Call for Applications: African Cluster Centres
within the Cluster of Excellence "Africa Multiple: Reconfiguring African Studies"

Building on its strength in African studies, the University of Bayreuth (Germany) is proposing a Cluster of Excellence within the so-called Excellence Strategy of the German federal and state governments. Titled "Africa Multiple: Reconfiguring African Studies" and currently under review, one integral component of our cluster proposal is the **establishment of four African Cluster Centres**, designed to create new forms of collaboration between researchers in African studies in Africa and Bayreuth. We hereby invite Africa-based research institutions with a strong profile in the study of Africa to submit **letters of interest** (submission deadline: May 15, 2018) as the first step in the two-stage selection application process.

The Cluster: At the current juncture, the field of African studies is confronted with profound conceptual questions, such as what constitutes Africa, or whether Africa is to be posited as exceptional or not. At the same time, power imbalances continue to characterise knowledge production on and in Africa, raising the question of who studies Africa, and how. Involving fifteen academic disciplines, the Cluster of Excellence "Africa Multiple" proposes to develop new responses to the theoretical, methodological, and structural challenges the field is facing. The title "Africa Multiple" stems from our proposition that Africa is neither unitary, nor isolated, but rather is, and always has been, constituted through its ever-changing relations, globally entangled and in flux. We posit "multiplicity" as a new conceptual framework that allows us to capture the simultaneity of heterogeneous and mutually influential African lifeworlds as they emerge in relational processes.

The cluster is conceived as a transformative space within which to systematically advance the study of African and African diasporic ways of life and world-making via the pursuit of research and theory-building based on new inter- and transdisciplinary formats of research cooperation. Our innovative research structures will include a cutting-edge digital research environment and will be well-tailored towards gaining new empirical insights and the realisation of theoretical advances across the following thematic fields: (1) Moralities; (2) Knowledges; (3) Arts and Aesthetics; (4) Mobilities; (5) Affiliations; and (6) Learning.

African Cluster Centres: In pursuing the reconfiguration of African studies, we seek to build new forms of collaborative partnership with African institutions and colleagues. For this purpose, we plan to create four African Cluster Centres (ACC) as independent research spaces where Africa-based scholars will develop and conduct their own projects linked to the overarching cluster agenda and/or the six thematic fields listed above. Possible hosting institutions include universities, research institutes, or faculties, which will be equipped with a representative office and staff connected to the (future) Cluster of Excellence based at the University of Bayreuth. The main tasks of the ACCs will include:

- initiating and conducting research projects involving scholars from the ACCs' hosting institution, and possibly other Africa- and Bayreuth-based scholars;
- participating in and contributing to the cluster's Digital Research Environment (DRE), particularly in the joint development of the databases;
- organising regular workshops and conferences that bring together the clusters' researchers from the ACCs and Bayreuth with colleagues from other African countries and beyond;
- advancing debates on theory and method in African studies, with special emphasis on the modes of knowledge production and Afrocentric and context-relevant approaches;
- making research and workshop results available to the academic public through publications in international and regional journals and other adequate formats;
- enhancing mobility between Africa and Bayreuth as well as facilitating intra-African academic mobility;
- the (joint) training and supervision of early career scholars, especially at the doctoral level (through BIGSAS, Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies).

What We Offer: Each of the four ACCs will receive 150.000 Euros per year as an annual budget for staff and recurring expenses, covering a full-time academic director and an academic coordinator, as well as for administrative and IT staff and support of the IT infrastructure. Each ACC will be given the opportunity to raise additional cluster funds for specific research projects, workshops, and conferences based on a competitive selection process. The cluster will also set aside funds for one academic fellow per year, to be in residence at the ACC for up to six months. Funding for further activities (research projects, workshops, conferences, publications) will be granted on the basis of applications to the cluster's Academic Committee. In order to ensure prominent representation of the ACCs in the cluster, the academic directors will serve as full voting members of the Academic Committee, where all decisions regarding the distribution of cluster funds are taken.

Requirements: The ACCs are expected to work as independent units within the hosting institution; the precise institutional arrangement will be determined in consideration of the structural setup of the hosting institution. While the cluster's joint working language will be English, we strive to encourage direct academic exchange between colleagues from different parts of the continent and from different linguistic backgrounds (English, Arabic, French, Portuguese speaking countries, and also African languages). An institution that aspires to host an ACC needs to:

- demonstrate strong commitment to and have a distinguished record in the study of Africa and its diasporas across different academic disciplines, preferably stretching over two or more academic fields or faculties (in the case of universities);
- present a vision of an active and excellent contribution to the cluster's intellectual agenda with its thematic fields and its objective of reconfiguring African studies;
- offer office space for the academic director, the coordinator, and other staff;
- provide access to high-speed internet in order to ensure stable connection of the ACC to the cluster's Digital Research Environment (this includes space for the installation of electronic storing devices and archiving systems);
- ensure smooth cooperation between the ACC, the cluster, and the host institution's facilities (such as libraries, archives, conference infrastructure, e-learning and e-depository systems, and other research facilities);

- facilitate visa applications for foreign researchers and assist them in other logistic matters (finding accommodation, obtaining residence and research permits, etc.).

Application Procedure: The establishment of the ACCs will be contingent on the approval of the cluster proposal by the donors, which will be known by the end of September 2018. The ACC application procedure will come in two stages. Interested Africa-based institutions are invited to submit a **letter of interest by May 15, 2018**. We will subsequently work with the applicant institutions towards the submission of full applications, which will be due by October 31, 2018. The final decision about ACC selections will be taken by November 30, 2018. The start date for the cluster as a whole, as well as for the ACCs, is January 1, 2019, for a period of seven years (until December 31, 2025; with the possibility of another seven-year funding period from 2026 to 2032).

Letters of interest need to declare the willingness of the hosting institutions to meet all requirements listed above. Duly signed by the institutional heads (President, Vice Chancellor, Director, etc., as applicable), they should be accompanied by the following documents:

- a brief statement (ca. 2 pages) about the applicant institution, highlighting the expertise and previous achievements in the study of Africa;
- a list of researchers at the host institution who are able to contribute significantly to the cooperation with the cluster's researchers in Bayreuth and other ACCs;
- a concept paper (ca. 4-5 pages), detailing how the ACC will be integrated into the host institution, how researchers of the host institution will contribute to the academic activities, and how the ACC envisions cooperation with the cluster in Bayreuth and other ACCs, especially in the field of academic mobility, the training of doctoral students, and the Digital Research Environment.

Please send letters of interest and accompanying documents (as pdf files) to:
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