



# Parliaments and Democracy in Africa

## MIASA Conference

**University of Ghana, 12-13 December 2019**

*Department of Economics Conference Facility*

Parliaments are one of the most important building blocks of democracy. In Africa, they are commonly dismissed as ‘rubber stamps’ despite mounting evidence that they shape states’ political and developmental trajectories in critical ways. It is clear that African legislatures are institutions that matter. This makes it critical to understand who makes up African parliaments, how they get there, and what legislators do once elected. It is also essential to examine different models of representation, the interactions between parliamentarians and local government, and the ways in which institutional variations shape the behaviour of parliaments across the African continent.

This conference will bring together leading scholars, activists and policy-makers from Africa and beyond to examine these topics. The conference will be hosted by the Maria Sibylla Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA).

MIASA is dedicated to the study of Sustainable Governance, with a focus on sustainable environmental transformation, sustainable conflict management, and sustainable democracy. MIASA aims to reduce global asymmetries in knowledge production while bridging the cultural divide between anglophone and francophone Africa. It serves as a hub for exchange, networking and collaboration amongst leading researchers from across Africa and beyond. MIASA’s activities include a series of interdisciplinary fellowship groups, including the fellowship group on Parliaments and Democracy, which is hosting this conference.

*With support from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the University of Ghana.*



# Day I Thursday, 12 December 2019

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## 9:00 – 9:15 Official Welcome

**Prof. Abena D. Oduro** (University of Ghana) and **Prof. Gordon Crawford** (University of Coventry/University of Freiburg), Co-Directors of MIASA.

## 9:15 – 11:00 The Choice Before the Choice: Candidate Selection and Implications for African Parliaments

In many African countries, political parties are the gate-keepers to parliaments: voters can only select from the “menu” of candidates they put on offer. Candidate selection procedures influence who has access to political power, and what they do with it. As a result, the ways in which parties select candidates play a crucial role in shaping political debates and determining the composition of legislatures. Papers in this panel will examine how candidate selection shapes African parliaments and the implications of this for democracy across the continent.

**Mr. Abou Bakarr Kamara**, *Country Economist, International Growth Centre – Sierra Leone*

**MIASA Fellows (TBC)**

**Dr. Bossman Eric Asare**, *Deputy Chairperson, Electoral Commission of Ghana*

*Discussant: Dr. George Bob-Milliar, Senior Lecturer, Department of History & Political Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology*

*Chair: Dr. Seidu Alidu (University of Ghana), Co-Covenor of the MIASA Interdisciplinary Fellowship Group on Parliaments and Democracy in Africa*

## 11:00 – 11:30 Break

## 11:30 – 12:45 Keynote Address: Parliaments and Democracy in Africa – A complicated relationship

**Dr. Edalina Rodrigues Sanches**, Assistant Researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon

*Chair: Dr. Anja Osei (University of Konstanz), Co-Convenor of the MIASA Interdisciplinary Fellowship Group on Parliaments and Democracy in Africa*

## 12:45 – 14:00 Lunch

**14:00 – 15:45**      **Representation and Accountability: Exploring Interactions between Parliamentarians and Local Government**

In Africa, parliamentarians must juggle a variety of roles. In addition to making laws, representing constituents and holding the Executive to account, they are also expected to bring development to their communities. As a result, the relationships between legislators and local government actors are crucial for understanding what representation and accountability mean in practice. Papers in this panel will seek to untangle the complex relationship between parliamentarians and lower level of government in different African contexts.

**Prof. Joseph Ayee**, *Department of Political Science, University of Ghana*

**MIASA Fellows, TBC**

**Dr. Thomas Malang**, *Senior Research Fellow and Chair of International Relations and Conflict Management, University of Konstanz*

*Discussant: (TBC)*

*Chair: Daniel Wigmore-Shepherd, University of Sussex, MIASA Fellow*

**15:45 – 16:15**      **Break**

**16:15 – 17:45**      **Policy and Practice Roundtable: Research and the Monetization of Politics**

In Africa, politics is an expensive business. This has a number of implications, influencing who is able to run for parliament, who gets elected, and how parliamentarians spend their time. Speakers on this panel will reflect on the challenges this creates for those who seek to strengthen parliaments, as well as the role that research can play in reducing the role of money in politics.

**Mr. Michael Abbey**, *Programs Coordinator for democratic processes (Parliaments, Political Parties and Security) at the Fredrich Ebert Stiftung*

**Dr. Isaac Owusu-Mensah** *from the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*

**Dr. Mohammed Awal** *from the Center for Democratic Development – Ghana.*

*Chair: Dr Seidu Alidu (University of Ghana), Co-Covenor of the MIASA Interdisciplinary Fellowship Group on Parliaments and Democracy in Africa*

## Day 2 Friday, 13 December 2019

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### 9:00 – 10:45 **The Role of Institutional Design: Variation between African Parliaments and Implications for Democracy**

Many African parliaments share similar histories, but no two African legislatures are the same. There is a remarkable degree of variation across the continent in terms of formal institutional design – something that past research has too often ignored. Papers in this panel will explore how institutional design shapes the behaviour of African parliaments and their potential to contribute to democratization.

**Dr. Abdul-Gafaru Abdulai**, *Senior Lecturer in the Department of Public Administration & Health Services Management, University of Ghana Business School*

MIASA Fellows (TBC)

**Prof. Emmanuel Aiyede Remi**, *Professor of Political Institutions, Governance and Public Policy, Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan*

*Discussant: Hon. Dr. Ziblim Iddi, Member of Parliament for Gushegu and Deputy Minister for Tourism.*

*Chair: Dr. Mathew Sabbi, University of Bayreuth, MIASA Fellow.*

### 10:45 – 11:15 **Break**

### 11:15 – 12:45 **Policy and Practice Roundtable: Harnessing Research in the Fight for Equal Representation**

Research has shown that women and youth remain poorly represented in many African Parliaments. This has serious implications for the ability of legislatures to contribute to democratization. In this roundtable, speakers will examine how we can better harness research to support the fight for gender equality and the inclusion of youth within Africa's parliaments.

**Dr. Rose Mensah-Kutin**, *West Africa Regional Director, ABANTU for Development*

*Discussants (TBC)*

*Chair: Prof. Gretchen Bauer (University of Delaware), MIASA Fellow*

### 12:45 – 14:00 **Lunch**

**14:00 – 15:45**

## **Power within Parliaments: Executive Experience and Social Networks within Legislatures**

Parliaments are important institutions, but they are institutions made up of individuals. One critical challenge for new research on African parliaments is to better understand the relationships between individual legislators and their sources of political power. Papers in this panel will examine the social networks that exist within legislatures and the value of executive experience to Africa's parliamentarians.

*MIASA Fellows (TBC)*

*International Guest (TBC)*

*Discussant: (TBC)*

*Chair: Dr. Susan Dodsworth, University of Birmingham, MIASA Fellow*

**15:45 – 16:00**

## **Official Close**

**Dr. Seidu Alidu** (University of Ghana) and **Dr. Anja Osei** (University of Konstanz), Co-Covenors of the MIASA Interdisciplinary Fellowship Group on Parliaments and Democracy in Africa.

# Finding the Venue

The conference will be held at the Department of Economics Conference Facility, sometimes known as the Bank of Ghana Building. This is located at the heart of the University of Ghana campus, adjacent to the Balme Library.

