













Review of the 3rdGerman African Diaspora Conference NRW in Dortmund, 03.-05.09.2021



















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The first day of the conference - Friday, 3rd September

After the planned conference in 2020 had to be cancelled due to the Corona pandemic, the German African Diaspora NRW Conference, initiated by the Dortmund-based association VKII e.V. (Association of Cameroonian engineers and informaticians), took place for the third time in Dortmund from 3 - 5 September 2021. Due to Corona restrictions, the number of participants this year was limited to a maximum of 150 people, which is why the conference was held as a hybrid event for the first time.

The main theme of this year's conference was: 60 Years of Independence. For the face-toface event, a landmark of the city, the Dortmunder U, served as the conference venue. From the 7th floor, overlooking the city in the centre of the former Ruhr coal and steel region, **Armel Djine** of VKII e.v. welcomed the conference participants. The city director and treasurer of Dortmund, Mr. JörgStudemann, then gave a welcoming speech in which he spoke about the city and the region as a place of migration. Dortmund is one of the most diverse cities in NRW (North Rhine Westphalia) and has a long history of immigration. People from African countries tend to belong to a later group of immigrants, but today they and their descendants are a visible part of the cityscape, said the city director. He praised the fact that there are numerous African associations in Dortmund that do voluntary work in various areas. Mr Studemann, however, praised the association VKII e.V., which had initiated the conference in order to make the commitment of the African diaspora visible on the one hand and at the same time to encourage other actors to get involved in the sense of the 17 global sustainability goals (SDGs). The city director underlined the importance of migrant organisations not only working for development in their countries of origin, but also addressing local concerns. In this context, he regretted very much that the Africa House in Dortmund had not survived the Corona pandemic. More such places are needed, said the city director. However, they must also be well organised.

Dr Alfred Buß, Chairman of the Foundation for Environment and Development SUE (from German Stiftung Umwelt und Entwicklung), which also co-sponsored the event, praised the conference as a framework in which knowledge about development models for African countries could be imparted and deepened and which enabled the exchange of experiences. He said this was also in the spirit of the Foundation, which was primarily active in North Rhine-Westphalia, but through its focus on education for sustainable development also had an impact on North-South and South-North cooperation. He emphasised how important it was to think of environment and development together. There is only one climate, for example, and the effects of climate change affect everyone. Therefore, one should never look at development from only one perspective. What is needed is a "great transformation", "a fundamental change in the way we do business, move around, build, heat, live, feed















ourselves or deal with waste", said Dr.Buß. Only if you understand global interrelationships can you work towards the goals of sustainable development. He praised the diverse activities of VKII e.V. and wished that the association would spur on an overarching network throughout the Ruhr region to similarly inspiring projects in the spirit of the SDGs.

The Keynote

The keynote speech was given by **Dr Boniface Mabanza** from the Church Office for Southern Africa. His topic: 60 Years of Independence - A Critical Review in the Light of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. In his presentation, Dr Mabanza stated that political decolonisation is still incomplete after six decades and that economic and epistemological decolonisation is still in its infancy. There had even been regressions, he said, such as through the nationalisation of land, property and mines that took place in some countries around the 1970s. He also addressed the question of whether the Sustainable Development Goals were at all helpful as a reference framework for international cooperation to hold African governments accountable, and what role the Sustainable Development Goals (can) play for decolonisation processes. The fact is that many countries on the continent are still in the clutches of foreign beneficiaries who exploit the resources and thus continue the colonial penetration. But the African elites are also part of the imbalance because they make themselves the extension arm of foreign powers and their interests, says Dr Mabanza. Decolonisation as a conditio sine qua non for healing the strained relations between the countries of Africa and the "former" colonial powers in Europe does not seem to have reached the latter yet, or at least not to be wanted, he sums up. As proof of this, he listed the Economic Partnership Agreements, the PostcotonouTreaty and many other EU initiatives, which, in his opinion, rather want to strengthen the existing conditions. What must happen to put an end to this perpetuation of harmful relations, he asked? He ended his presentation with a look at Agenda 2063, which the African Union AU formulated for its 50th anniversary, in the hope that these self-imposed goals may be implemented by the 100th anniversary.

Following Dr.Mabanza's presentation, conference participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the presentation. What followed was such a lively discussion that lasted so long that the speaker unfortunately missed his train.













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The second conference day - Saturday, 4th September

The second day of the conference opened with a lecture by Prof. Dr. Akosua Adomako Ampofo from the University of Ghana, who was connected via zoom. Her topic was: "60 years of independence: Beyond Wakanda¹, jollof rice and afrobeats". The gender scholar and chairperson of the African Studies Association of Africa asked where the continent is today. "We may ask where our nations are today, and we must acknowledge that in many ways we are not where our founding parents promised we would be," she said before asking "who are we, who defines us and how?" The development of African countries depends crucially on the answers to these questions. Whereas the wish for a Wakanda-like place, which many people from Africa and its diaspora see themselves as, is not a solution to the challenges facing the countries of the African continent. The problems could not be tackled with a "romantic essentialisation", but with pragmatism. Independence through development does not mean returning to an idyllic past with great kingdoms spared from European encroachment, Prof. Adomako-Ampofo said. Rather, the system of removal and replacement (of knowledge, resources, manpower, culture) that has taken place over centuries and is still taking place to some extent must be recognised. And based on this, a new form of development work or development reparation must emerge. As a gender scholar, Prof. Adomako of course did not fail to mention the role women play in the development of the continent and the black diaspora and mentioned the contributions of some of them, such as Barbara Allimandi, who fought for women's rights in Uganda (SDG 5) and Hawa Abdi, who was committed to better medical care in Sudan, especially for women (SDG 3).

In a subsequent panel discussion, led by moderator Tina Adomako, the topics and theses from the presentations of Dr.Mabanza and Dr. Adomako-Ampofo were taken up and discussed further. The focus was on questions of the political, economic and epistemological decolonisation of the continent and the implications for development policy issues. The panel consisted of **Virginie Kamche**, "Eine-Welt" promoter in Bremen, **EmanuellaBih** from the University of Cologne, who deals with gender issues and gender inequality in Cameroon, and **Dr.ChicgouaNoubactep**, University of Göttingen, whose department focuses on SDG 6 and questions of water security. **Amanda Magambo**, a member of the CERF Advisory Board, the UN organisation that ensures that urgently needed humanitarian aid reaches people in crisis areas, joined us from Uganda. The plan was to discuss the issues from the EU's perspective as well. Dr Pierrette Herzberger Fofana, the first Black MEP from Germany of African descent and Chair of the EU Committee on Development and Vice-Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, was therefore also invited. To the great regret of all participants, Dr. Herzberger-Fofana was prevented from attending at short notice.

¹Wakanda is a fictional country in the Marvel Comics universe and the main setting of the film "Black Panther". Wakanda is shown in the film as a technologically advanced and completely self-sufficient state in all areas













Therefore, the question of what role the EU plays in the "development" of Africa and the advancement of the SDGs will be taken up again next year.

A question of funding

It is difficult to carry out projects without funding. Because many committed people and also those who would like to get involved in the future often ask themselves the question of funding, the conference also offered the opportunity to get to know some funding institutions and their programmes better.

In addition to SUE and Engagement Global, which both sponsored the event, the Schmitz Foundation and GIZ also presented an overview of their offerings.

Mr Frank Griesel from SUE was digitally connected and presented the foundation, which supports non-profit organisations through project consultancy and funding. Education for sustainable development is at the centre of the funding. Unlike EG, the foundation only funds projects in North Rhine-Westphalia. SUE particularly welcomes projects that combine environmental and developmental concerns, in which people get involved on a voluntary basis and in which something is created that continues to have an impact after the funding ends.

The Schmitz Foundation supports development cooperation projects, mainly in the field of education, which are intended to increase the employment opportunities of people in countries of the global South. Claudia Janz presented the foundation's offer and explained the application guidelines.

While SUE focuses on projects in NRW and the Schmitz Foundation primarily co-finances projects in the global South, Engagement Global promotes DC projects both at home and abroad. GIZ/CIM, on the other hand, promotes partnership projects worldwide. Catherine Van Even presented the extensive range of funding offered by GIZ/CIM and explained the guidelines for the various projects. She put a special focus on the Diaspora2030 programme, which not only funds projects but also supports returning professionals.

All funding institutions encouraged the participants to submit applications if they have good project ideas. At the same time, reference was made to the advisory services offered in advance, which applicants should take advantage of in order to meet the formal requirements.

The workshops















After a short lunch break, the workshop phase began. The conference participants could choose from 5 workshops. The first workshop, jointly led by **Dr. Emmanuel Ndahayo** from the University of Giessen and **Mr. Justin Fonkeu**, a city councillor from Mülheim an der Ruhr, dealt with the issue of racism and how it affects development work at home and abroad. The question was: Is there development cooperation at eye level or is it rather colonialism reloaded?

In the second workshop, Joel KossiviAgnigbo from Engagement Global presented concrete examples from development cooperation projects funded by his institution. The workshop participants discussed how to deal with dependencies and how changes can be initiated to make projects more effective. The workshop began with a definition of the term and a question: 1. what does dependency actually mean in relation to projects in the field of development cooperation and 2. how do these dependencies manifest themselves? The speaker took a look back at the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), which founded the Development Assistance Committee in 1960 to deal with all issues related to co-operation with developing countries. Joel KossiviAgnigbo went into the emergence of the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) as a framework for so-called development cooperation, which were replaced in 2015 by the SDGs, which now serve as a reference framework for development cooperation projects. The question that was intensively discussed in this workshop was: Do projects stemming from these international agreements help the African continent in a sustainable way? The unanimous answer of the participants was: "no". Afterwards, it was discussed what African countries could do to better position themselves and better assert their interests. Conclusion at the end of the workshop: The point is that we from the African continent can also decide for ourselves which projects we want and why we want them. These projects do not always have to fulfil a plan from industrialised countries. We have to start from our own needs and formulate our expectations and implement them ourselves. If someone wants to cooperate with us, it should be on our terms. This is not the case at the moment.

What is the significance of memory culture in the discussion about 60 years of independence and in the implementation of development policy projects? Vicky Amankwa-Birago from the Anton Wilhelm Amu project explored this question. Using the example of Anton Wilhelm Amo, a contemporary of Kant, Amankwa-Birago showed the gaps in memory in discourses about the time of the Enlightenment. The participants discussed the person of Wilhelm Amos, why so little is known about the philosopher, and how Amo is remembered in Germany and in Ghana. The question this workshop addressed was: How do such gaps in memory influence international development projects, for example in the field of education? How can projects in education and culture emerge that are not marked by colonial continuities?















Muslim Abdul Moomen from the Bambu Center, Ghana, also addressed the importance of art and culture for sustainable development in his workshop. He presented a partnership project that focused on writing as a form of creative expression. Through creative expression (in this case writing, but other forms such as dance, theatre, music are equally suitable) new perspectives emerge. Creative writing provides the space to develop images and symbols of sustainability that invite engagement with the issues of the SDGs. This in turn leads to change processes being triggered. However, the importance of art is often not addressed in debates on development. The participants of the workshop discussed whether art is a luxury or a necessity - especially when there are supposedly more urgent problems. The importance of art and culture, especially a culture of memory, for spiritual development was an important topic in the workshop. Often, development is only understood as technical development or technical progress, but even this needs spiritual development as a prerequisite in order to have a lasting effect.

Abdul Moomen presented another project that is currently being planned: a musical theatre plays about Mansa Kankam Musa that is to be performed throughout West Africa. He asked how the memory of such a historical African personality can also set development processes in motion. This art project is not only meant to draw attention to the historical figure, but also to include many other topics such as indigenous health knowledge, sustainable urban planning and gender issues.

A fifth workshop dealt with the question of development models. Here, participants discussed whether economic development in African countries was at all compatible with ecological values. Is it possible to have a thriving economy and at the same time preserve the value of the environment? What could be our contribution to sustainability at home? How can the diaspora work with governments in the home countries or countries of origin so that sustainable models are supported or accompanied by them? These were the questions addressed by workshop leader Emmanuella Bih and the participants. A particularly important question that was discussed at length was: How can we adapt sustainability models to the AU Agenda 2063? Emancipation, especially from mental slavery, was seen as an important prerequisite.

Examples from the practice

Theory is nice, practical knowledge is even better. Which projects worthy of imitation already exist or how can very concrete examples of development cooperation look like? This question was addressed after a short break. Five concrete projects were presented, which are either implemented locally in Germany or as a partnership project in an African country.

Virginie Kamche presented the "Diaspora Preis Bremen" (Diaspora Award Bremen). This is organised annually by the Afrika Netzwerk Bremen and honours voluntary work by diaspora















and migrant organisations in Bremen. The award ceremony takes place in a festive setting at the Focke Museum and includes an accompanying programme. It not only honours the commitment of the award winner, but also serves as an incentive for more people in Bremen to deal with sustainability issues. The fact that the Diaspora Prize is also supported by the Senate Chancellery of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen lends it further significance. Virginie Kamche reported on how the idea came about, what challenges there were until it was established and why such a prize sends a positive signal not only to diaspora actors.

"I will rise" is a sneaker brand from Cologne. But "I will rise" is about more than just shoes. "We rise by lifting others" is the motto of start-up founder Nando Nkrumah. The designer presented the idea behind his sneaker project. The "I will rise" sports shoes combine highquality hand-woven fabrics from Ghana with exceptional shoemaking skills from Portugal. In this way, the designer combines traditional craftsmanship from two continents. Nando Nkrumah told how he raised the money for his first collection through a crowdfunding campaign. The young entrepreneur collected his first start-up capital via the Kickstarter.de platform. However, before the first shoe was produced, a long development phase preceded it, in search of a durable, sustainable material option. A vegan leather alternative is used for the upper shoe, and the laces are made from organic cotton. While the sole is made of 50% recycled rubber, the insole is 90% biodegradable. The shoes are not only sustainable, fair and "vegan", they also ensure that Kente weavers in Ghana have a buyer for their fabrics. Because there is a lot of local competition from printed Kente fabrics, which are imported as a cheaper version from China. However, every "I will rise" trainer is decorated with the much higher quality hand-woven Kente from Ghana. Nando Nkrumah's message to the participants was to believe in their ideasand also to dare other ways of financing projects.

"Creativity leads to Sustainability – Creative Resistance" is the name of a creative writing project from NRW's partner country Ghana, which is being carried out with the support of CIM. Muslim Abdul Moomen had already talked about this project in his workshop, but now he presented it in more detail in the plenary. The aim of the project is to produce a book with texts written by the participants. In these texts - and in a series of workshops and monthly writing workshops - the participants have dealt with the 17 sustainable development goals as well as with various forms of creative writing. Over a period of two years - with Corona interruptions - they met regularly to deepen writing and digital skills and to address sustainability issues, especially from their own perspectives. In doing so, they were to record the topics in written texts. These texts will then be published in a book. After publication, the book will be given away free of charge to some libraries and will also be used in readings at schools. In this way, a sustainable engagement with the SDGs is to take place.

Lydia Amenyaglo also presented a project from Ghana with **plentyplenty.africa**, a project that aims at a more sustainable cocoa cultivation in Ghana. After addressing the main













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problems in the cocoa economy, Lydia Amenyaglo elaborated on five steps she is implementing with a team of mentors, partners and the local community of Krabokese to enable more sustainable cocoa production. Currently, unsustainable agricultural practices such as deforestation, monoculture and the use of pesticides are the norm in the cocoa industry. These practices lead to soil erosion and residues in cocoa. Climate change is also already leaving its mark - for example, yields are getting smaller and the quality of the beans is declining. As a result, even less of the billion-dollar cocoa business remains with the actual producers.

plentyplenty.africa's vision is to use 100 % of the cocoa fruit. Until now, it is common that only the beans are used and thus about 80 % of the cocoa plant is wasted. The start-up wants to produce juices from the pulp and packaging from the shells and thus use the whole fruit. The product range should eventually extend from scrubs and essential oils for skin care to healthy snacks and chocolate.

With the support of African Tech Vision and GIZ, the start-up has been given mentors to help the young company develop these ideas. The focus is always on cocoa, but also on showing how versatile the product is, not just as an ingredient in chocolate. The focus is always on the community of Krabokese, which should benefit from all steps to make the lives of the local people more sustainable.

Arnold Bwele from the Dortmund-based association Culture pour touse.V. presented the media project **Diaspora Creative Lab** from Cameroon. In this project, children and young people learned how to use a camera over a longer period of time and developed their own scripts under professional guidance and shot their first own films. The Diaspora Association carried out this project together with the Cameroonian partner association "Association Vision #237". Bwele reported that this project is now considered a model approach for other diaspora and cultural associations.

The evening

In the evening, there was a live performance by young people from the **Cactus JungesTheater** from Münster. With dance and poetry, they addressed the topics of migration and empowerment. They performed their own poems as well as poems by May Ayim² and SemraErtan³. Dance pieces with titles like "Freedom", "Global Curses" and

²May Ayim was a German poet, educator and activist of the Afro-German movement. Her words and works not only led to the visualisation of Black people who have their centre of life in Germany, but also to the publicization of a long-lost history.

³SemraErtan was a Turkish migrant worker and writer in the Federal Republic of Germany who publicly self-immolated in protest against racism.













"Power" also addressed global inequalities and power structures. Actress **GiftyWiafe** led the Cactus programme, which received thunderous applause from the audience.

Afterwards, poet and spoken word artist Muslim Abdul Moomen gave a sample of his work.

For all those who were not yet exhausted after this programme-filled Saturday, there was a musical finale with the singer "Hervella Lafleur", who entertained a small, tireless group of conference visitors with titles from the *African Song Book* and made them dance until the doors of the house had to close.

The last conference day - Sunday, 5th September

The third and last day of the conference started with a delay due to technical problems. The speaker, the interdisciplinary artist and activist **OkhiogbeOmonblanksOmonhinmin**, had to be unceremoniously connected from London because he would have had to go into quarantine during the planned entry on Friday. As he could neither see nor hear the audience at the beginning, but interaction was important to him - also in view of the discussion that followed his lecture, it had taken a while for everything to run smoothly. In his lecture "60 Years De-Colonisation: Black and African Experience in Knowledge Decolonisation", he posed several provocative theses. One of them was that the independence of African states was purely a performance. Literally, he said: The idea of independence is corrupt once you even look at it from the point of departure. The idea of nationhood is imported; colonisation was and is evil; the concept of granting independence remains a performance.

His lecture was followed by a very lively discussion with the artist. Not only the conference participants took part, but also many who were connected online.

The side programmes

On the first two days of the conference, the exhibition "Sichert(e) sichauchunser Land einen Platz an der Sonne? Der lange Schatten der deutschen Kolonialzeit" (Is our country also securing a place in the sun? The long shadow of the German colonial era). This exhibition of the Eine Welt Netz NRW shows that the German colonial era is still relevant today in many ways - for example, in the area of global economic relations, in the topic of flight and migration, or when it comes to racism and identity in Germany. Even man-made climate change and the associated climate injustice also have causes that lie in the colonial era. One















World expert promoter Serge Palasie briefly introduced the exhibition on Saturday. "This exhibition looks at the past so that we can better understand the present and learn for the future. So this is not so much about historical details, but about the long shadow cast by a supposedly closed history," he said.

Throughout the conference, a market of opportunities was set up in the foyer, open to conference visitors during the breaks. In addition to healthy freshly squeezed juices, fair trade products from small diasporic manufacturers were available, as well as information about various projects and diaspora organisations. Among others, **Le Papillon créole** presented itself, a small label that has taken up the cause of diversity in the (children's) wardrobe and therefore develops fabrics that represent children with different skin tones. The company's fabrics break gender stereotypes, such as stereotypical colour schemes, hobbies and career aspirations.

Sandrine Chouansu presented the **Ingenieur Kids** association, which consists of a young team of African or diasporic academics, engineers, lecturers, offering STEM workshops and STEM projects for children (not only with migration biography). The aim of the association is to ensure that children get the hands-on, imaginative experiences they need to open their minds to new skills and future possibilities. At the tables set up, children and also adults were able to do hands-on experiments to get an idea of the workshops.

In her farewell speech after three jam-packed days, moderator Tina Adomako looked ahead to 12 September, the UN Day of South-South Cooperation, and expressed the hope that new ideas and cooperations would emerge in the Open Space for Networking and Idea Development, with which the event ended. These could then be reported on at the next conference.

Keynote speakers and panellists

Dr. Boniface Mabanza Bambu

Dr.Mabanza was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and now lives in Heidelberg. He studied philosophy, literature and theology in Kinshasa and later did his doctorate at the University of Münster on the topic "Justice can only exist for all. Criticism of Globalisation from an African Perspective." This is a topic that continues to drive him to this day, also in his work as coordinator at KASA, KirchlicheArbeitsstelleSüdliches Afrika. His main topics are trade and economic policy. Since 2015, Dr Mabanza has also worked as a freelance lecturer on development policy. He is active in numerous networks of the African diaspora in Germany and Europ.















Prof. Dr. Akosua Adomako-Ampofo

Akosua Adomako-Ampofo is Professor of African & Gender Studies at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon. She researches women's roles in the African context and has published widely on the subject. In 2005, she founded the Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy, CEGENSA at the University of Ghana, of which she was the first director until 2009. CEGENSA formulated a sexual harassment policy for Ghana long before the #metoo debate.

In addition to teaching & research, Prof. Adomako advises numerous institutions at home and abroad on gender issues, including the Gender and Human Rights Documentation Centre, Ghana, the Association of African Universities, universities in the USA & Europe such as Johns Hopkins and Emory University; UN organisations such as UNAIDS; UNIFEM; UNFPA; UNICEF; WHO, to name but a few. She is also a member of many organisations including The African Gender Evaluators Network; The Gender and Women's Studies (for Africa) Network; The International Sociologists Association - where she is also Vice President. She is also the current President of the African Studies Association of Africa.

Virginie Kamche

Virginie Kamche is a One World promoter in Bremen and works on the intercultural opening of the One World groups there. She accompanies migrant NGOs - for example by supporting them in their public relations work - and also supports the networking of migrant organisations. In 2010, she co-founded the Afrika Netzwerke Bremen e.V. The association acts as a link between the African communities, but also other immigrant groups and various institutions in Bremen. She is very concerned to highlight the migrant perspective as an enrichment within the development debate.

Three years ago, she launched the Bremen Diaspora Award to highlight and honour exemplary examples of engagement in and for the diaspora. The prize is now awarded annually.

Emmanuella Bih

Emmanuella Bih comes from Cameroon and is a research assistant at the University of Cologne. She has worked on gender inequality and the influence of language in Cameroon, where she has taught courses on youth language in Cameroon at the university. She is currently working on gender issues and gender inequality in Cameroon.

Dr.ChicgouaNoubactep















ChicgouaNoubactep has been the local mayor of Rittmarshausen since 2016 and teaches at the University of Göttingen in the Department of Applied Geology. His seminars often focus on the topic of water security and safe drinking water. 1.8 billion people have no access to clean drinking water (about 20% of the world's population). These people almost all live in the Global South, most of them in Africa. He criticises the paternalistic attitude of the Western world also when it comes to water.

OkhiogbeOmonblanksOmonhinmin

OkhiogbeOmonblanksOmonhinmin was born in 1985 in Benin City, Nigeria. He is an interdisciplinary artist/activist who takes the form, shape or position necessary to realise projects in documentary, archival, film, music, installation art practices and more. He works within intersections and uses tools such as research-based methods of "oral tradition", oral storytelling. Omonblanks believes that practitioners, especially those of Black and African heritage, should be given the same space and appreciation as their academic counterparts, because only through practice can academic theories be tested. He founded "The Art Concept" in 2017, a documentation and archiving platform that makes Black history(s) visible. Combining home and diaspora, Omonblanks lives in Accra, London and recently in Berlin.

The overall moderation of the event was done by **Tina Adomako**, New German Media Maker and expert promoter in the One World Network NRW. Tina Adomako is a freelance journalist who writes about culture and development issues. As a specialist promoter in the One World Network NRW, she is committed to topics of sustainable development - such as global learning, fair trade, migration & development and works increasingly in the areas of empowerment and intercultural opening.









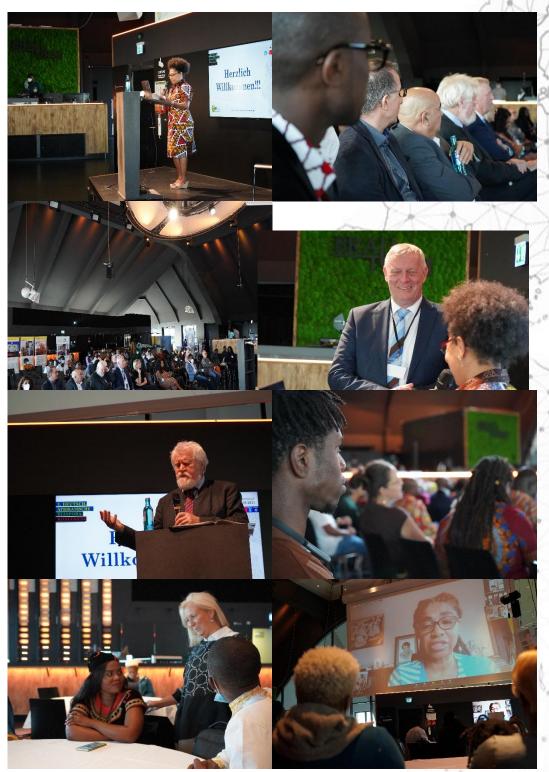








A review in pictures









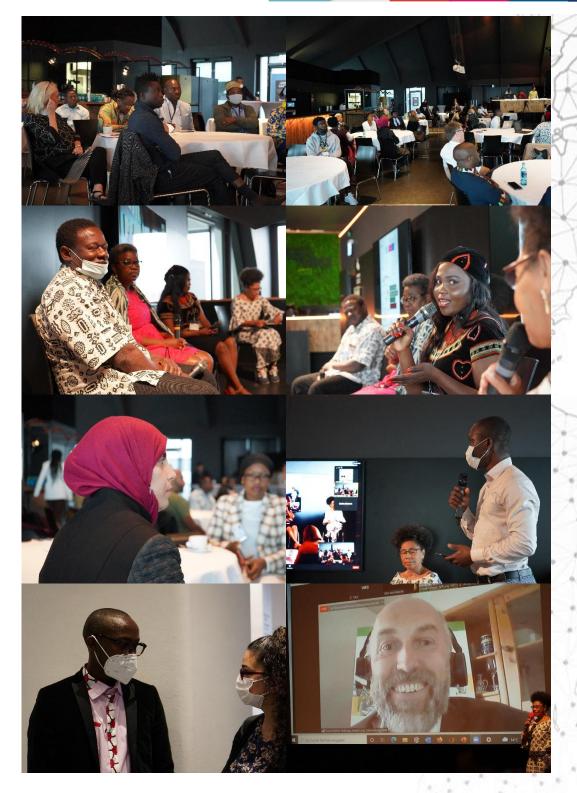




















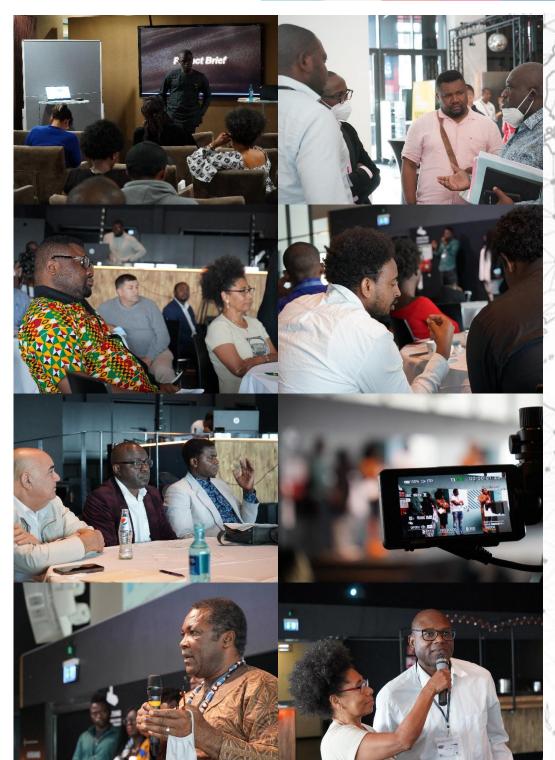




10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES































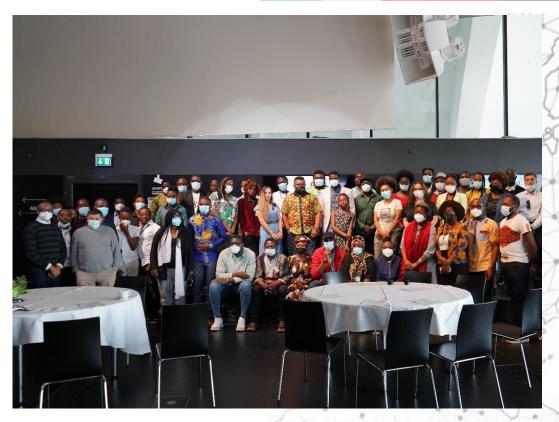












Thank you

A big thank you to all the hard-working helpers without whom the conference would not have been possible.

















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