

## Across the Spectrum

With this issue (1/2016) we enter the 51<sup>st</sup> year of publishing *Africa Spectrum*. Now that we can look back on half a century of the journal, it seemed apt to commission a short retrospective. The report by Andreas Eckert published in this issue situates the journal's trajectory in a general context by looking at its progress over time and tracing some of the historical dimensions that have shaped the framework and conditions for an academic periodical concentrating on Africa. Launched in Hamburg in the 1960s, *Africa Spectrum* was a kind of contemporary mirror image, reflecting West Germany's difficulties finding its place in a changing global order after many years of isolation following World War II. Andreas Eckert was a member of *Africa Spectrum's* editorial team for many years. He is an astute scholar and a privileged observer of such developments, and we are grateful for his informed analysis. His overview shows that we were not interested in our praises being sung or a "heroic narrative" being written about our journal, along the lines of the "patriotic histories" we sometimes come across in African Studies when engaging with postcolonial, nationalist writing.

Focusing on aspects other than those selected by Andreas Eckert would have potentially highlighted alternative ways of reading the journal's history – such as in the context of the parallel developments within the Hamburg-based Institute of African Affairs (i.e. its initial close cooperation with the business community, gradual emancipation, politicisation in the 1970s, and growing internationalisation in the 1990s, followed by its adoption of an Open Access philosophy and quest for excellence over the past decade). The content of contributions over half a century might have also invited a specific engagement with the thematic focuses and shifts over time and generations, as well as the growing internationalisation of the journal's profile – not least through the increasing inclusion of African authors.

The latter is also documented by an innovation introduced at the beginning of our 50<sup>th</sup> year, when we announced the establishment of the Young African Scholars Award, in collaboration with the Centre for Africa Studies at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein and the African Studies Association in Germany (VAD). Much to our delight, the submissions responding to the first call were of such high quality that we are thrilled to be able to publish the first peer-reviewed award-winning essay in this very issue. We hereby congratulate Fana Gebresenbet and would like to draw your attention to the next call for submissions for the year 2016/17. We hope that in next year's first issue

we will be able to publish the next award-winning article, thereby modestly contributing to capacity building in the discipline in and for the African continent.

Over time, the composition of our editorial team has also undergone changes. We are grateful to Katja Werthmann, who served for many years on the editorial board of *Africa Spectrum*. She has now moved on to join the editorial group at *Sociologus*, a logical step for her as a social anthropologist. Our loss is another's gain, and we congratulate the journal on being able to further strengthen its already reputable work with Katja's help. In turn, we were lucky enough to have Jason Sumich, a more than suitable replacement, join our team: Jason has not only joined the GIGA family as a staff member of the Institute of African Affairs, but has also been willing to contribute his competences to maintain the high quality, reputation, and impact the *Africa Spectrum* team has now achieved. This team includes not only the more visible members of the editorial staff, but also the essential support services of language editors (Meenakshi Preisser for most articles) and our long-serving, ever-reliable editorial manager, Ellen Baumann.

With Andreas Mehler "going south" by moving from the Institute of African Affairs in Hamburg to the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute (ABI) in Freiburg, the journal has added another strong institutional cooperation partner. The ABI has a long-standing history of engagement in both African Studies and academic publishing. In addition, it publishes the peer-reviewed *International Quarterly for Asian Studies (Internationales Asienforum)*, which is currently preparing to become an Open Access journal. *Africa Spectrum* will remain a member of the GIGA Journal Family and continue to be published in Hamburg.

Fifty-one years into its existence, we hope you find our journal enjoyable to read and worthwhile as a source, as we strive to maintain the standards that have facilitated our ascension into the upper echelons of African Studies journals.

■ Andreas Mehler and Henning Melber