

Date: 2nd of November 2021

Initiator: University of Bucharest (Faculty of Political Science, Institute of African Studies, Faculty of History)

Title: Conceptualizing and understanding the role of African diaspora in Europe

Brief description: The research project on African diaspora is an actual and pertinent question, directly linking the African continent to the world, and especially to Europe. These last years the interest on the matter intensified and the number of studies published has increased (see e.g. *Human Rights, Race, and Resistance in Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Toyin Falola, Cacee Hoyen, Routledge, 2017; *The African Diaspora. A history through Culture*, Patrick Manning, Columbia University Press, 2009; *Opression and Resistance in Africa and the Diaspora*, eds. Kenneth Kalu, Toyin Falola, Routledge, 2019, "Migration Conundrums, Regional Integration and Development. Africa-Europe Relations in a Changing Global Order", eds. Inocent Moyo, Christopher Changwe Nshimbi, Jussi P. Laine, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.). The reflection on mobility and the African identity, within and across African societies (*Intersectionality and Interconnections* eds. Jamaine M. Abidogun, Sterling Recher, Pagrave Macmillan, 2021) and the story of interconnections is maybe more pertinent than ever.

The interrogation about modernity, global evolutions and diaspora constitutes a transversal subject, present for example in countries from Eastern and Central European as well as in the African context. In this sense, nowadays we observe an increased role of the African diaspora to sustain and get involved in the problems of their communities.

To deeper understand this complex dynamic, the project opens several perspectives on the domains of the African Studies, manly following the following **two axes**:

- On the **theoretical and historical perspective**, we aim at a better conceptualization of the African diaspora and an analysis on the identity discourses in European and African contexts. The historical reading of the phenomenon considers not only the slave trades, colonialism but also issues such as industrialization or urbanization as part of the modernizing project.
- **Social, political, cultural, and economic approaches** propose an analysis of the contemporary dynamics of the African diaspora in Europe. The study of the Modern African diaspora allows us to better understand present-day challenges and evolutions (migration, economic crisis, democratization, social movements, contestation, gender, heritage discourse and identity etc.)

The project aims mainly the following **research questions**:

- What are the specific integrational / transactional mechanisms correlated to the social class, educational attainment and specialization differentiation characteristic of migrant groups when in contact with exogenous factors (i.e. objective material conditions in the receiving European states)?
- What are the specific patterns and timeframes of socio-economic and cultural/habitus convergence between professionals, specialized, highly educated migrants, and a diaspora-based, progressive civil society configuration?

- How do they differ in qualitative and quantitative terms, from those intrinsically connected to working-class, basic specialization, or limited qualification members of migrant groups?
- What are the interactional dynamics or contradictions between members of the same African diaspora groups?
- From an Area Studies, critical geography and World-Systems analysis transfer perspective, how does the brain-drain determined by the large-scale migration of specialized personnel affect the long-term socio-economic development of African states?
- In what ways do these points influence or threaten the progress of specific Sustainable Development Goals in relation to the African continent?

Partners: All CIVIS universities are invited to participate in this project. The universities from the African continent are a necessary part of this project, the dialogue Nord-South as well as South-South being equally important.

Institutional privileged partners: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, General Inspectorate for Immigration.

Other potential partners: Göttingen University (<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/547763.html>), Osnabrück University (<https://www.imis.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/startpage.html>), University of Casablanca (Marocco).

Objective: The present initiative aims at creating a work study group on the question of African diaspora. Starting from the expertise of the CIVIS partners, another objective is to expand the European-African dialogue on the matter. The project is articulated as a first dialogue on the subjects, proposing an interdisciplinary approach that involves a federation of the reflections that the members of the CIVIS community have on the subject in their domain of expertise.

Proposed activities and estimated timeline

The present project proposes a research project about African diaspora, with a timeline and outcomes as follows:

1. A **study day in January-February 2022** (TBD). In Bucharest or online, depending on the evolution of the pandemic conditions.
2. Following the study day, **joint courses/seminaries** during the second semester of the current academic year (2021-2022)
3. In the light of the research-driven and joint education activities, the publication of a collective **volume** (October 2022).
4. A **photography/art exhibition** dedicated to both tangible and intangible cultural heritage - an essential part of the cultural and social identity of human beings, illustrating: a) the diversity of contexts of the African diaspora in contemporary Europe, and b) if/how the perception and expression of cultural identity changes in time, as a consequence of foreign socio-cultural and economic factors. The exhibition would be both virtual (with a dedicated webpage) and physical (Faculty of History, University of Bucharest).