

# FUTURE AS COMMODITY AND IN(TER)VENTION — NARRATION, KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY

Working Group E - Summer Term 2015

**Program Supplement**

Bayreuth Academy  
of Advanced  
African Studies

BA



## **Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies**

Hugo-Rüdel-Str. 10  
95445 Bayreuth

### **Contact:**

Dr. Doris Löhr (Coordination): 0921 55-5401  
Renate Crowe (Secretary): 0921 55-5400

**[bayreuth.academy@uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:bayreuth.academy@uni-bayreuth.de)**  
**[www.bayreuth-academy.uni-bayreuth.de](http://www.bayreuth-academy.uni-bayreuth.de)**



## ***Concepts of Future in Mediaspaces of Africa and its Diasporas***

Sub-project IV of the Bayreuth Academy is the convenor of Working Group E. Our work is dedicated to fictional conceptualisations of the future in the intersection and overlapping of internet, **imagination** and Africa and its Diasporas.



**Prof. Susan Arndt**

English & Anglophone Literatures



**Dr. Henriette Gunkel**

Visual Studies



**Peggy Piesche M.A.**

German Literature & Cultural Studies



**Dr. Mariam Popal**

Postcolonial Studies &  
Anglophone Literatures

## Working Group E – Summer Term 2015

### ***Future as Commodity and In(ter)vention: Narration, Knowledge and Technology***

After the previous Working Groups investigated and discussed notions of temporality, space and nature in their relation to 'Future/s', this Working Group E will explore the idea of future as commodity in regard to narration as guided by the question: What is narrated when about the future by whom, how and why and how do these narrations commodify futures?

Narrations are trans-spaces that entangle the world throughout time and space. Being societal textures, narrations shape different forms of texts (be it fictional texts, ethnographic texts, sounds, visual languages, sets of images, codes and/or numbers) that rely on and feed into epistemologies. In fact, any narration relies on the interaction of 'discourse' (content) and 'story' (structure) and thus the entanglement of 'who', 'what' and 'how'? In other words, the discourse (i.e. 'what') is communicated via chains of events, narrative texts, images, or cultural artifacts (i.e. the 'how')? When complementing the 'what' and the 'how' with time ('when'), reason ('why') and subjectivity/agency ('who'), narration turns out to be a commodifying performance.

Commodity is understood here foremost as materialized products with market-value such as texts (blogs), novels, plays, and films as well as different other codes of (scientific) knowledge (production) like ethnographic materials, models, empirical research data, etc. and the ways they are sorted, structured and received in different communities of knowledge and practice. The term is further perceived as a knowledge-product/material/item that enables us to read 'future' in a shifting, deferred sense that might challenge our imaginations of the seemingly girdling present and the still to-come. Thus framed, we read commodities as wares that are coded economically, politically, intellectually and culturally, thus referring to all sorts of properties, be it intellectual or material. We therefore do not perceive commodity as a term

confined to capitalism as scrutinized by Marxism; rather commodity is a concept that blossoms intellectually, culturally and virtually. The key question is hence as following: What makes future a commodity – how, when, by whom and for what reason – and how is this affected by narration – in various fields such as art, academia, politics, economy, ecology, etc.?

As Elisio Macamo reminds us, (re)searching for modes of conceptualizations of 'future' in Africa from a European point of departure already contains various traces of narratives which might already manifest themselves as a 'future we hope to find'. In order to approach these inscribed narratives, it is important to unpack the notion of 'future' itself.

Along those lines, Working Group E aims at reading 'future' in its fluidity between an already existing pre-text (inventions) and new storytelling (interventions).


Like any concept and idea, we understand 'future' as a free floating discursive 'artifact' that is susceptible to its uses, its meanings being constructed upon different readings, in different spaces against different tracks and/of memory that it touches. Those tracks may be signs of time, of events, that give meanings to it. When such 'artifacts' become part of the flows of knowledge that, especially in the present, characterize the complex configurations of (globalized) ethics/aesthetics, capital/property and technology/nature etc., it turns into a commodity that is exchanged and bargained. The 'trade' affects are sorts of exchanges, be it money, goods, knowledge, literature and the market-value goes far beyond economic interests (financescapes, to use Appadurai's wording). It also has a contested affective, performative value of knowledge (re-)production and (re-) narration.

Understanding 'future' as a layer or level of time is one such understanding that is nonetheless subject to the free flow of space-time and its construals. Yet 'future' can also be construed as a commodity of (inter)vention into/of representations of the past (memory) and possibilities of the present (agency).

In this Working Group, different narrations about







the future will be approached, whereby the focus will be on power and/of knowledge as related to time and space, ownership and belonging, articulation and silence. Paradigms of producing or silencing futures will be explored, based on core notions and categories of narratives about/on future, such as memory, hope, vision, and acceleration. One focal point of our perspective under scrutiny and a prominent pillar of the subsequent discussions will constitute technology and its effects on narrations on/about future. Of special interest will be the technology of the world wide web as an other space that has given new (philosophical, conceptual) dimensions to space-time, duration, distance and narrativity. Another core interest will address academia as shaped by and positioned within the interaction of future, narration and commodity: how do academic structures predetermine the 'findings' about future and how do they foster and silence epistemologies and related visions, in(ter)ventions and resources?

Our main objective is to further strengthen transdisciplinary discussions amongst the members of the Academy by providing maybe other angles to open up space for thinking 'future' 'Africa'.

All members of the academy are invited to present one core concept of their own research project that they would consider relevant in relation to the overarching topic of 'Future as Commodity and In(ter)vention. Narration, Knowledge and Technology'. We would like to ask for written (or else) contributions (minimum 800 words) which will be discussed in sessions 6, 7 and 8; here we explicitly welcome complementary other-media-presentations like a set/series of images, film (excerpts) etc. Sessions 1, 2, 3 and 5 are dedicated to the work of and with our 'Future Africa' Fellow Arjun Appadurai; Sessions 4 and 5 will frame this Working Groups' international conference 'African Futures and Beyond. Visions in Transition'. We warmly invite all members and guest of the academy to participate and to contribute to the ALA as well as our Working Group this international conference that took place for the first time in Germany.



## ***ALA Conference 2015 & BIGSAS Literature Festival of African and African Diasporic Literatures***

From June 3rd – June 6th, 2015, the 41st Annual Conference of the African Literature Association (ALA) took place at Bayreuth University/Germany. It was the first time that the ALA community meets for its annual convention in Europe, cooperating with Bayreuth's BIGSAS Festival of African and African-diasporic literatures. Scholars from all around the globe were invited to discuss latest developments in studies on African and African-diasporic literature and media, framed by the overarching topic "African Futures and Beyond. Visions in Transition".

Of course, an occasion like this is an invitation to talk about African <--> European <--> American encounters: history matters, and the future does as well. Like suggested by Sankofa, we head towards the future, whilst at the same time contemplating and evaluating the past. Thus, Europe's dissipation of African futures is scrutinized, yet Future Africa is what the conference will address, analyse and envision. Future Africa, here, means both: the future of Africa and its diasporas as well as African(-diasporic) contributions to futures that matter in Africa and beyond – planetarily, indeed. Visions are in transition, as agents in space and time that keep the world in motion. It is the realm of the imaginary – its fictions and aesthetics – that matters during our four days in June 2015. The conference delves into the polyphony of genres and aesthetics, crosscrossing languages, cultures and nations in Africa and way beyond. The sharing of (imaginary) African visions of the Future for African futures in academia and beyond is paving us a way to an „African Turn“ 3.0.

## ***Summer Salon***

Our *Summer Salon* is a panel in conversation with the renowned scholars



**Prof. Anne Adams**  
(Cornell University)

**&**



**Prof. Rinaldo Walcott**  
(University of Toronto)

with a completing *open forum* regarding the main concepts of our term's topics

### ***Narration - Technology - Future - Commodity***

Like any concept and idea, we understand 'future' as a free floating discursive 'artifact' that is susceptible to its uses, its meanings being constructed upon different readings, in different spaces against different tracks and/of memory that it touches. Those tracks may be signs of time, of events, that give meanings to it. When such 'artifacts' become part of the flows of knowledge that, especially in the present, characterize the complex configurations of (globalized) ethics/aesthetics, capital/property and technology/nature etc., it turns into a commodity that is exchanged and bargained. The 'trade' affects are sorts of exchanges, be it money, goods, knowledge, literature and the market-value goes far beyond economic interests (financescapes, to use Appadurai's wording). It also has a contested affective, performative value of knowledge (-production) and (re-) narration.

Our main entry point to the discussion is a text by Prof. Dr. Rinaldo Walcott:

*Rinaldo Walcott, „The Struggle for Happiness, Commodified Black Masculinities, Vernacular*



*Culture and Homoerotic Desires”, in: Peter Pericles Trifonas (Ed.), Pedagogies of Difference - Rethinking Education for Social Justice, Routledge 2002*

For further reading into this topic we also recommend a text of our fellow Dr. Kien Nghi Ha on eipcp:

*Kien Nghi Ha, Crossing the Border? Hybridity as Late-Capitalistic Logic of Cultural Translation and National Modernisation, URL: (<http://eipcp.net/transversal/1206/ha/en>)*

### ***Research Associates and Team***



**Dr. Shola Adenekan**, Department of English & American Studies



**Shirin Assa**, M.A. Candidate



**Renzo Baas**, PhD Candidate



**Nabil Barham**, PhD Candidate



**Nadja Ofuatey-Alazard**, PhD Candidate



**Ajayi Oladapo**, PhD Candidate



**Tanimomo Oluseun**, M.A. Candidate



**Fadiah Saleh**, PhD Candidate

***Stuart Hall's Legacy for Thinking  
Tomorrows *Planetarily****

**Representation, Language and  
Postcoloniality in Posthumanism and  
Beyond**

—

Workshop in Honor of Stuart Hall  
(Prof. Dr. Susan Arndt & Dr. Mariam Popal)

University of Bayreuth

Department of English & American Studies

The workshop is designed to discuss the work of Stuart Hall in general and concepts such as Representation, Identity and Diaspora in given interactions with posthum\_animal studies, its linguistic turn, ethics and visions for the future.

**Date: July 3th – 4th 2015**

**Venue: GWI – K 5  
(Campus of the University of Bayreuth)**

## ***Workshops outside of Bayreuth***

### **What's Love got to do with it**

Workshop as part of the the annual symposium, Africa in Translation, curated by Wangui wa Goro and Mbuguah Goro of SIDENSI in Partnership with the Royal Africa Society and the British Library with support from Afrikult, AFFORD, Birkbeck College, (University of London), Ankara Press and the Igbo Conference (SOAS).

Participants: Peggy Piesche and Henriette Gunkel (SP4)

3rd July 2015

### **Visions of Future/s: Towards Radical Collective Imaginations**

Workshop as part of the European Conference on African Studies ECAS, Paris.

Convenors: Katharina Fink (SP5) and Peggy Piesche (SP4)

10th July 2015



## *Guests of the Academy in Summer 2015*



**Prof. Anne Adams**, New York



**Prof. Hakim Adi**, London



**Dr. Ingrid LaFleur**, Detroit



**Dr. Kien Nghi Ha**, Berlin



**Prof. Charles Ngiewih Teke**, Munich



**Deborah Nyangulu**, Münster



**Abdi Osman**, Toronto



**Moses Serubiri**, Kampala



**DJ Spooky**, New York



**Prof. Rinaldo Walcott**, Toronto

## ***Activities in & outside of Bayreuth***

### **1. Discover the region and one of the most beautiful Beer-Gardens in the region**



#### **A Hiking Tour to "Theta"**

(duration: 3 hours  
walk - go and back)

meeting point:  
Iwalewahaush,  
Wölfelstraße 2  
(Bayreuth city center)

Wednesday, 17 June at 15:00h

If you are interested to participate, please  
contact Natalie Patterer:  
[natalie.patterer@uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:natalie.patterer@uni-bayreuth.de)

### **2. City Tour „Africa in Bayreuth“ by BIGSAS Alumni Fellows**

The new Bayreuth City Tour „Africa in Bayreuth“ visits historical places of Alzire and Wilhelmine and is questioning the role of Bayreuth in the cultural history of racism and its resistance movements.

The tour also offers alternative views on Jean Paul and sees Bayreuth as a place of variety. Together



with the Bayreuth Marketing & Tourism GmbH and the Iwalewahaush Gilbert Ndi Shang, Peter Narh and Katharina Fink, all researcher and Alumni of the BIGSAS of the University of Bayreuth, are offering an exceptional City Tour that traces historical and current connections to the African continent and its Diaspora, as well as



tracing its global routes.

Meeting Point is the Tourist Information, Opernstraße 22, opposite of Iwalewahauss.

If you are interested to participate, please contact Dr. Katharina Fink: [Frl\\_fink@gmx.net](mailto:Frl_fink@gmx.net)

### **3. Discovering the new Iwalewahauss – Africa Centre of the University of Bayreuth**

## IWALEWAHAUSS

Wölfelstraße 2

Opening hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 1pm – 5pm

### ***“Mash Up” (30.05.2015 - 27.09.2015)***

Exhibition floor, Iwalewahauss

Curated by Sam Hopkins & Team

Mashup is an exhibition of artworks by contemporary artists from Africa generated during the research project Mash up the Archive which has taken place at Iwalewahauss in Bayreuth over the last two years. The project has so far been accompanied by two “Mash up the archive-Festivals” in 2012 and 2013.

At the core of the project are a series of four artist residencies in which six visual artists were invited to explore the diverse archive of African Art housed at the Iwalewahauss, and develop new artworks in response to this cultural production. The artworks which have been developed present a series of distinct and considered approaches to the archival material.

More information: [www.mashupthearchive.net](http://www.mashupthearchive.net)

## ***The Project ,Eagle Africa' by Philip Kojo Metz***



1000 Pages, Video Still, 2013 © Philip Kojo Metz

Wed. 17.06.2015, 19.00h

Foyer, Iwalewahauss

Philip Kojo Metz (Berlin)

A project that employs art as an approach to German history in Africa. Since 2011 Philip Kojo Metz is working on this project, an attempt to bridge the gap between the 17th century and the present time and to make it possible to experience this history directly through contemporary techniques and media. Metz works conceptually and puts a focus on a narrative dimension regarding the content in media like photography and video, but also in his more spacial works.

After the presentation: Music Archive Listening Session in the Lounge.

## ***Roundtable 2: Aura: The Object in Postcolonial Art Collections***



© Sam Hopkins

Sat. 20.06.2015, 14.00h

Exhibition floor, Iwalewahaus

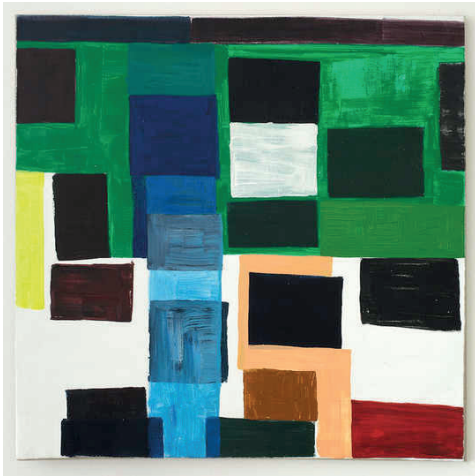
As part of the research and exhibition project Mashup this roundtable tries to articulate some of the tensions surrounding the possession of unique objects of cultural production. What is the relationship of these objects to the knowledge systems that produced them and what does their absence entail?

Participants: David Dibosa (TrAIN Research Centre, Univ. of the Arts, London), Smooth Ugochukwu (Hood Museum, Hanover).

### ***Lecture Series 'African Modernism' - Presentation by Atta Kwami***

This Lecture Series is organized in cooperation with the Work Group Aesthetics at the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies and co-curated by Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi (Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College). International scholars and experts in the field of African Arts and Aesthetics give public presenta-

tions to enrich the theoretical input for the research on African Modernism and a close reading of the Iwalewahaus collection of modern and contemporary art.



© Atta Kwami, 2014

Sat. 20.06.2015, 16.00h

Atta Kwami (Kumasi)

Making modernism in Kumasi and its aftermath

The lecture considers the development of art education from the decade of the 1950s to the postcolonial era and examines these as a backdrop for new Ghanaian contemporary art. The work of El Anatsui, George Afedzi Hughes, Kwame Akoto (Almighty God Artworks), Alex Amofa, Owusu Ankomah, Ibrahim Mahama and others will be discussed.





## *Highlife on the Move - CD launch and concert*



© Soundway Records

Wed. 24.06.2015, 20.00h

Foyer, Iwalewahauss

The launch of Highlife on the Move will include live music by the singer and Kologo-player GUY ONE from Bolgatanga (Northern Ghana) and THE POLYVERSAL SOULS, the Afro-Soul-Funk-Band around the drummer Max Whitefield from Berlin (also Drummer for Bombino, Lana Del Ray & Dr. John).

Markus Coester has joined forces with London's Soundway Records for their latest release Highlife On The Move. The 2 CD and also 3 12"/17" Vinyl compilation provides the soundtrack to his 10-year long, substantial research on Highlife music and popular culture in the 1950s and 1960s, in Nigeria, Ghana, and England – a time of significant cultural travel and motions.

It features among many other stunning and rare recordings of this era the first ever recordings of



Fela Kuti – done for Melodisc in London in 1959; amazing first recordings that kept in hiding for over 50 years. Co-compiled by Soundways label head Miles Cleret, the collection suits Soundways earlier interest in exceptional, culturally significant yet almost forgotten African music; it has had stunning press reviews already.

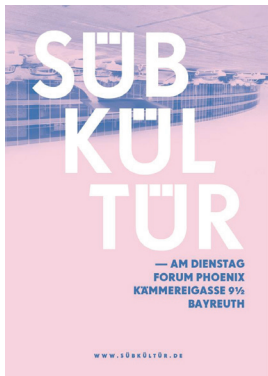
After the concert: Markus Coester & DJ guests spinning Highlife & other Afro Sounds for dancers.

### ***Iwalewahaus-Summer-Party***

2 July, 19:00h at Iwalewahaus

### **4. Sübkültür on Tuesday**

every Tuesday you can discover and participate in Bayreuth's Subculture Scene at 20:00h, doors are open at Forum Phoinix, Kämmereigasse 9 ½ in the city center of Bayreuth



June Events at Sübkültür:

16.06. Ice-Cold-Worlds

23.06. Richard's heirs – popcultural treasures, Trash & more about Richard Wagner's work of a lifetime

30.06. Concert: „The Two Robbers“ from Bamberg

[www.suebkueltoer.de](http://www.suebkueltoer.de)

## 5. Uni-Open Air Festival

13. June Backyard of NWII-Building, Campus



Bands: SAWA, Cosby, Impression, tune circus, yalta club, say yes dog, Moop Mama

[www.uniopenair.de/2015](http://www.uniopenair.de/2015)

### ***Charming Bistros and Cafés in Bayreuth City that we recommend to you***



Inexpensive and good regional food (pizza – pasta – baguette – salads) and beers:

#### **Bistro Rosa Rosa –**

Quaint place for young and old

Von-Römer-Str. 2  
Bayreuth city centre,  
the kitchen is open  
until midnight



**Café Kraftraum** – famous for fresh vegetarian and vegan delicious as well as healthy food and drinks, lovely setting on the terrace outside in Bayreuth's most beautiful street

Sophienstraße 16, Bayreuth city centre

**Heimathafen** – Lovely atmosphere, self-made cakes – A place for Live-Music in the evenings

Kanzleistraße 2, Bayreuth city centre



## Dates

<b>23.4.</b>	15.00-17.00	<b>Plenary Session, Working Group E:</b> Introduction (Susan Arndt, Peggy Plesche, Mariam Popal) Future: From Narration to Commodity: What is 'narration'? And what does the term 'commodity' imply? In whose future, whose Africa?	BA R112
<b>7.5.</b>	15.00-17.00	<b>Plenary Session, Working Group E:</b> The Future as Cultural Fact (Text Appadurai, Intro Peggy Plesche)	BA R112
	18.15-20.00	<b>Public Lecture</b> („Future Africa and Beyond“ Series): <b>Aleida Assmann</b> (University of Konstanz): 'Shapes of Time and Transformations of the Modern Time Regime'	GW1, H26
<b>21.5.</b>	15.00-17.00	<b>Plenary Session, Working Group E:</b> Difference and Disjuncture (Text Arjun Appadurai, Intro Mariam Popal)	BA R112
<b>27.5.</b>	18.15-21.30	<b>Public Lecture</b> (Bayreuth Academy Series): <b>Jeffrey Alexander</b> (Yale University) 'Middle Class as Iconic Consciousness - A conceptual and visual Approach to 'Middle Classes' in Emerging Economies'	Iwalewahaus
<b>28.5.</b>	15.00-17.00	<b>Plenary Session, Working Group E:</b> Introduction to ALA Conference African Futures and Beyond. Visions in Transition (Susan Arndt, Ute Fendler & Nadja Ofuatey-Alazard)	BA R112
<b>2.6.</b>	14.15-16.00	<b>Public Lecture</b> („Future Africa and Beyond“ Series): <b>Souleymane Bachir Diagne</b> (Columbia University) "On Prospective: Development and a Political Culture of Time"	NW1, H18
<b>3.6.-6.6.</b>		<b>41st Annual Conference of the African Literature Association (ALA) "African Futures and Beyond, Visions in Transition"</b>	Campus
<b>10.6.</b>	18.15-20.00	<b>Public Lecture</b> („Future Africa and Beyond“ Series) <b>Jörn Rüsen</b> (Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen): 'The Future of Humanity – Intercultural Communication in a Historical Perspective'	GW1, H26
<b>11.6</b>	18.15 -20.00	<b>Public Lecture</b> Rinaldo Walcott: The Long Emancipation: Moving Towards (Black) Freedom	GW1, H26
	15.00-17.00	<b>Plenary Session, Working Group E:</b> Reports from the ALA-Sessions	BA R112

<b>18.6.</b>	<b>15.00-17.00</b>	<b>Plenary Session, Working Group E: Summer Salon</b>	<b>BA R112</b>
	<b>18.15-20.00</b>	<b>Public Lecture</b> („Future Africa and Beyond“ Series): <b>Keebet von Benda-Beckmann</b> (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle) ‘The time of property. Connecting past, present and future in legal concepts of land’	<b>GW1, H26</b>
<b>23.6.</b>	<b>18.15-20.00</b>	<b>Public Lecture Prof Hakim Adi:</b> Past, Present, Future – The Making of the Manchester Pan-African Congress	<b>GW1, S91</b>
<b>25.6.</b>	<b>15.00-17.00</b>	<b>Plenary Session, Working Group E:</b> Narration, Knowledge and Future. Reflections on Core Notions, part one (Vision, Environmentalism, Model, Futurity, Memory) with short presentations by project leaders TP 1 and 2; discussants: Post-docs TP 3, 4, 5.	<b>BA R112</b>
	<b>18.15-20.00</b>	<b>Public Lecture</b> („Future Africa and Beyond“ Series): <b>Anne Adams</b> (Cornell University, USA): ‘Out(side) of Africa: 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Diaspora and/or Cosmopolitanism?’	<b>Iwalewahaus</b>
<b>2.7.</b>	<b>15.00-17.00</b>	<b>Plenary Session, Working Group E:</b> Narration, Knowledge and Time. Reflections on Core Notions, part 2 (Middle Class, Hope, Generation, Time, Iconography, Afrofuturism, Afropessimism, Acceleration) with short presentations by project leaders TP 3, 4, 5; discussants: Postdocs TP 1-2	<b>BA R212</b>
<b>7.-11.7.</b>		<b>ECAS Conference</b> (with participation of TP 1,3,4,5)	<b>Paris</b>
<b>16.7.</b>	<b>18-open</b>	Bayreuth Academy invites to a <b>Summer Night Party</b>	<b>BA Garden</b>
<b>17.7.</b>	<b>9.00-15.00</b>	<b>Reflection day</b> of the Bayreuth Academy members	<b>BA R112</b>
<b>18.7</b>	<b>14-18</b>	<b>Campus erleben</b> (with participation of SP 1,4,5)	<b>Campus</b>



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## Impressum

**Prof. Susan Arndt**  
**Florens Eckert, M.A.**  
**Natalie Patterer, M.A.**  
**Dr. Mariam Popal**

GEFÖRDERT VOM



Bundesministerium  
für Bildung  
und Forschung



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