



UNIVERSITÄT
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Bayreuth Academy
of Advanced
African Studies BA



WAITING IN AFRICA

WORKSHOP

September 28–30, 2017, Bayreuth

Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies
/ BIGSAS, University of Bayreuth
Working Group 'Waiting for Futures'

Venue Iwalewahaus, Wölfelstraße 2



Africa's futures, Goldstein and Obarrio (2016: 13) remark, seem to be 'engulfed by a continuous present'. Economic exigencies, neopatrimonial dependencies, conflicts, displacements, inequalities and a widespread insecurity about day-to-day routines have epistemic repercussions: the present's obtrusiveness limits horizons of expectation, perpetually postponing the creation of meaningful futures. Simultaneously, and seemingly paradoxically, for many people in Africa the main state of being is one of anticipatory alignment towards possible futures – a state that is principally tantamount to waiting. People wait for work and (social) adulthood; for opportunities for education, migration and curative treatment; for stability, prosperity, redemption etc. At the same time, 'works of waiting' are also ubiquitous in more quotidian realms, such as transport, bureaucracy and ICTs.

Whether experienced as suffering or deferred gratification, as a 'wasting' of time or an 'investment' in the proverbial better-times-to-come, waiting portends that the future will be qualitatively different from the present. While waiting, people engage in and expect something from the future and, ultimately, from life, ascribing value to what is forthcoming, whether near or far. Waiting, seen from this angle, emerges as both a gap and a link between present and future. Waiting might be experienced as a temporal void or an instrument for submission, leading people to resign to fate or into states of rage, frustration or even apathy. Yet it might also surface as a possibility for muse or for tempting fate by exercising faith, hope, patience and, ultimately, agency. States of waiting tend to restructure temporality in such ways that present and past are engaging the future as a possibility for difference, whether this pertains to social, economic, political, religious, imaginative, existential or utterly mundane positioning.

In this interdisciplinary workshop, we attend to the multifaceted nature of waiting from an Africanist perspective. We have assembled empirical or theoretical contributions from across the social sciences to explore practices, experiences, affects, contexts and consequences of waiting in Africa and among African diasporas. By zeroing in on the different ways in which people engage with temporalities of waiting, be it through modes of expectancy, patience, perseverance, creed, anxiety, powerlessness or indifference, we wish to strengthen the theoretical purchase that the perspective on waiting offers. Set against the overarching topic of *waiting in Africa*, the primary aim of the workshop is to provide a platform for discussing different approaches towards waiting as both a descriptive and an analytical category, as well as for reflecting on the methodological challenges implied in the study of situations of waiting.

THURSDAY, SEP 2817:00-18:00 **Workshop Opening****Welcome Address & Introduction**

WG 'Waiting for Futures' & Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies

18:00-18:30 *Coffee break*18:30-20:00 **Opening Keynote****Gregor Dobler** (University of Freiburg)20:00 *Dinner***FRIDAY, SEP 29**9:00 – 10:20 **Session 1****Waiting in the workshop: Work, uncertainty and the negotiation of hope amongst young Ghanaian weavers**

Niamh Jane Clifford Collard (SOAS, London)

An Idle Threat: Population Control and a Politics against Developmentalism in Urban Uganda

Erin V. Moore (Northwestern University)

10:20 – 10:50 *Coffee break*10:50 – 12:10 **Session 2****'Wasting time': migratory trajectories of adolescence among Eritrean refugee girls in Khartoum**

Katarzyna Grabska (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva)

Waiting in Transit Land: Vulnerabilities and social navigations of undocumented Ethiopian migrants stranded in Khartoum, Sudan

Tekalign Ayalew Mengiste (Stockholm University)

12:10 – 14:30 *Lunch*14:30 – 15:50 **Session 3****Waiting as a way of life: Social im/mobilities and imagined futures among Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia**

Aurora Massa (University of Trento)

States of waiting and aspirational capitalism: MLMs in Kenya

Jan Beek (Goethe University Frankfurt)

15:50 – 16:20 *Coffee break*16:20 – 17:40 **Session 4****Waiting for change: Citizens, economic crisis and political change in Zimbabwe, c.2000-2016**

Wesley Mwatwara (University of Zimbabwe)

The labours of waiting: Ghanaian departure time and its shadows

Michael Stasik (MPI-MMG Göttingen/University of Bayreuth)

19:30 *Dinner***SATURDAY, SEP 30**9:30 – 11:10 **Session 5****Waiting, uncertainty and community formation in South Africa's Rustenburg informal settlements, c.1994-2016**

Joseph Mujere (University of Zimbabwe/University of the Witwatersrand)

Enduring crisis: Staying and practicing patience during forced displacements in the Nile Valley, Sudan

Valerie Hänsch (University of Bayreuth)

11:10 – 11:40 *Coffee break*11:40 – 13:00 **Session 6****Waiting for Justice: Subversive Affirmation through the Lens of *Siinquee* Feminism**

Martha Kuwee Kumsa (Wilfrid Laurier University)

Resignation, Resentment, and Anticipation: Waiting for the Present in the New Gambia

Niklas Hultin (George Mason University)

13:00 – 15:00 *Lunch*15:00 – 16:20 **Session 7****Religious Performances and Formation of subjectivities in the process of waiting**

Serawit B. Debele (MPI-MMG Göttingen/University of Bayreuth)

Waiting for the Future, Looking to the Past: Zimbabwean Nostalgia and Displacement in the Twenty-first Century

Andrea L. Arrington-Sirois (Indiana State University)

16:20 – 17:00 *Coffee break*17:00 – 18:30 **Closing Keynote****Daniel Mains** (U of Oklahoma/ZMO Berlin)19:30 *Closing dinner & round-up discussion*