

Editorial

Dear reader

We are very proud to present to you the third Afrika Focus issue of 2014. This December issue is the second regular issue of 2014, but in November of this year we published the first ever digital issue of the journal (devoted to agroforestry and entirely accessible through www.afrikafocus.eu). This was a milestone in the history of Afrika Focus. The digital issue demonstrates clearly that we are a modern, 21st century journal, one that has an open access policy and is free of charge. Moreover, the fact that AF has run to three issues in 2014 gives some indication as to the volume of quality manuscript submissions we are now receiving for the journal, an upward trend that is tremendously satisfying. We are gradually becoming more visible and also better known on the international academic scene, thanks to our high quality articles, and the wide variety of topics we engage with as part of our conscious choice to be (and to remain) an interdisciplinary journal on Africa.

The year 2014 has been a commemorative year with regard to Africa. The world has been marking the 20th anniversary of Rwanda's genocide, but this year has also seen the 20th anniversary of the first ever democratic elections in South Africa. Curiously enough, both of these events took place in April 1994, obliging a number of journalists to choose between reporting on one of the biggest massacres the world has ever known, or on the joyful event of a nation finally freeing itself from the shackles of oppression. In 2014 both of these events were commemorated all over the world.

Twenty years of democracy in South Africa tended to be celebrated in an atmosphere of pride and nostalgia on the one hand, but also sadness and despair on the other hand. How will South Africa be facing the future with regard to the country's social and economic problems, how will it deal with the challenges in the areas of education, unemployment, crime, and so on? What has remained of the 1994-miracle, and what has happened to the generation of young lions who were prepared to give their lives for the struggle and who now hold power in the country? Over the last 20 years, South Africa has been presented as a shining example to the rest of Africa, but has it really lived up to the expectations? There is still hope and South Africa is definitely a better place than it was under apartheid – but everybody seems convinced that the South African government needs to re-invent itself in order to make drastic changes regarding the socio-economic constellation of the country.

In April 2014 we also commemorated 20 years of genocide in Rwanda. The Rwandan genocide is one of the historical events that makes many world leaders feel very uncomfortable, as the world still feels a sense of guilt at not having done more to prevent and deal with the catastrophe. The genocide has definitely polarized the Rwandan population, both inside the country and in the Rwandan diaspora throughout the world. The younger generation seems to feel a need to look forward and to turn the page of the genocide past. And despite the harsh regime that characterizes post-genocide Rwanda, the country clearly seems to be on the road to further development. Other voices inside the country claim that tensions are building between the various population groups and that Rwandan society is a ticking time bomb.

South Africa and Rwanda, just two African countries that were in the news over the past year, and two countries that constantly invoke ambivalent feelings – despair and hope; hope for the future of the continent, but also despair about how current power relations are not adequately managed. These ambivalent feelings frequently surface when talking about Africa. The African continent is clearly doing well on an economic level: economic growth is estimated at 5.8% for 2014 and because of this steady growth the continent continues to be attractive to investors. The telecom sector and tourism are on the rise in Africa, and while Western countries continue to invest in education and health care in Africa, Chinese funding focuses on infrastructure and industry – thus making for complementary cash flows. But on a number of other fronts the picture is worrying: extremism is on the rise in Africa (Boko Haram in Nigeria, a number of northern African developments) and West African does not seem to be able to take control of the ebola epidemic. In addition to that, there remain in Africa a few hearts of darkness, such as Eritrea, the Central African Republic or Zimbabwe.

Studying the African continent means that one constantly oscillates between frustration and disillusion on the one hand, but also fascination and amazement on the other. We all hate and love the continent, and that makes our attachment to Africa so genuine and meaningful.

In most of the articles presented in this issue of Afrika Focus we see hopeful messages about the African continent. In “Arab Spring in Morocco: Social Media and the 20 February Movement”, Brouwer & Bartels explore the ways in which the offline and online worlds interconnected in order to create new forms of meaning-making during the Arab Spring. Also our second article “Modernisation néolibérale et transformation du profil des dirigeants des entreprises publiques au Maroc. Cas de la Caisse de Dépôt et de Gestion (CDG): 1959-2009” talks about Morocco, by investigating the extent to which the directors of public enterprises underwent transformations under the heading of neoliberal modernization processes. In his article “Depoliticised Ethnicity in Tanzania: A Structural and Historical Narrative” Malipula gives the history and the rationale behind the fact that Tanzania is not characterized by politicized ethnicity, which tends to lead to cleavages and tension in a lot of other African societies. Finally, Celis et al. “Characteristics of participants in an HIV prevention intervention for youth in Rwanda: results from a longitudinal study” picture a hopeful image of HIV prevention campaigns in Rwanda by describing the ways in which participation in these interventions could be increased, mainly amongst young people.

We hope you will enjoy reading this new issue of Afrika Focus, an issue in which, as usual, we present to you the hopeful, dynamic and fascinating side of Africa.

And it is worth repeating this message: Africa is the continent of the future, and this clearly manifests itself in a growing interest in the continent (also on the level of research and studies on Africa). Our journal is doing well and this is no coincidence – as we focus on one of the most promising areas on Earth. Let us have confidence in the power of Africa. One day, the rest of the world will believe us.

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Editor-in-Chief