



MIASA Thematic Conference 2024

Regional Governance as Experience: New Perspectives on Politics and Sustainability

University Omar Bongo

Libreville, Gabon 4-6

July 2024





Universiteit
Leiden



Introduction

Regionalism has long been an integral part of African governance. Upon gaining independence in the era of decolonization, African states immediately set about creating numerous regional and sub-regional institutions to realize their interests. These regional institutions have since expanded their portfolios to provide governance in areas such as peace and security, economic development, the environment, health, and humanitarian affairs. Examples range from wellknown organizations such as the African Union (AU) or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to lesser known ones such as the Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA) or the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Scholars and policy-makers are paying greater attention to African regional institutions and have high expectations of them.

However, academic engagement with these developments has so far been dominated by an institutionalist perspective that rarely looks beyond formal institutions, state leaders, and their often grand policy agendas. Little knowledge exists about how African communities 'on the ground' experience the governance of these institutions, that is, scholars have rarely explored the sites and actors most impacted by regional norms and policies. The MIASA conference aims at filling this lacuna by scrutinizing regional governance as experience, that is, as seen through the lived realities, narratives, practices, perceptions, and cosmologies of a variety of actors 'on the ground'. Such actors may be individuals and (organized) groups that interact with regional norms and policies, local officers of regional organizations, civil society groups, religious and spiritual orders, national government officials, local leaders, 'ordinary' citizens, etc. And their experiences may be contemporary or past, direct or indirect, cognitive, affective, visual, bodily, or otherwise. In centering the experiences of African communities, the conference deliberately takes a microperspective, i.e. through lived and every-day realities, on an allegedly macro-phenomenon, i.e. (regional) institutions and 'grand' policy programs. Such a shift in perspective generates new conceptual and empirical knowledge about the everyday politics and sustainability of African regional governance.

Due to its explorative character, the conference is intended to cut across disciplines and methodological approaches. The contributions will explore regional governance as experience in a broad range of policy fields.

Conveners and Organizers (in alphabetical order):

Dr André Adjo, National Center for Scientific and Technological Research (CENAREST), Libreville, Gabon

Dr Juliana Appiah, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana

Prof Mamadou Diawara, Director (Germany) MIASA, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

Dr Fortuné M Mboula, University Omar Bongo, Libreville, Gabon

Dr Densua Mumford, University of Leiden, Netherlands

Dr Fabert Mensah Ngoma, University Omar Bongo, Libreville, Gabon

Dr Marko Scholze, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

Dr Antonia Witt, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), Germany

The conference takes place in the framework of the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA) which was founded in 2018 at the University of Ghana in Legon/Accra. The conference is part of the outreach program of MIASA in collaboration with the Institute for Sciences on Societies (INSS-CNRST) and the Goethe University in Frankfurt/Main in Germany. MIASA is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research. For more information, please consult: <https://www.ug.edu.gh/mias-africa/node/1>

Conference Program

4 July 2024

- 9:00-9:30 **Opening Ceremony and Welcome Addresses**
Prof Dr Serges Loungou, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (FLSH),
University Omar Bongo, Libreville
Dr Grace Diabah & Prof Dr Mamadou Diawara, directors of MIASA, University of
Ghana, Accra
Housekeeping (Marko Scholze)
- 9:30-10:30 **Introduction and Icebreaker (interactive group session)**
Convening Team: André Adjo, Juliana Abena Appiah, Fortuné Matsiegui Mboula,
Densua Mumford, Fabert Mensah Ngoma and Antonia Witt
- 10:30-11:00 Coffee/tea break
- 11:00-13:00 **Panel 1: Experiencing Regional Governance in Times of (Political) Crisis**
Chair: Fabert Mensah Ngoma; **Discussant:** Afua Boatemaa Yakohene

Regional Crises "On the Ground": A Local Perspective Based on the Experience of
the Program for Young Politicians in Africa (PYPA), *Abdoul Karim Saidou*

Military Coups, Regional Integration and Pan-Africanist Rhetoric: Public Opinion in
the ECOWAS Region, *Anja Osei & Hervé Akinocho*

Regionalism and Transnational Identity in West Africa Questioned from "Below",
Hanza Diman

Analysis of Regional Health Policy Coordination in CEMAC: The Case of OCEAC,
André Adjo
- 13:00-14:00 Lunch
- 14:00-15:30 **Panel 2: Experiencing Regional Trade Governance Chair:**
Antonia Witt; **Discussant:** Juliana Appiah

Crossing Borders, Mending Bridges: Nigerian Traders' Perspectives on ECOWAS
Trade Agreements in Ghana, *Adeyemi Johnson Ademowo*

The Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries and Small-Scale Cross-
Border Traders: The Governed's Experience of Regionalism, *David*
NgendoTshimba

Impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement on Women Shuttle
Cross-border Traders in West Africa, *Ruth Abiola Adimula & Adebusuyi Isaac*
Adeniran

15:30-16:00 Coffee/tea break

16:00-17:30 **Panel 3: Experiencing Regional Governance in Times of (Violent) Conflict**
Chair: Christian Wali Wali; **Discussant:** Densua Mumford

Regional Governance and African Communities: Exploring the Experiences of SADC and its Impact on Local Communities in Conflict Management in Africa. The Case of Mozambique, *Arthur Fidelis Chikerema*

19:00 What Makes an Experience? Singularity, Rumours and (Non-)Interactions as Multipliers in African Regional Interventions, *Sophia Birchingner*
Dinner

5 July 2024 9:00-10:30 Panel 4: The border as site of experiencing regional governance

Chair: Augustin Emame; **Discussant:** Antonia Witt

Nigeria-Benin Border: Corruption, Xenophobic Attitudes and Phenomenality of Regional Governance in West Africa, *Idowu Emmanuel Adeniyi*

Border Regulation Processes in the CEMAC Zone: Formal and Informal Dynamics in the (De-)Construction of Regional Sentiment, *Lazare Koé Ndzomo*

Border Practices Put to the Test by the ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons and Goods: The Case of the Aflao Border Between Togo and Ghana (1975-2022), *Halourou Maman*

10:30-11:00 Coffee/tea break

11:00-12:30 **Panel 5: Experiencing Economic Integration Policies**
Chair: Mamadou Diawara; **Discussant:** Adebusuyi Isaac Adeniran

Africa's buy-in of Agenda 2063: The Ghanaian case, *Esther Adjoa Asamoah*

The African Diaspora as an Agency in Regional Integration: The Case of the Ghanaian Diaspora, *Afua Boatemaa Yakohene*

Beyond the Spotlight: The Principle of Free Movement of Goods and People in Rural Côte d'Ivoire, *Loroux Serge Pacome Junior Djokouri*

12:30-14:00 Lunch

14:00-17:00 **Joint visit of a sub-regional institution in Libreville**

19:00 Dinner

6 July 2024 9:00-10:30 Panel 6: Experiencing Regional Governance: Citizens' Experiences
Chair: André Adjo; **Discussant:** Abdoul Karim Saidou

Architects' Experiences within the East African Community: Insights from the Mutual Recognition Agreement, *Marylyn Mumbua Musyimi*

Perceptions and Appropriation of Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) Agreements and Conventions by Lake Chad riparian populations, *Armel Sambo*

Barriers to Trade within ECOWAS: The Case of Ghana, *Amina Tondi & Juliana Abena Appiah*

10:30-11:00 Coffee/tea break

11:00-12:30 Panel 7: Regional Diplomacy as Experience
Chair: Fortuné Matsiegui Mboula; **Discussant:**

Burkina Faso Diplomats in the Construction of West African Integration, *Salif Kiendrebeogo*

Diplomatic Mediation and the Genesis of Pan-African Integration: Unveiling the Role of Diplomats in Shaping Regional Unity, *Abraham Ename Minko*

Understanding Diplomats' Role in Regional Integration: Case of the East African Community, *Caroline Shisubili Maingi*

12:30-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:30 **Interactive session with societal actors "Experiencing formal and informal regional governance"**

15:30-16:00 Coffee/teak break

16:00-17:30 **Closing session**

19.00 Dinner

Abstracts

Ruth Abiola Adimula & Adebunsi Isaac Adeniran: Impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement on Women Shuttle Cross-border Traders in West Africa

The Paper interrogated research questions on assessment of the knowledge base of Women Shuttle Cross-border Traders on African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement in selected West Africa borders, investigating the gender-based and security challenges covering nine(9) communities in Nigeria, Benin Republic and Togo. Trade impediments affect especially women in Africa to benefit from the regional integration as a result of high poverty level and lack of education. Qualitative and quantitative research methods adopted. In-depth interview(IDI) and questionnaire on experiences of women cross-border traders were used. Findings established that 71% respondents have no knowledge of AfCFTA; 68% of female traders agreed to differences in access to trade related infrastructure between men and women; 93% agree that changes in exchange rates affect their profitability and the viability of their ventures; 86% of the respondents believe that there are disparities in access to financial resources and capital for men and women; 89% accept that gender based discrimination affect economic opportunities and outcomes for women in cross border trade. The study concluded that though the AfCFTA project was adopted since May 2019, yet there is a dearth of study, information and communication on AfCFTA project is very low generally and the main beneficiaries of the provisions are mostly not aware of the contents and benefits, coupled with security and gender discrimination challenges. It was recommended that government support and friendly policies will foster petty women traders businesses, promote economic inclusivity and equal opportunities; financial support and loans could promote their businesses; while training and upskilling would be viable policies for their development.

Adeyemi Johnson Ademowo: Crossing Borders, Mending Bridges: Nigerian Traders' Perspectives on ECOWAS Trade Agreements in Ghana

Crossing Borders, Mending Bridges: Nigerian Traders' Perspectives on ECOWAS Trade Agreements in Ghana The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) established its free trade area in 1990 and adopted its common external tariff, twenty-five years later, in January 2015; yet, many West African cross-border traders are still concerned about the effectiveness of the many treaties relating to trade in the region. This study delves into the experiences and perspectives of Nigerian traders operating in Ghana, examining their interactions within the framework of ECOWAS trade agreements. It seeks to understand how these traders perceive the advantages and obstacles presented by regional trade policies, notably the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre Act and ECOWAS' Promotion of Free Trading Policy. Through a combination of key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of pertinent policy documents, the research investigates the strategies deployed by Nigerian traders to capitalize on ECOWAS trade provisions, navigate regulatory landscapes, and overcome barriers to crossborder commerce. Furthermore, it evaluates the role played by the Nigerian Union of Traders Association in Ghana (NUTAG) in advocating for the rights and interests of Nigerian traders and fostering cooperation among stakeholders within the trade environment. Through an in-depth exploration of these dynamics, the study aims to provide insights into the nuanced realities of cross-border trade in West Africa and contribute to discussions surrounding the enhancement of regional trade facilitation mechanisms.

Idowu Emmanuel Adeniyi: Nigeria-Benin Border: Corruption, Xenophobic Attitudes and Phenomenality of Regional Governance in West Africa

The vision behind the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is to create a networked polity, visa-free and borderless region where its population has free movement and access to economic potentials in member states. However, experience has shown that language barrier, xenophobic attitudes, and corruption at borders of many of its member states often hinder the attainment of these objectives. Drawing on my experience as a former journalist who visited and reported on the Nigeria-Benin (Seme-Krake) border and later did an ethnographic study on the lived experience of victims of extortion/xenophobia at the border, this study investigates the roles of touts – also known as Kelebe – who in connivance with the Beninese immigration extort travellers/traders at the border and subject many to xenophobic mistreatment. The study interrogates how the touts and immigration officials of both countries circumvent the ECOWAS free movement protocol in the region. Using phenomenology as a theoretical model, the study explores the phenomenology of experience of victims, and contributes to the process of strengthening regional governance and disrupting unjust practices at the border. I read the border as a suitable site for regional integration, though turned to a locale for driving divisiveness, corruption and injustices. The study is guided by the following questions: What do travellers/traders from both countries experience in the course of their journey at the border? How do extortion, xenophobic consciousness and linguistic dichotomy constitute a barrier to free trade and movement of persons at the border? It argues that to have effective regional governance; communication is key, hence the necessity of engaging population of the region in cultural exchange programmes, and ensuring economic stability in member states to discourage smuggling and other forms of corruption at borders.

André Adjo: Analysis of Regional Health Policy Coordination in CEMAC: The Case of OCEAC

Since 1994, the year CEMAC was created, the sub-regional governance model adopted and implemented by CEMAC has been essentially inspired and driven by inter-governmental institutions. The format of this governance is based on inter-state cooperation through, among other things, specialised agencies or entities. The purpose of these agencies is to implement subregional public policies in the sectors that justify their existence. Specialised agencies can therefore be a tool for measuring the quality and level of cooperation between the States that make up this sub-regional entity. One of these specialised agencies, the *Organisation Coordinated for the Fight against Endemic Diseases in Central Africa* (OCEAC), came to the fore during the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this study is therefore to examine the quality and level of coordination/cooperation of sub-regional health policies through the deployment of the OCEAC.

Anja Osei & Hervé Akinocho: Military Coups, Regional Integration and Pan-Africanist Rhetoric: Public Opinion in the ECOWAS Region

In order to strengthen peace, security and democracy, the African Union (AU) developed a so-called anti-coup norm that condemns unconstitutional changes in government. Within the framework of the Peace and Security Architecture, regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) played a central role. In practice, however, the application of the norm was inconsistent and could neither prevent the extension presidential terms beyond constitutional limits nor the recent series of military coups in Africa. In West Africa in particular, the effort of ECOWAS to stand against the recent coups ended up driving the subregion to a deeper crisis with the declared withdrawal of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, ECOWAS is at turning point. This paper reports first findings from an ongoing public opinion

survey in West Africa, funded by the Cluster of Excellence, SCRIPS, at the Freie Universität Berlin in collaboration with the Center for Research and Opinion Polls (CROP) in Togo. We attempt to provide insights into the following questions: How does the population perceive the latest political developments in the region? What is the significance of the pan-Africanist rhetoric used by some of the coup leaders? What are people's expectation of regional integration and what do they think about sanctions and external interventions? What do they understand by African unity? We focus both on coup countries like Niger, as well as on contrasting cases that have not experienced a military coup. Against the empirical background of our data, we will advance some theoretical arguments about the prospects of regional integration in West Africa and the need to strengthen not only the capacity of regional organizations in peace building, but also to make governance in member states more accountable to the people.

Esther Adjoa Asamoah: Africa's buy-in of Agenda 2063: The Ghanaian case

Africa's development frameworks and policies remain in abundance. Yet, there is a seeming disconnect between them and development on the ground. Development policies are expected to change and transform their implementation area. What, then, is Africa's challenge in realizing its development policies to a complete end? Agenda 2063, Africa's fifty-year plan, is expected to put everything in perspective. It coalesces all existing development initiatives on the continent and leverages the African citizenry as the main driver in achieving "The Africa We Want." Agenda 2063 is said to be participatory and people-centered. It was birthed from a series of consultations and "conversations" held with various stakeholders across sectors and society. But the question remains. Do Africans truly own this development Agenda? This study assessed the level of participation and ownership by the average African for whom this grand design has been created, using Ghana as the case study. A qualitative approach was used as the methodology of this study. It zoomed in on the process and experiences of respondents from both formal and informal sectors of Ghana and officials from the National Development Planning Commission. This nonnumerical data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The study also relied on literature from secondary data sources to draw holistic conclusions. The findings showed that the average African does not have buy-in on the Agenda 2063. The data collected show very low levels of ownership and interest amongst Ghanaians and, by extension, Africans on where Africa is headed in the next fifty years. This is primarily because of the lack of communication, inadequate finance, and low awareness creation to get the citizenry interested. The study also revealed a strong correlation between communication and participation. Toward the end, the study also recommends that for active participation to happen, intensive communication must happen because it is non-negotiable.

Sophia Birchinger: What Makes an Experience? Singularity, Rumours and (Non-) Interactions as Multipliers in African Interventions

The discipline of International Relations (IR) predominantly approaches the study of regional security governance through an institutionalist and top-down lens. However, this focus on norms, policy frameworks and institutional structures, such as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) often overlooks how citizens experience the regional and sub-regional security governance. Integrating the emerging everyday perspective on International Relations, everyday peace scholarship, and literature on African interventions, this think piece explores what makes an experience in (non-)military intervention contexts and how singular (individual or group) experiences shape collective narratives. Drawing on interview and focus group research on citizens' experiences of AU and ECOWAS interventions in The Gambia since 2016, this think piece examines citizens' accounts of direct (bodily) and indirect (audio-visual) interactions with these interventions. It demonstrates how singular experiences travel within an intervened society.

As a result, I argue that an experience emerges from a (non-)interaction that can be (in-)direct, (audio-)visual, or bodily. These (non-)interactions, regardless of their singular or wide-spread nature, traverse space, time, and, to a certain extent, social hierarchies. Multiplying processes of news dissemination, gossip, and rumors constitute a collective 'living through' the intervention. Hence, these singular (non-)interactions shape narratives in host societies about the intervention, ultimately shaping the public perception and support for regional interventions. By providing both empirical and conceptual insights, this think piece joins the call for paying closer attention to the experiential dimension of African interventions and regional (security) governance.

Arthur Fidelis Chikerema: Regional Governance and African Communities: Exploring the Experiences of SADC and its Impact on Local Communities in Conflict Management in Africa. The Case of Mozambique

Africa has been embroiled in resource-based and electoral conflicts. The contestations tend to have far-reaching effects on the continent's stability and development. Local communities have been victims of the callous shenanigans impacting heavily on human security in the northern province of Cabo Delgado in Mozambique. The lackadaisical approach and complacency by SADC were condemned by political stakeholders. Mozambique's request for assistance and support from member states was only noted with concern as the regional body expressed continued solidarity with Mozambique". The insurgency was said to have been instigated by poverty, lack of socio-economic opportunities, marginalisation, inequality and frustration of young people due to prolonged and unresolved conflict in the country. The research explores the perceptions, attitudes, and engagement of Mozambican communities towards regional governance. Furthermore, the study will unpack the extent and nature of community participation in decision-making processes through which local communities can contribute to policy formulation and decision-making within the regional governance context. The study will deploy a mixed-methods approach to gather both qualitative and quantitative data as this allows for a comprehensive exploration of the experiences of African communities in Mozambique within the SADC regional governance framework. The study enquires about the level of awareness and understanding of SADC's regional governance initiatives among local communities in Mozambique and the effectiveness of community participation in ensuring meaningful community engagement and empowerment. The study recommends improving community participation, strengthening governance mechanisms, promoting inclusivity, and aligning regional policies with the needs and aspirations of local communities in Mozambique.

Hanza Diman: Regionalism and Transnational Identity in West Africa Questioned from "Below"

The creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 embodied the ambition to bring together the specific characteristics and socio-economic and political interests of the member states to form a strong and useful regionalism. At the time, and as the turbulent history of ECOWAS has unfolded, it was envisaged that the citizens of the West African sub-region would develop and consolidate a transnational identity and sense of belonging. In the same vein, regionalism and transnational identity are seen at macro (institutional) level as self-reinforcing in the major interest of the nationals of member countries. What do 'transnational identity' and 'regionalism' mean from a micro or non-institutional perspective? This contribution is intended as an exploratory reflection that investigates this question. From this perspective, the author brings together the terms 'regionalism' and 'transnational identity' and proposes an analysis based primarily on the experiences of non-institutional actors. The aim is to prioritise an understanding that shifts the focus away from the dominant institutional appreciation of these terms towards the contextualised experiences of 'the grassroots', i.e. those of West African

citizens in general. This 'bottom-up' approach is interesting to study, especially at this key moment when the announced withdrawal of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso from ECOWAS is constantly giving rise to debate and raising fears of de-regionalism. In such circumstances, rethinking regionalism in the ECOWAS area and linking it to the realities of its non-institutional components becomes more than a challenge. From a methodological point of view, I adopt an intertextual analysis approach to provide some answers to the question posed above.

Louroux Serge Pacome Djokouri: Beyond the Spotlight: The Principle of Free Movement of Goods and People in Rural Côte d'Ivoire

Since its creation in 1975, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has had the mission of promoting sub-regional cooperation and economic integration. To fulfil its mission, it has set itself a number of objectives. The policy of free movement of goods and people within the ECOWAS zone has emerged as a major element for nationals of the said community. In the name of this principle, many ECOWAS nationals are migrating to rural Côte d'Ivoire. However, due to their remoteness from urban areas, the realities experienced by these populations are overlooked. This study aims to analyse the obstacles and strategies used by ECOWAS nationals to integrate and move freely in rural Côte d'Ivoire. It is based on a methodology combining bibliographical and field data. The literature on immigration and land tenure is used as a theoretical basis. Most of the practical work is based on empirical data and qualitative interviews conducted in five villages in the department of Gagnoa. Located in the centre-west of Côte d'Ivoire, the department of Gagnoa is considered to be a very attractive and cosmopolitan area, as it has become one of the preferred destinations for ECOWAS nationals due to its favourable climate and vegetation for agriculture. A comparison of the data leads to some provisional results. It emerges that the principle of free movement is an important factor in immigration. However, it often comes up against local realities. To ensure their integration, migrants develop new matrices by integrating or creating linguistic, religious, ethnic and even political communities.

Salif Kiendrebeogo: Burkina Faso Diplomats in the Construction of West African Integration

Research question: What historical analysis can be made of the role of Burkina Faso diplomats in the construction of the sub-regional area in the context of the country's withdrawal from ECOWAS?

Method: The study was based on a micro-historical approach, which involved comparing the information obtained from thematic interviews and life stories with that provided by other sources, in particular archives, literature, audio-visual material, the press, the Internet and direct observation.

Burkina Faso gained independence in 1960, becoming a player in international relations capable of establishing diplomatic relations with other states and joining regional and sub-regional organisations. In the name of the ideals of freedom and equality as defined in the United Nations Charter, the country has joined the following regional organisations: Conseil de l'entente, Union Africaine et Malgache, African Union, Liptako Gourma Authority, Comité inter-Etat de Lutte contre La Sècheresse au Sahel (CISS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA), CEN-SAD, etc. From Maurice

Yaméogo to Ibrahim Traoré, via Sangoulé Lamizana, Seye Zerbo, Thomas Sankara, Blaise Compaoré and Rock Marc Christian Kaboré, all regimes have sent diplomats to help build subregional integration through the Conseil de l'entente, ECOWAS, WAEMU and so on. The question that arises is how did Burkina Faso's diplomats participate in this regional construction, and what role did they play in the field of integration? We will examine their contribution by

focusing on the life story of Kadré Desiré Ouedraogo, who was President of the ECOWAS Commission from 2012 to 2016 at a time when Burkina Faso was withdrawing from the institution.

Caroline Shisubili Maingi: Understanding Diplomats' Role in Regional Integration: Case of the East African Community

Introduction: Diplomats play a vital role in advancing regional integration by aiding negotiations, promoting collaboration, and settling disputes between partner states. Their diplomatic expertise is instrumental in overcoming various obstacles, including political, economic, and social-cultural barriers, that hinder the advancement of regional integration efforts. This study examines the role of diplomats in promoting regional integration within the East African Community (EAC). Research question: What are the key functions and contributions of diplomats in facilitating the regional integration process within the EAC?

Research Findings: Through a comprehensive review of existing literature and analysis of primary and secondary data, this study sheds light on the significant role played by diplomats in fostering collaboration, dialogue, and consensus-building among partner states. The findings reveal that diplomats serve as crucial mediators, negotiators, and facilitators, working towards the advancement of common goals and interests within the EAC. However, some foreign missions with a more powerful political and economic capability play a bigger pronounced role than others. Key primary and secondary data: The sources will include interviews with diplomats, questionnaires and analysis of diplomatic communications and agreements, as well as scholarly articles and reports on regional integration efforts in the East African region.

Conclusion: This research underscores the importance of diplomatic engagement in driving forward the agenda of the EAC integration and enhancing cooperation among EAC member states.

Halourou Maman: Border practices put to the test by the ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of persons and goods: the case of the Aflao border between Togo and Ghana (1975-2022)

In 1975, after nearly a quarter of a century of independence, African countries, particularly those in the western part of the continent, realised the advantages to be gained by abolishing the borders they had inherited from colonisation in order to boost their development through subregional cooperation and integration. This desire took concrete form with the creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on 28 May 1975. This immediately instituted the system of free movement of people and goods within the member countries of the area. Nearly 30 years after the ECOWAS system was set up, it is highly unlikely that the reality experienced by the population on the ground is in line with the texts laid down by the organisation. This raises a number of questions. What is the degree of application of the principle of free movement of people and goods in the ECOWAS area from its creation to 2023? To answer this question, we will explore documentary sources on ECOWAS texts and their implementation, and gather oral information from resource persons on the issue of the free movement of people and goods within the ECOWAS area. An analysis of the content of these various sources reveals that there is a gap between the texts of the sub-regional institution and the reality experienced on the ground by the people. This proposed paper will attempt to elucidate the degree of application of ECOWAS cooperation and integration instruments in the light of current practices based on the example of the Aflao border between Togo and Ghana from 1975 to 2023.

Abraham Ename Minko: Diplomatic Mediation and the Genesis of Pan-African Integration: Unveiling the Role of Diplomats in Shaping Regional Unity

Research Question: How do diplomatic mediation efforts contribute to the establishment and development of Pan-African integration, and what are the underlying mechanisms through which diplomats shape regional unity?

Summary of Project/Findings: This research investigates the pivotal role of diplomatic mediation in fostering Pan-African integration, shedding light on the intricate mechanisms through which diplomats influence regional unity. Employing a multi-dimensional analytical framework, this study delves into historical instances and contemporary dynamics to elucidate the evolving landscape of Pan-African cooperation and the diplomatic interventions that have propelled its progress. By examining case studies ranging from the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to modern initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), this research uncovers the nuanced strategies employed by diplomats to navigate geopolitical complexities and foster consensus among diverse African nations. Through in-depth analysis of diplomatic archives, interviews with key stakeholders, and scholarly literature, this study reveals the crucial role of diplomatic actors in facilitating dialogue, mitigating conflicts, and fostering trust among member states. Furthermore, this research highlights the significance of cultural, historical, and ideological factors in shaping diplomatic approaches to Pan-African integration, illustrating the dynamic interplay between domestic interests and continental aspirations. By synthesizing empirical evidence and theoretical insights, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex processes underpinning regional integration in Africa and underscores the enduring relevance of diplomatic mediation in advancing collective aspirations for unity, prosperity, and peace.

Key Primary or Secondary Data: Diplomatic archives from various African countries and international organizations. Interviews with diplomats, policymakers, and experts in African regional integration. Scholarly literature on diplomacy, regional integration, and African politics

Marylyn Mumbua Musyimi: Architects' Experiences within the East African Community: Insights from the Mutual Recognition Agreement

This paper explores the experiences of Architects within the East African Community (EAC) under the framework of the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA). Through the Research Question: How do Architects experience and navigate the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) within the East African Community (EAC), and what insights does their experience offer into regional governance dynamics? Summary of Study: As regional governance increasingly shapes professional practices and standards, understanding the lived realities of Architects navigating these dynamics is crucial. Drawing on qualitative research methods, including interviews and ethnographic observations, this paper delves into the challenges, opportunities, and perceptions of Architects operating within the EAC context. The project aims to uncover how Architects navigate certification processes, cross-border collaboration, regulatory frameworks, and professional networks within the EAC context. By focusing on Architects' experiences, the study sheds light on the micro-politics and everyday realities of professionals within regional integration frameworks. Primary data sources include interviews with Architects practicing within the EAC region, gathering insights into their experiences, perspectives, and challenges related to the MRA. Ethnographic observations complement the interviews, providing nuanced understandings of Architects' interactions with regional governance structures. Secondary data sources include scholarly literature, policy documents, and reports on regional integration and professional mobility within the EAC.

Lazare Koe Ndzomo: Border Regulation Processes in the CEMAC Zone: Formal and Informal Dynamics in the (De-)Construction of Regional Sentiment

The aim of this study is to show how official actors (police, gendarmerie, customs, water and forestry, etc.) and informal actors (occasional or permanent traders, smuggling networks, intercommunity family relationships, etc.) operating at the borders of CEMAC countries have a concrete influence on the implementation of regional integration. To this end, the use of the concept of 'regulation' as an analytical category aims to highlight the roles, issues, mechanisms and strategies that structure these interrelationships. The aim of this work is to answer the following central question: in what way do the logics of these actors constitute dynamics of construction or deconstruction of the regional feeling, understood as the will to integrate? The developments that this question entails will be based on the inductive method, by collecting data in *situ*, particularly at the border between Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea (Campo area) on the one hand, and between Cameroon and Gabon (Kye-ossi, Ambam) on the other. More specifically, this preliminary work will involve observing trade flows, typologising the nature of trade and the quality of relations, recording the difficulties encountered by players and the various strategies used to overcome them, etc. These data will then be interpreted using sociological institutionalism to show how 'instituted' beliefs, practices, rules and perceptions effectively determine the quality of regional integration in this sub-region.

Abdoul Karim Saidou: Regional Crises 'On the Ground': A Local Perspective Based on the Experience of the Program for Young Politicians in Africa (PYPA)

This contribution is the sharing of an experience between 2020 and 2023 by a civil society organisation, the Institute for Governance and Development (IGD), which since 2012 has been implementing the regional PYPA project aimed at training young people involved in politics. The project, funded by Sweden through the International Foundation of the Swedish Centre Party (CIS), is being implemented in seven francophone West African countries. The paper analyses how PYPA has been affected by the regional crisis brought about by the coups d'état in three Sahelian states, the ECOWAS sanctions against these countries, the decision by these countries to withdraw from ECOWAS, the Russian offensive in the Sahel, and the suspension of Swedish aid to Mali and Burkina Faso. The central question is this: How has this regional crisis affected the IGD and the young people benefiting from this project? More specifically, how has this crisis affected these actors' perceptions of ECOWAS and democracy? How have these local actors been affected? What are the prospects for the IGD's work with young people? The data comes from our personal experience within the IGD as PYPA coordinator (2012- 2022) and director since 2019. In this capacity, we have participated in virtual and face-to-face exchanges with more than 600 young PYPA alumni and in strategic reflections between the IGD and the CIS. The sanctions adopted by ECOWAS against Mali in 2020 and Niger in 2023 have polarised the debate within the community of PYPA alumni grouped in a WhatsApp group. On the one hand, there are those who defend ECOWAS in its stance against coups d'état, and on the other, those who criticise its policy of "double standards", i.e. its inability to sanction "civil coups d'état". For the IGD and CIS, the crises have led to reflection on the project's "doctrine" on regional institutions and democracy. The question arose as to whether the WhatsApp group should be banned from advocating coups d'état. A dilemma arose because, although the transitional regimes had made it possible for some young PYPA alumni to take responsibility, their anti-democratic discourse was incompatible with the aims of the project. In response to the anti-democratic rhetoric, the IGD and CIS have included modules on ECOWAS and the African Union in the training manual from 2020 onwards. There have also been practical consequences. For example, Malian participants were unable to attend a workshop in Senegal in 2020 because of border closures.

In terms of prospects, the uncertainties surrounding the free movement of people following the withdrawal of the three ECOWAS states and the authoritarian excesses in these countries mean that these three states will be excluded from activities for 2024. This reorientation of activities towards stable countries such as Côte d'Ivoire to the detriment of the Sahel states has consequences for training opportunities for young people. Finally, there is uncertainty about the financial sustainability of the IGD if the Swedish subsidy is suspended after 2024. The PYPA is funded for 2024 but no one knows how the Swedish position will evolve after that year. This uncertainty is having a knock-on effect on job security at the IGD and is leading the organisation to embark on a strategy of diversifying its partnerships.

Armel Sambo: Perceptions and Appropriation of Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), Agreements and Conventions by Lake Chad riparian populations

Aware of the importance of integrated management of Lake Chad's water resources, the Heads of State and Government on the shores of the lake (Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria) signed the Convention of 22 May 1962 establishing the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). Since then, the management of Lake Chad has gone beyond the national framework to become a regional concern. Conventions and agreements have been signed for the management of water, hydraulic developments, flora and fauna, economic activities, and so on. However, the main question is whether these regulatory frameworks are known and appropriated by the local populations. This paper is based on semi-direct interviews with users, observation of activities around Lake Chad in the localities of Darak, Kofia, etc. and use of written data (archives of the CBLT, reports of technical structures, scientific works, etc.). The results show that the people living along the shores of Lake Chad perceive the LCBC as an organisation that finances projects for the sustainable management of water resources. However, they are not very familiar with the texts (the LCBC convention, the Moundou protocol, the Enugu agreement, the water charter, etc.) regulating water management. As a result, they claim that they are not involved in decisionmaking on governance. The result is that the actual water users take little ownership of these texts, leading to an increase in cross-border conflicts over use. It is therefore important to involve local people in decision-making to ensure that the texts governing the sustainable and shared management of Lake Chad waters by the LCBC are properly adopted.

Amina Tondi & Juliana Abena Appiah: Barriers to Trade within ECOWAS: The Case of Ghana

Trade is an integral part of any economy's quest to develop. Within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), it is the cornerstone of regional integration and economic advancement. Trade within the region, however, is not without its own challenges, some of which cross-border traders across the region must navigate in order to sustain their businesses, capitalize on market opportunities, and contribute to the economic growth and integration envisioned by the ECOWAS agreements. This paper discusses the barriers to trade within the ECOWAS with a particular focus on Ghana in order to understand the obstacles to regional economic integration. The study sought to answer the following research questions: What barriers do traders and businesses experience when trading with other countries? What strategies do they use to address trade barriers faced with cross border trade? and How do they view policies and initiatives by the ECOWAS to reduce trade barriers? The study employed both primary and secondary data. Primary data was gathered using semi-structured interviews to explore firsthand cross-border experiences of local traders. Secondary data employed includes scholarly articles, reports and policy documents. The interview data revealed that traders encounter a range of barriers, including infrastructural inadequacies, language and cultural differences, etc. Despite the existence of the ECOWAS' framework of policies aimed at minimizing these barriers, the findings

of this study indicate a significant lack of awareness among traders regarding these policies, compounded by doubts about their practical effectiveness. The paper concludes that for the ECOWAS to achieve its goals of economic integration, a reorientation of policies to focus on the pressing needs of traders is imperative. Recommendations include improving infrastructure, harmonizing customs procedures, enhancing policy communication, and actively involving traders in the policy formulation process.

David Ngendo-Tshimba: The Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries and Small-Scale Cross-Border Traders: The Governed's Experience of Regionalism

On 29 August 1966, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Burundi, DR Congo and Rwanda met in Kinshasa for the first time in the post-independence era to brainstorm on the future of regional cooperation among the three countries. A decade later, on 20 September 1976, the three Heads of States agreed to the creation of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) by signing the Gisenyi Convention. Since then, CEPGL has striven—against so many odds amidst (armed) violence—for the removal of both trade and non-trade barriers towards establishing closer regional cooperation and shared prosperity. This paper looks into the experience of CEPGL regional governance, not from the standpoint of the established inter-state institutions and policy frameworks, but that of small-scale cross-border traders (SSCBTs) as the governed. Primary data (both narrative and statistical) for this study were collected in four selected border areas, namely Goma - Gisenyi (between DRC and Rwanda), Bukavu - Cyangungu (between DRC and Rwanda), Uvira - Gatumba (between DRC and Burundi), and Akanyaru - Akanyaru Haut (between Rwanda and Burundi). A sample size of 250 SSCBTs as respondents (100 females and 150 males) were engaged in data collection through interviews and focus group discussions. Another category of respondents (12 key informants) consisted of state revenue officials across the four border-points. Chief among the study's findings are (i) instances of joint investments by resource-pooling and risksharing that remain common among these SSCBTs even amid inter-state volatile relations and (ii) instances of contraband and moneylaundering passing through small-scale cross-border trade amid tight regimes of state border surveillance and customs. In view of these findings, the study challenges much of the conventional wisdom about conflict-sensitivity and business-for-peace rife in the policy rhetoric of regional governance in today's Africa.

Afua Boatemaa Yakohene: The African Diaspora as an Agency in Regional Integration: The Case of the Ghanaian Diaspora

In February 2003, the African Union formally changed the Constitutive Act of the Union to recognize the African diaspora as its Sixth Region and a crucial body in the integration process. Yet, there has been very little done to tap into the agency of the African Diaspora in the AU's integration efforts. This study sought to unravel the agency of the African Diaspora in the integration process with a particular focus on the Ghanaian Diaspora. Qualitative research was used in this study, through primary and secondary data collection and thematic analysis. The study discovered that though the African Diaspora, particularly the Ghanaian Diaspora, are aware of their agency, there has been minimal efforts by regional integration agencies in Africa to disseminate the project to the diaspora and tap into their agency through collaboration. This shows that while the legal context has been provided, a clear-cut roadmap has been non-existent, and this situation has trickled down to individual states such as Ghana – a key player in the economic integration process of Africa. The study discovered that this gap was primarily as a result of unawareness of the regional integration project by the diaspora, the lack of collaboration, lack of ideological direction and political inclusion as well as an unfavorable investment environment for the Ghanaian diaspora in particular. The study recommends a deliberate partnership between

government and other non-governmental organizations to spearhead regional integration narrative through both mass media and new media. The study also recommends that continental bodies such as the AU must critically engage with existing regional integration initiatives to identify weaknesses and propose improvements based on an understanding of local contexts and needs.