

Pilot African Postgraduate Academy (PAPA)

Developing a scholarly agenda for Africa

The Pilot African Postgraduate Academy (PAPA) targets early career scholars who have recently accomplished their doctoral theses and who are based at Universities in Africa. The goal is to foster among them a commitment to the value of scholarship for its own sake, cultivate their interest in conceptual understanding and promote an orientation towards the use of knowledge acquired in Africa to contribute to the further development of science in general. In order to achieve this, the proposed PAPA will set up a training programme to encourage laureates to engage with fundamental epistemological issues in a critical dialogue with their disciplines, Area Studies and their identity as scholars. The proposed project will consist of the following elements:

- Two workshops per year bringing together fifteen selected scholars and up to four established researchers in Bamako;
- A mentorship programme bringing together senior researchers and laureates at their home institutions;
- A strong network amongst the scholars themselves;
- A strong intellectual centre based at Point Sud, an independent organization with a long-standing expertise in organizing scientific events and providing high level training to young scholars.
- A focus on early career scholars from francophone African countries, which in spite of remarkable strides over recent years continues to play a minor role in global knowledge production. The project has the ambition to make early career scholars more productive in that regard. All candidates must be fluent in French and have a working knowledge of English, as a significant part of the bibliography will be in English.
- Linkages with established African researchers living outside Africa with colleagues from African universities; in this way, not only does it promote networking between the scholars but also between diaspora lecturers and Africa.

The programme is committed to the promotion of scholarship as opposed to policy relevant research. It acknowledges the crucial role which scholars of Africa can play in the further development of the social sciences and humanities owing to Africa's particular historical circumstances and the special epistemological issues raised by knowledge produced on Africa.

I. The Objectives of the Pilot African Postgraduate Academy (PAPA)

The idea of an African Postgraduate Academy came about in response to the problems raised by how African scholars have sought to respond to the methodological, theoretical and conceptual challenges they face. To address it this project draws from the distinction between basic and applied research and seeks to identify in the tension issuing from it themes to serve as the basis for training early career scholars. The goal is not to replace universities. Rather, it is to help recover genuine scholarship by fostering a truly scholarly attitude to knowledge production among promising early career scholars who can make a difference in their respective social science and humanities disciplines. The idea is to contribute towards creating room for an understanding of science as an investment in a better public sphere, i.e. one that is

competent in debate, knows how to evaluate evidence and values reliance on evidence, rather than on opinion or intuition. Point Sud has been committed to these goals right from its inception.

The key distinction made in this proposal is between (a) a research agenda and (b) a scholarly agenda. Most programmes assisting Africa in its efforts to improve Higher Education and research focus on enhancing research skills, often bearing on policy relevant issues. The focus on improving research skills to meet policy demands is a legitimate one given Africa's development challenges. These challenges yield, indeed, the research agenda focussing on development issues addressed by most of these programmes. The continent needs, however, an intellectual in addition to a research agenda. In other words, Africa needs to pursue a discussion focussing on what it means to study a particular subject under the specific conditions of Africa as well as what validates knowledge thus produced. The continent needs to establish the relevance of the knowledge produced in Africa to the pursuit of knowledge in general, i.e. to the various disciplines in the world. This task is best taken up within the framework of a scholarly agenda, i.e. one committed to clarifying conceptual issues.

In the interest of a coherent approach the project will focus on four thematic issues central to policy making in Africa: *Conflict, migration, youth and growing urbanisation*. They correspond to the areas of expertise of most scholars who will be invited to contribute to the project. Given their policy relevance they will also help us to show through the envisaged conceptual work why we value basic over applied research as the key ingredient in developing scholarship in Africa.

The envisaged project has three key programmatic goals:

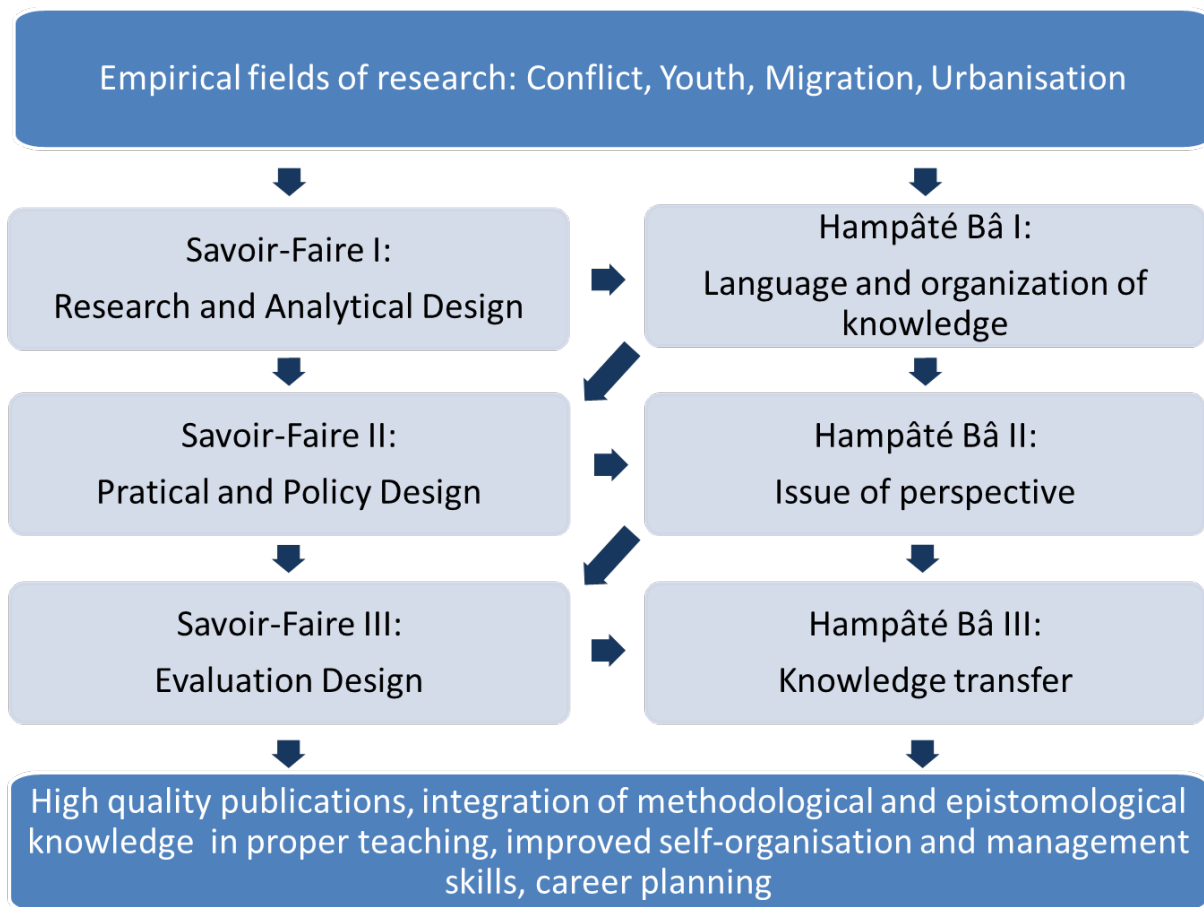
- Fostering a commitment to conceptual understanding: this is the key element in the programme;
- Enhancing methodological skills: this is the vehicle through which the overall goal will be achieved;
- Establishing a critical mass committed to the expansion of scholarly culture: the overall goal.
- In terms of output we aim at different levels:
- The fellows will be guided to publish at least one peer-reviewed article in a high ranking journal or one monograph, which could be a strongly revised version of their unpublished PhD thesis.
- The fellows will be trained to organize a scientific event, together with their mentor and/or with co-fellows. There will be limited funds in the module "Le réseau du savoir". This training will be based on the long-standing experience of Frankfurt in the framework of the Volkswagen Fellowship Program in the Social Sciences.

The fellows will be trained in application writing and will be informed about funding opportunities at IAS likes MIASA and STIAS and about career development programs of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, PANGEA and the DAAD, amongst others. For each fellow a career development plan will be finalized before the end of 2022.

II. The Programme

The programme offers two kinds of workshops, one methodological (“Les ateliers du savoir faire”) and another “epistemological” (“Les ateliers Amadou Hampâté Bâ”). It will also develop a network of scholars (“Le réseau du savoir”). The two workshops will run every year in Bamako for two weeks each. The workshops series build on the empirical research of the fellows. As “Savoir-Faire” takes place in spring of every year and “Hampâté Bâ” in autumn, there is ample time to analyse the experiences made and questions asked in each workshop to adapt the following one to the needs of the fellows.

Graph 1: Overview of the key project elements and their interlinkages



“Les ateliers du savoir-faire”

These methodological workshops are 2 weeks long events at Point Sud in Bamako to train young scholars in scholarly methodology. Unlike ordinary methodological courses, these workshops focus on the logic of inquiry by imparting knowledge, on the one hand, on the fundamental difference between basic and applied science and, on the other, on the fundamentals of (qualitative and quantitative) analysis. The purpose of this workshop is to impart valuable research skills to the laureates in a way that encourages them to reflect on the tools available to them. Key to the content is an attention to issues pertaining to knowledge transfer and translation into practice. The workshop will entail the following elements:

I. Research design: conceptual problems vs. practical problems

This unit introduces participants to fundamental epistemological issues around the production of knowledge by making a distinction between basic research (conceptual problems) and applied research (practical problems).

II. Analytical design: Formulating problems

This unit elaborates on the nature of basic research by exploring the ways in which it can be understood as research which helps to formulate problems for which there may already be solutions or, at any rate, which require solutions to be worked out.

III. Practical design: Formulating solutions

This unit is the counterpart to the previous one (formulating problems) and focuses on the process of identifying problems for which solutions can be worked out.

IV. Policy design: How solutions work in the real world

The focus of this unit is on the political, economic and social conditions that must be met for a solution to be effective.

V. Evaluation design: Checking the relevance of research

This unit introduces participants to the important task of drawing up criteria to ascertain the extent to which the implementation of research results can be used to improve research design. The courses will be supplemented by teaching scientific event organization, application writing and international funding schemes.

« Les ateliers Hampaté Bâ »

These workshops are named after a great Malian historian in honour of his highly insightful idea that only those who know that they do not know will know (*Si tu sais que tu ne sais pas, tu sauras.*). This idea brings to the fore the main challenge posed by inquiry, namely the basis for our knowledge. How do we know that we know? This calls for the organization of a Summer School (2 weeks) to discuss these epistemological issues and encourage the publication of papers and books on the matter by both faculty and, above all, student participants. The network and its work seek to act on the intellectual goals of the programme through practical activities with an immediate impact on intellectual life in Africa. Four major issues seem central to the work of rethinking the practice of science in Africa and for this reason they will feature prominently in the curriculum of the workshop:

I. The language issue

A scholarly engagement with the social sciences and humanities in Africa requires deep reflection on the role of language. This presents itself on three levels: (a) the language of the social sciences and humanities; (b) the vernaculars spoken in Africa including the worldviews entailed in them; (c) the European languages spoken as official languages in Africa. The idea is to encourage reflection on translation as a particularly significant element of scholarship in Africa, one where African scholars are more likely to make important contributions to general scholarship.

II. The organization of knowledge

The study of Africa follows a structure placing the continent under the orbit of “Area Studies” and particular disciplines (e.g. social anthropology). This organization of knowledge production on Africa has had a bearing on the nature of knowledge. The rationale behind the organization of knowledge provides an important epistemological framework within which to reflect on the quality as well as the validation of knowledge. This represents a fundamental element in the process of re-thinking knowledge production in Africa.

III. The issue of perspective

Perspective determines what is of scholarly interest and how it is to be addressed. Knowledge production on Africa has drawn mainly from perspectives developed outside of the continent. What would reversing the gaze mean to the definition of the object of knowledge in Africa and the vocabulary through which it is to be retrieved? This module explores issues arising from how Africans have grappled with issues of positionality in knowledge production and what African experiences can contribute to the world of scholarship.

IV. Knowledge transfer

The tension between basic and applied research is central to the intellectual agenda developed in this project. While the project places emphasis on basic research, it does not lose sight of the applied challenge. It does so by focusing on knowledge transfer, i.e. how knowledge is communicated across knowledge bearers and practitioners and, most particularly the challenges arising from the need to implement what we know. The instrumentalisation of knowledge has always played a major role in the constitution of Africa as an object of scientific inquiry. Addressing its politics is central to the development of an intellectual agenda on the continent.

The course will provide a framework to develop and guide individual publication projects and to finalize them before the end of the funding period.

« Le réseau du savoir »

This is a small-grant facility to enable laureates to organize one workshop or a lecture series at their home institutions, to invite guests for single lectures and proposal writing, or for engaging with other fellows. The fellows are invited to pool their funds and to jointly organize events. As explained above, all events proposed should have a focus on methodological and epistemological questions raised by PAPA. The use of these funds must be approved by the mentors on the ground and the Steering Committee. Furthermore, there will be a web-based exchange platform where the faculty and the fellows can inform each other, exchange and build up a shared bibliographic archive. The key goal is to foster a critical mass with the task of promoting a new scholarly agenda for African Studies on the continent itself.

III. The Faculty

The core team of the Faculty will consist of the following academics:

- Prof Justin Bisanswa, Literature Studies, Université Laval, Canada and Université de Lubumbashi, DR of Congo. Prof. Bisanswa will also work as a mentor in DRC.
- Prof Mamadou Diawara, Anthropology, University of Frankfurt, Germany
- Prof Augustin Emame, Law, Université de Nantes, France
- Prof Elísio Macamo, Sociology, University of Basel, Switzerland

At least two of the above persons will be present during the workshops in Bamako. Up to two more senior researchers from the following list of mentors will also be invited to Bamako to actively contribute to the workshop:

- Prof Augustin Loada, Directeur de l'École Doctorale de l'Université Ouaga II, Président de l'Institut pour la Gouvernance et le Développement (IGD), Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- Dr. Ludovic O. Kibora, Maître de Recherche, Directeur de l'Institut des Sciences des Sociétés (INSS), Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- Prof Antoine Socpa, Département d'Anthropologie, Université de Yaoundé I, Cameroun
- Dr. Julienne Louise Ngo Likeng, Department of Public Health, School of Health Sciences of Catholic University of Central Africa, Yaoundé
- Prof Joseph Tonda, Département de Sociologie, Université de Libreville, Gabon
- Prof Mahaman Tidjani Alou, LASDEL, Niamey, Niger
- Professeur Abdoulaye Niang and Prof Alfred Inis Ndiaye, Université Gaston Berger, Saint-Louis, Sénégal

IV. The Application, funding, mentoring

Basic requirements

Applicants should have finished their PhD not longer than 10 years before applying and should not be older than 50 years of age. Excellent French and a good command of English are basic requirements. Applicants are invited to set out in writing (10 pages in total, only French language accepted) the issue they want to deal with, how they want to deal with it methodologically, theoretically and conceptually, its relevance to their discipline (social sciences and the humanities) as they understand it, and the scholarly challenges it raises also for the application of their new skills into their own academic activities in their home universities. They are also required to propose a publication project that not only foresees the publication of empirical findings, but also contributes to fundamental challenges of knowledge production in their field. Applicants should provide a detailed academic CV indicating the evolution of their own intellectual agenda and how it relates to the objectives of PAPA.

They are also required to produce a letter of commitment by their respective university allowing them to fully participate in the activities of the programme throughout the full three years (absence of around five weeks per year spent abroad, enough time for preparation and follow-up and for the integration of the acquired knowledge into their own research projects). If an applicant is not employed by African universities she or he must provide evidence that she or he will be hired by an African institution of higher education before enrollment into the programme.

Mentoring

All fellows will have a mentor who will help them in their academic career advancement. In the case of fellows applying from Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Mali, DRC, Gabon, Mali, Niger or Senegal the mentor will be one of the professors mentioned under chapter III. All applicants from other countries are requested to propose an intellectual mentor of their choice (letter of support, CV of mentor proposed). The duties of the mentors and fellows and the expected outcome will be fixed in a mentoring contract.

Timetable

The opening ceremony of the program will take place on 1st March 2020 in Bamako. The first course starts on 2 March. All courses will take place in the first two weeks of March and September respectively. If funding is accorded there will be 2 additional PAPA conferences and one visit to MIASA, the new Institute of Advanced Studies in Accra, in the course of the fellowship. The Fellowship starts on 1st January 2020 and ends on 31st December 2022.

Funding

Fellows will receive:

- A monthly stipend of 300 Euro
- A lump sum of 10.000 € for self-organized workshops or conferences at their home institution, conference travel, invitations of colleagues and collaboration partners (“réseau de savoir”), whole period. All activities must be approved by the Steering Committee and all activities must be accounted according to the regulations of Goethe University Frankfurt.
- A lump sum of 2.000 € for proofreading, publication fees, whole period. Same as above applies

Mentors will receive:

- An annual allowance of 1.000 €
- A lump sum of 2.000 € per year and per fellow assigned, to be used for scientific activities spreading the PAPA message at their home institutions, for publication costs, conference travel. All activities must be approved by the Steering Committee and all activities must be accounted according to the regulations of Goethe University Frankfurt.
- If mentors act as lecturers in one of the PAPA courses there will be paid an additional honorarium of up to 1.000 € for 7 days.

The *home institution* will receive:

- Annual institutional overhead for home institution of 1.000 €

Applications should be submitted to the following address:

Dr. Stefan Schmid, s.schmid@em.uni-frankfurt.de.

Deadline is 31st October 2019.

You will be informed about our decision on 15th December 2019.