**Call for applications “Adaptation and Creativity in Africa”**

Conference in Sally (nr. Dakar), Senegal – 1-4 October 2014

The Research Priority Programme (SPP 1448) “Adaptation and Creativity in Africa: Technologies and Significations in the Production of Order and Disorder”, which is funded by the German Research Society (DFG), is organising its second biannual conference. After a first meeting in Maputo in October 2012, the second out of a total of three biannual conferences will be held in Sally/Dakar (Senegal) on 1-4 October 2014.

**On short notice we are able to offer 10 junior researchers from Africa grants for participation in this conference.**

Successful applicants will be offered transport and full board for up to six days. No conference fees apply. Successful applicants will have to take care of their own visa arrangements.

Applications should add to their letter of application in English (1) a CV, (2) a description of their PhD or post-doc research of 3,000 Words, and in English or French (3) a chapter from their PhD dissertation or a current writing project, and in English (4) an explication on how their own research connects to the research agenda of the SPP program (see below).

Applications shall be addressed to the programme’s coordinator: Ms Lena Heinze (lena.heinze@uni-leipzig.de). The deadline for applications is 15 September 2014.

*The SPP research programme in Sally/Dakar*

The African continent and its role in the world are changing again. Political and economic liberalisation, changing state-society relations, new local and translocal dynamics as well as accelerated processes of globalisation are posing wide-ranging challenges. Africa is witnessing one of the most precarious periods in its post-colonial time: new distributions of sovereignty and forms of ordering are negotiated at various levels. The capacities of African societies to navigate these changes are crucial, yet the determinants of these capacities are heavily under-researched. The DFG Priority Programme 1448 addresses the key question of how actors in post-colonial Africa deal with the multiple challenges they are facing by mobilising and transforming their institutional capacities of adaptation and creativity. Particular attention is being paid to the role of technologies and systems of signification in the production of order and disorder (for more details see also [www.spp1448.de](http://www.spp1448.de)).

The SPP examines the sites, dimensions and conditions of creativity in practices of adaptation on the African continent. It is particularly interested in practices of adaptation implying technologies and significations in the making of order (and hence also of disorder). Ordering as an on-going and never completed process is conceived as “investment in forms” (following Thèvenot 1984). This process presupposes existing classification, forms, conventions and significations (semantic grammars), which change while they are enacted in ordering practices. During the first two phases the researchers of the twelve different SPP sub-projects have established empirical and theoretical foundations that centre around three dimensions important for the analysis of ordering practices: technology, narrative, space.

Before the start of the empirical work it was assumed that technologies and significations are important dimensions of ordering practices. After some years of research we can now show and proof how meanings or significations are inscribed in technologies, how new meanings are induced by technologies, and we can identify moments of creativity in adapting technologies to particular material, semantic and normative orders. Our empirical work motivated us to replace the very general notion of signification as the main operation of semantic ordering practices with a more specific version of it: narrating. All projects of the SPP encountered in their empirical work important narrations that are related in illuminating ways to material and social technologies. Before the start of the empirical work we also knew that ordering practises necessarily do have a spatial dimension. We can now show and proof that it is mainly the deployment of material and social technologies that has an impact on the making of spaces and that this again is accompanied by sense-making narratives. We can also demonstrate how this relates to the formation of collective identities, notions of sovereignty and political citizenship.

These three core dimensions of the primary leading question of the SPP will guide the work of all researchers during the third and last phase of the programme (2015-2016). In practical terms we have formed three thematic clusters that regularly work together and prepare edited volumes on the three dimensions. The second biannual conference will also be structured by these three thematic clusters.

The biannual conferences are held on African soil in order to enhance our dialogue with African colleagues and to showcase current state of the art in African Studies in Germany abroad (apart from fostering cooperation between different sites of African Studies in Germany and developing a common vocabulary between the various participating disciplines, these two points have in fact been the core strategic aims of the SPP right from the start in 2011).

We are expecting some 70 participants in Sally/Dakar, among them 20 African colleagues – some of them are partners in the various sub-projects, some are local partners from the Université Cheikh Anta Diop, and other are coming from CODESRIA (the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa).