

Call for Papers

MIASA Conference

Regional governance as experience: New perspectives on politics and sustainability

4-6 July 2024, University Omar Bongo, Libreville, Gabon

Regionalism has long been an integral part of African governance. Upon gaining independence in the era of decolonization, African states immediately set about creating numerous regional and sub-regional institutions to realize their interests. These regional institutions have since expanded their portfolios to provide governance in areas such as peace and security, economic development, the environment, health, and humanitarian affairs. Examples range from well-known organizations such as the African Union (AU) or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to lesser known ones such as the Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA) or the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Scholars and policy-makers are paying greater attention to African regional institutions and have high expectations of them.

However, academic engagement with these developments has so far been dominated by an institutionalist perspective that rarely looks beyond formal institutions, state leaders, and their often grand policy agendas. Little knowledge exists about how African communities 'on the ground' experience the governance of these institutions, that is, scholars have rarely explored the sites and actors most impacted by regional norms and policies. The MIASA conference aims at filling this lacuna by scrutinizing regional governance as experience, that is, as seen through the lived realities, narratives, practices, perceptions, and cosmologies of a variety of actors 'on the ground'. Such actors may be individuals and (organized) groups that interact with regional norms and policies, local officers of regional organizations, civil society groups, religious and spiritual orders, national government officials, local leaders, 'ordinary' citizens, etc. And their experiences may be contemporary or past, direct or indirect, cognitive, affective, visual, bodily, or otherwise. In centering the experiences of African communities, the conference deliberately takes a micro-perspective, i.e. through lived and every-day realities, on an allegedly macro-phenomenon, i.e. (regional) institutions and 'grand' policy programs. Such a shift in perspective generates new conceptual and empirical knowledge about the everyday politics and sustainability of African regional governance.

Due to its explorative character, the conference is intended to cut across several disciplines and methodological approaches by bringing together sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, historians, legal experts, economists, scholars of the environment, as well as sociolinguists, scholars of peace and conflict and African studies. We invite contributions that explore regional governance as experience in a broad range of policy fields, including for instance trade, health, gender, migration, social welfare, human rights, sustainability etc.

We specifically, but not exclusively, invite contributions on the following topics/themes:

- Citizens as practitioners, implementers and partners in regional trade agreements
- Citizens and regional democratic governance
- Women and LGBTQI+ civil society as partners in regional governance
- Sports regionalism
- Religious and spiritual orders in regional governance
- Regional health governance and local health priorities
- Experiencing AfCFTA and its inclusivity/adaptability
- The role of symbols and arts for experiencing regional governance
- The role of 'translators' and 'brokers' of regional governance (e.g. journalists, chiefs, artists, idols, public intellectuals, community leaders, local NGOs etc.)
- Border areas as spaces of experiencing regional governance
- Informal practices, rules, norms, processes and forums in African regional governance
- The role of local structures/office of regional institutions
- Diplomats and their construction of regional integration

The conference will be organized around different thematic panels, based on presentations of papers or short think pieces (5-7 pages). It will also include a keynote lecture as well as several interactive formats (e.g. world cafés, roundtables with civil society groups, etc.). Working languages during the conference are English and French. A simultaneous translation will be provided throughout.

Funding: All travel expenses for selected participants will be covered by MIASA.

Submission Details:

- Paper title and abstract of maximum 250 - 300 words (formatted to a template including: research question, summary of project/findings, key primary or secondary data)
- Short biographical note (max. 500 words) indicating your current academic position, ongoing and past research, publications, etc. OR a CV of not more than 3 pages
- Deadline: 24 March 2024

Please send your submission as pdf-documents in English or French to Ahmed Al Maqtari (ahmedaalmaqtari@gmail.com) and Dr Marko Scholze (scholze@em.uni-frankfurt.de). Please always send your application to both addresses. Successful applicants will be notified in April.

Conveners and Organizers (in alphabetical order):

Dr André Adjoo, National Center for Scientific and Technological Research (CENAREST), Libreville, Gabon

Dr Juliana Appiah, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana

Prof Mamadou Diawara, Director (Germany) MIASA, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

Dr Fortuné M Mboula, University Omar Bongo, Libreville, Gabon

Dr Densua Mumford, University of Leiden, Netherlands

Dr Fabert Mensah Ngoma, University Omar Bongo, Libreville, Gabon

Dr Marko Scholze, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

Dr Antonia Witt, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), Germany