

Archiving dis:connected cultural heritages in Africa. Prospects, processes and challenges

A workshop at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect

Archives are global sources of information, cultural transmission and identity formation as well as serving the preservation of cultural heritage. They constitute one of the most valuable national assets and, according to Canadian archivist Arthur Doughty, are the gifts of one generation to another. Despite their value, many archives and collections, especially in the Global South, are exposed to destruction by natural or man-made disasters. Many others are poorly stored and need to be conserved, restored or converted into new formats to remain accessible. Even more fragile are what Lowry (2023) refers to as disputed and displaced archives, a term that could broadly encompass contested or disconnected histories and cultural heritage – including indigenous knowledge systems, traditional practices and performative heritage – of marginalized cultures, such as those of the Black/African cultural renaissance.

The history of the Black/African cultural renaissance consists largely of pan-African ideas, movements, actors and transnational events organized to focus on the struggles of the continent and its diaspora against empire. Embedded in the network of these transnational events, cultural festivals such as FESMAN 1966, PANAF 1969, Zaire 1974 and FESTAC 1977 functioned as global arenas for the celebration of African unity, the exhibition of Black/ African cultural heritage and collaboration between Black/ African artists, scholars, cultural administrators and governments. In addition, they served as sites of protest for geopolitical exclusions, socio-cultural hegemony, politically motivated absence and the silencing of dissidents, including artists and scholars, and highlighted different paths of development on the continent.

Given the global framing of Black/African heritage in these events and the transnational aims of their conceptualization, organization, promotion, participation and remembrance, the workshop aims to explore the often-overlooked tensions, absences and dis:connections within the conceptual, organizational and participatory frameworks of pan-African postcolonial festivals from a broad perspective. It will also examine how these festivals and the collections and narratives they produced both represented and obscured aspects of Africa's cultural heritage. Most importantly, it will look at the challenges associated with archiving, preserving and digitizing the material remains of these festivals and the wider implications for understanding postcolonial African identity, cultural heritage and historiography. The workshop aims to synthesize different perspectives on how dis:connected cultural heritage – fragmented by colonial histories, geopolitical tensions and institutional constraints – are remembered, archived or lost.

Your participation is understood to imply consent to photographic and video recordings for internal purposes, scholarly communication and publicity.



Käte Hamburger
Research Centre
global dis:connect

Archiving dis:connected cultural heritages in Africa

Prospects, processes, and challenges

Concept and organisation:
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Gideon Morison



Please register by 16 April 2025:
<https://www.globaldisconnect.org/registration/>

24–25
April
2025

Käte Hamburger
Research Centre
global dis:connect

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Thursday, 24. April 2025

- 9:00 Registration
- 9:30 Opening remarks, Christopher Balme
- Panel 1**
Chair: Andrea Kifyasi, global dis:connect, Munich
- 9:45 **Colonial archival silences and dis:connected African heritages: search for the evidence of acquisition and ownership of colonial ethnographic collections**
- Valence Silayo, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- 10:45 Coffee break
- 11:15 **Museum object here, archival record there: the 2019 restitution of Hendrik Witbooi's Bible to showcase museological-archival dis:connections in returning African cultural heritage**
- Leah Niederhausen, University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht, The Netherlands
- 12:15 Lunch
- Panel 2**
Chair: Tom Menger, global dis:connect, Munich
- 13:15 **Silences of the mission: why closed missionary archives matter**
- Nancy Rushohora, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- 14:15 **Calabar Slave Museum: towards creative archiving (via zoom)**
- Patrick Ebewo, Topfaith University, Mkpatak, Nigeria
- 15:15 Coffee break
- 15:45 **The role of AI in reconstructing African cultural heritage: decolonising or reinforcing colonial narrative?**
- Mohamad Fareed, Sharjah University, Sharjah, UAE

Friday, 25. April 2025

- Panel 3**
Chair: Işıl Eğrikavuk, global dis:connect, Munich
- 09:30 **Re: Claiming cultural identity: the potential transformative impact of post colonial festivals in Lesotho**
- Rethabile Malibo, National University of Lesotho, Roma, Lesotho
- 10:30 Coffee break
- 11:00 **Notes on deterritorialising festival archives: developing curatorial and publishing interventions in Lagos**
- Naima Hassan, G.A.S. Foundation, Berlin, Germany
- 12:00 Lunch
- Panel 4**
Chair: Christopher Balme, global dis:connect, Munich
- 13:00 **Panel discussion on 'Contexts of material preservation and futures of cultural collections: FESTAC '77 and CBAAC Collections'**
- Jubril Adesegun Dosumu, Hon. Aisha Adamu Augie, Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), Lagos, Nigeria
- 14:45 Excursion - **Museum Fünf Kontinente**
- Stefan Eisenhofer, Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich, Germany
- 15:50 Closing remarks, Gideon Morison
- 16:00 Adjourn