

Future Africa

VAD Congress 2014: June 11th – June 14th in Bayreuth

Call for Panels

The current images of Africa are ambivalent: there is still the concept of the “aboriginal”, ageless continent with no history and therefore no future. On the other hand, the image of Africa as a continent of wars, crises and catastrophes, according to which an apocalyptic future seems unavoidable, is likewise widespread.

These bleak prospects are recently attended by another image: that of the “young” continent or even the “young continent of the future”, whose demographic and economic potentials still wait to be explored. Already during the era of decolonization, African politicians evoked the youth of their countries as the “future of the nation”. According to this image, Africa is a “treasure room” – not only with regard to globally sought resources like oil or rare minerals, but also for human resources; it is therefore an “emerging market”. Africa is also labeled the “laboratory of the future” because it is ethnically, socially and politically so heterogeneous; because the continent has found unexpected answers to the challenges of globalization; and because homogenizing tendencies of globalization did not become prevalent there.

The VAD Congress 2014 in Bayreuth will address these ambivalent images, their respective prevalence and outreach from the perspective of diverse academic disciplines; it will appraise the impact of such images on social developments. Under the guiding theme “Future Africa”, we will discuss development and change, projections and visions of the future about Africa as well as those that are powerful in concrete configurations within African countries or that were powerful in the sense of a ‘history of the future’. This also includes trend analysis and futurology, which are currently the fashion across the globe.

Visions of the future about Africa emerge both outside the continent and in Africa itself. African societies have in fact created diverse, independent conceptions of the future which are by no means only reactions to or appropriations of the exoticizing or pessimist projections from outside. On the contrary, there exist in Africa manifold hopes and conceptions of a better future; these are reflected in pro-democracy movements, aspirations for social advancement and education or in migrants’ departures. And also new or ‘neo-traditional’ political or cultural orders are supported by hopes for a better future. Such trends may not at all be conceived as mere countermovement against the social-political order of the state, imposed by

colonialism. Lastly, hopes for a better future accompany the most rapidly advancing urbanization around the world.

We suggest the following thematic areas, which both structure the societal and academic debates on 'Future' and examine social, political, cultural, ecological and economic trends of development.

- The expected or projected future in the framework of development strategies and development goals (for instance Millennium Development Goals) or prognoses in the area of climate research or economy
- Visions on the future in Africa: visions on climate change, on viable peace orders, on ways of dealing with history, on intellectual property or archives, future conceptions for family orders or gender politics; conceptions of future and time
- Visions on a future for Africa: states' constitutions as "promises for the future", new trading regimes, politics of migration
- Media and Fora for negotiating the future: for instance schools and Universities in Africa where future professionals are formed, African and international media like television (e.g. CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, al Arabia, RFI, Deutsche Welle), radio, printed media and the internet (e.g. internet fora, blogs, internet campaigns), projections of visions for the future in art, music, performance and literature
- Actors who create and design the future: for instance protagonists of the Arab Spring, new religious movements, middle classes, peasant movements, governments, political parties, state and non-state actors in the development sector, multilateral organizations (UNO, World Bank), commercial enterprises.

We are also planning to have three round table discussions, and participants from outside the academia (politicians, media representatives or artists) will also be invited.

Please submit your applications for discussion panels until the 1st of June 2013!!!

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