestor-dominated traditions for concepts of ‘future’ in Africa are drawn at the conclusion of the paper.

Michael Hauhs, Prof. Ecological Modelling, BayCEER, / Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies, University of Bayreuth, (michael.hauhs@uni-bayreuth.de):

Concepts of Time as Mediators in Science: African Natures from a Modelling Perspective

Nature protection can be justified by intrinsic values of life. Western culture sees nature as an autonomous system. Thus, nature protection is often synonymous with refraining from human interference as much as possible. It is supposed that “nature takes care of itself”. A worldwide network of National parks is largely organized along these ideas.

Behind this attitude towards wildlife management stands a model, here the nature/culture dichotomy. Models can be regarded as mediators between empirical and theoretical aspects of a management task. In the sub-project “Visions of Nature” we inspect the perspectives of different stakeholders for their underlying and often implicit modelling assumptions when dealing with climate change or national parks in Africa. Especially interesting are how models employ and interpret temporal ordering through mixtures of cyclic and linear time concepts. Is conservation of biodiversity a task which can be accomplished by interacting with humans only, or does it also involve interacting with wildlife? What are the roles of management experience versus scientific understanding in different modelling approaches?

We conjecture that from a modelling perspective these questions pose a basic science problem rather than an applied science problem. We discuss possible implications for the appropriate time concepts in modelling wild nature in Africa. The currently hold Western idea of an autonomous nature as the reference for conservation may not only in Africa fail as a consistent model of “wild nature”.

Emma Hunter, PhD., Faculty of History, University of Cambridge (elh35@cam.ac.uk),

Concepts of Progress in Late Colonial East Africa

In his seminal collection of essays, *Futures Past*, Reinhart Koselleck set up a contrast between pre-modern and modern ideas of the future in Europe. For Koselleck, one of the characteristics of modernity was the idea of a future which ‘transcended the hitherto predictable’, characterised both by the ‘increasing speed with which it approaches us’ and ‘its unknown quantity’. In the nineteenth century, alongside utopian visions of radical change, the concept of ‘progress’ became increasingly central to self-understandings and to political projects in Europe, tied to a political philosophy of liberalism. However, as recent work in the global history of ideas has shown, it also became a global concept. This paper explores the

concept of 'progress' in late colonial East Africa. The concept of 'progress' was integral to ideologies of legitimation in late colonial East Africa and framed the discursive terrain in which colonial subjects engaged with colonial rulers in Tanganyika's Swahiliphone public sphere. This paper uses empirical evidence from Swahili-language newspapers to map out the ways in which African writers engaged with the concept in the public sphere, and demonstrates that it was characterised as much by an optimistic vision of the future as pessimism about the fragility of progress and the risk that it could go backwards as well as forwards.

Andreas Jess, Prof. Lehrstuhl für Chemische Verfahrenstechnik, Bayreuth Engine Research Center, University of Bayreuth, (jess@uni-bayreuth.de):

Global Energy Supply and Demand – Predictions and Visions

In today's global energy mix with a share of 80% fossil fuels, the growth of the population from today 7 billion to 9 billion in about 2050 and the further growth of the energy demand will lead to a conflict between stable ecosystems and global welfare.

Energy is the key to sustainable development, bringing benefits to public health, social welfare and economic productivity. Estimations based on social indexes of welfare and happiness show that an annual demand of 2 tonnes of oil equivalent per capita (toe pc) is sufficient without severe cutback in welfare and happiness. Taking this value as target, high-income countries with currently up to 8 toe pc have to reduce their demand while currently low-income countries should increase their demand until 2 toe pc are reached.

Sub-Sahara African, with the exception of South Africa, is characterized by low income and low energy consumption per capita; e. g. the (average) energy consumption in sub-Saharan Africa is the lowest in the world (0.5 toe pc, mainly traditional biomass like fuelwood and charcoal), i.e. the gap to the estimated target of 2 toe pc is the highest.

By 2050 the global scenario of 2 toe pc and then 9 billion people will lead at current technologies and energy mix (still mainly based on fossil fuels) to an increase of the ecological footprint from today 1.3 to 2 planet Earths. The only solution to provide 2 toe pc without damaging the biosphere is a strong reduction of the single largest demand humanity put on the biosphere, the carbon (CO₂) footprint with a share of 50%. Thus, an extensive if not complete shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources (wind, hydro, solar, biomass etc.) is needed to reach the desired footprint of one planet Earth.

Within the presentation, aspects of the reliability of predictions in the field of energy supply and demand will also be discussed.

Literature

- [1] Jess, A.: What might be the energy demand and energy mix to reconcile the world's pursuit of welfare and happiness with the necessity to preserve the integrity of the biosphere? *Energy Policy* 38 (2010), 4663 - 4678.
- [2] Kern, C., Kaiser, P., Unde, R., von Olshausen, C., Jess, A.: Considerations concerning the energy demand and mix for global welfare and stable ecosystems. *Chem. Ing. Techn.* 83 (2011), 1777 - 1791.

Kara Lynch, PhD., Associate Professor of Video Production, Hampshire College, Amherst, NH, (klhomegirl@gmail.com):

Invisible – a Retro/Future Exploration

Invisible is a speculative narrative that explores the limits of Black liberation and western civilization. Separate episodes, each linked to a specific moment in time and space -- and then elaborated into video and audio landscapes, installations, and performances for a contemporary audience -- comprise this expansive project. Each episode incorporates archival footage and present-day field recordings to abstract a multi-voiced fiction of the original event. This is a project that conjures psychic and emotional states of being. The meta-narrative that drives this project begins here:

In 2099, the transatlantic slave trade never happened. The event disappeared from the history books. A strange cult keeps the false memory alive through ritual bondage and transport of bodies across imaginary borders. Three main characters dominate our experience in this futurescape. One, Z.L. Rhinehart is a CLEANER, Nia Tabono, a TIME-TOURIST, and THE ARCHIVIST. We now have the technology to move freely between a time/space continuum without adverse effect. There is no present/future 'consequence' for altering the past – the grandfather paradox - has no weight: thanks to a corps of CLEANERS. This chameleon caste melts into any era as they follow the every move of careless TIME-TOURISTS, picking up after them, shifting events to remedy their clumsy interactions with past and future landscapes. THE ARCHIVIST lives in the archives of the early 21st century dusting off the traces and remains of the past and the future. It is through her determined research and the unconventional presentation of her findings that we piece together this episodic story that speculates the black liberation parallel to eurotrash western civilization in the conflux of public record and sci-fi.

Invisible is a project that confronts a history of violence meted out upon Black bodies. It is dedicated to speculation: what-if and what could be. This is a project searching for a new

visual vocabulary to describe the beauty and terror of the Black experience. In 'Invisible', maritime meets speed of light.

By engaging with time and space where/when the spatial and the temporal rely upon one another for definition, description, and meaning, this project makes a commitment towards vision. The future is problematized precisely because in the popular western ontology there is no future for Black folks. For this reason I focus on "vision", like Alondra Nelson's 'Past-Future Vision,' as representation, an aesthetics, a conceptual framework, and a political provocation.

Elísio Macamo, Prof., University of Basel (elisio.macamo@unibas.ch)

Accommodating Time. Confidence and Trust in African everyday Life

The paper represents an attempt at contrasting modernity's conception of time, which is often wrongly understood as European (or Western), and conceptions of time which are informed by the logic of everyday life. Drawing from Peter Wagner's suggestion that the Enlightenment sought to domesticate the future by turning it into a social project the paper will argue that the ensuing project of modernity has had devastating effects on African livelihoods on account of its totalitarian logic which can perhaps be seen with a degree of clarity in the failures of and challenges faced by development policy. The argument will be based on an admittedly controversial revisiting of John Mbiti's theses on African conceptions of time to help formulate a critique of the substance of the future as a concept.

Valentin Y. Mudimbe, Prof., Department of Literature, Duke University, Durham, NC (mwr079@gmail.com):

'Singular.' On African Practices of Human Sciences

Exodus as Allegory serves as an entry to the idea of Africa in today's theories of difference. To rethink the history of non-Western nations cannot but take into consideration what signified a right to autonomy in terms of ethics and of a meta-ethics. A crucial moment was the Bandung Conference. Its guiding principle from the Indian model was its axis of solidarity in a globalizing world.

Ideologically auspicious and cogent, it incarnated new paths to 1960s political sovereignty and its allegories in the international arena. Are they only past symbols ?

At any rate how to read them vis-a-vis the New York 2000 International Millennium Initiative when we pay attention to three objective lines. First, the dynamics of strong self-

accenting cultural identities; secondly, by observable measures, Africa will not meet the Millennium Development Goals by the target year of 2015; thirdly, a philosophical practice and the implications of cultural diversity, multinational citizenship and the idea of justice.

Florian Stoll, Dr., Post-Doc, Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies, Universität Bayreuth (florian.stoll@uni-bayreuth.de):

Social Milieus and their Use of Time in Recife, Brazil. A Transfer of Bourdieu's Sociology to a Specific Context in the Global South

How do social milieus in Brazilian cities live and how do they use their time? This paper presents results and the methodology of my research on social milieus and their use of time in the Brazilian city Recife. The research is an adaptation of Bourdieu's Sociology and combines own empirical research, data and theories from the Brazilian Social Sciences and US-/European based Sociology to a theoretical-methodological framework. By looking at social milieus and their use of time this paper wants to give an example too how "Western" originating Sociology can be transferred to the Global South. With a multidimensional perspective the study can go beyond a mainly socioeconomic class analysis which neglects important cultural, historical and more elements.

The methodology uses a multidimensional frame to grasp the living conditions of the social milieus and their subgroups in Recife. In each milieu the study examines the dimensions social structure, division of labour, cultural aspects and historical socioculture. Referring on results from empirical research the study reconstructs elements of a temporal habitus and distinguishes subgroups and their use of time in the milieus. After an exemplary analysis of a social milieu and the use of time the paper gives an outlook how elements of this framework might be used to (re-)construct middle classes/milieus in urban Kenya.

Dirk Wiemann, Prof., Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Potsdam (dwiemann@uni-potsdam.de),

What does Time have to do with History?

Fictional Representations of Allochronism

Colonial discourse criticism and (self-)critical anthropology diagnose allochronism as the creation of a temporal gulf between groups that inhabit the same physical time. In this model, the modern metropolitan 'observer' as well as the colonizer on his/her civilizing mission encounter communities that appear to live in more or less radically retarded cultural

formations. In my presentation I will first draw on a sample of literary texts that articulate or interrogate allochronic discourses and, after that, inquire into the consequences of allochronism for possible futures.

Evelyn Wladarsch, Dr. Institut für Ethnologie, Universität Heidelberg
(wladarsch@eth.uni-heidelberg.de):

Time and future in health

Time is a universal fact of life: we all live in and with time. But how people think of and handle time varies cross-culturally. Societies have specific temporal norms according to their living conditions, economy, religion(s), social conventions etc. The anthropologist Edward Hall called time a “silent language” and learning this language facilitates good, deep-going and often unexpected access to a society.

As time permeates the entire social life, it obviously is also central in the domain of health and illness. Presenting some findings from my fieldwork in rural Burkina Faso, I show how ideas, norms and underlying assumption pertaining to time and future are encoded in health-related topics. By analyzing for example the medical concept of ‘prevention’ it becomes evident that it is based on specific ‘Western’ notions about time and future, which do not fully coincide with the Burkinabè conceptions. Finally, a model of the future horizon in rural Burkina Faso presents a new perspective, which may supplement and correct health economical calculations.

Making the invisible phenomena time and future analytically visible, is a fruitful and enriching access to the understanding of socio-cultural life in general and to health issues in particular.