



November 2018

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Dear Colleagues,

Warm greetings and welcome to this edition of the ISTR Africa Regional Network (ISTRAN) newsletter! We enjoyed meeting some of you at the [13th International Conference](#) and [PhD seminar in Amsterdam](#) in July and look forward to engaging with you all more closely in coming months.

As some of you will know, the newsletter has not been published regularly in the recent past. With your help, we would like to change that. To this end, we encourage submissions on a rolling basis throughout the year. We have made some suggestions for content in the latest [call for submissions](#) and welcome your additional ideas. Our aim is to reinvigorate relations among ISTRAN members and more regularly share information that relates to civil society research in and about Africa.

We are excited to be assisting in this publication and look forward to your contributions and feedback on this and future issues.

With warm regards,

Titilope and Albert

Titilope Ajayi

University of Ghana, Ghana
Independent researcher and writer-copyeditor

Albert Kagande

Nelson Mandela University, South Africa

ISTR/WITS Africa Regional PhD Seminar
May 14 - 15, 2019, Johannesburg, South Africa
Deadline to apply: December 15, 2018



The [ISTR/WITS Africa PhD Seminar](#) is open to all doctoral students in the field of third sector and civil society research, in all African countries, and at all stages of their doctoral research. This PhD Seminar will accept approximately 20 PhD students at all stages of their doctoral research in topics related to the Third Sector from all African countries.

The aim of the seminar is to provide doctoral students with the opportunity to receive extensive intellectual and methodological advice on their doctoral research from peers and scholars, to introduce them to main theories and developments in the field, to reflect upon publication and career strategies, and to provide an opportunity to network with scholars within the international ISTR research community. The core of the seminar will focus on the research of the individual students.

The PhD Seminar is scheduled for May 14-15, 2019 and runs prior to the first annual Conference on Philanthropy (May 16-17, 2019). Organizers include the Wits Business School's Centre for Philanthropy and Social Investment, in collaboration with the Center for African Studies at Harvard University, TrustAfrica and Africa Philanthropy Forum. PhD Seminar students are required to also attend the conference. Please read the full [Call for Applications](#) for more information and submit your application before the December 15, 2018 deadline.

ISTR Amsterdam Member Experiences

***Vrije Your Mind, Spread Your Wings:
 A Reflection by Albert Kagande, PhD
 Candidate and Lecturer Assistant,
 Nelson Mandela University, South
 Africa***

Being a part of the International Society for Third-sector Research has been a great opportunity and experience for me and has made me realise even more what a great decision I made in pursuing my PhD now and pursuing my area of interest—researching on the NGO sector. Our hosts, the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU), Philanthropic Studies Department, made it a memorable experience. From the 10–13 July 2018 with the PhD seminar having been held two days prior, it was a week that was intense and demanding and it also opened doors, created networks, helped me position my study and fun was had as well.

As this was my first time to travel outside Africa, Amsterdam was a great place to start. It is a lovely city with scenic views, friendly people and great ambience. After a long 10-hour flight from Johannesburg to Amsterdam, I found myself nested comfortably at the IBIS Budget Hotel City South. There was little time to relax though as the welcome ceremony started later in the afternoon of that Sunday I arrived. Despite the jet lag I felt really excited and looked forward to a great week in the capital of the Netherlands.

The two-day PhD seminar from 9–10 July was really intriguing and enlightening to say the least. It provided an opportunity for students to share our PhD journey and get advice and ideas from peers and the faculty chair. I was placed in a working group with peers that had relatable topics to mine. My working group had, including myself, eight students in total. These students came from or were studying in Brazil, Israel, the Netherlands, USA, Germany, Belgium and Finland. It was a good mix and I learnt a lot from

the other students who were at different stages of their research journey. Some were finalising their data analysis whilst others like myself had their proposals recently approved. My proposal was accepted earlier in the year and trying to hit the ground running was proving to be a challenge. ***In this working group, I managed to share my proposal and get valid advice on how to conduct my literature review and how to identify and engage potential study participants.***

The 3-Minute Thesis competition closed the curtain on what was a rewarding PhD seminar. Whilst I had signed up for the competition weeks before travelling to Amsterdam, nerves got the best of me on the eve of the competition. I hardly slept reciting my three minutes. Out of the 50 PhD seminar students, ten had signed up for the competition. ***Armed with one PowerPoint slide and three minutes I had to tell a captivating story about my research and keep it plausible using scientific rigour demanded for in academic research.*** Even though I did not scoop the first prize which went to a deserving winner, I was awarded a certificate for the achievement of earning honorable mention in the ISTR PhD Seminar Three Minute Thesis Competition for “having the clearest and most compelling presentation



of their PhD thesis”. How cool is that!

From a group of 50 PhD students to around 700 delegates during the conference, the aura quickly changed as VU became a hub of academics, practitioners and experts in different disciplines. Over the four days (10 to 13 July), we were treated to 124 paper sessions,

44 panels, 34 roundtables and 11 posters. It was intense and truly worth it. I attended as many sessions as I could and at some point, wished I could split myself and attend presentations that I had an interest in but were happening at the same time.

I also had the privilege of meeting my mentor, John Mohan, from the University of Birmingham. It has been a delight to share my research with him and get valid feedback and insights. I intended to tap into his knowledge and skills for the 12-month period that we have been paired as mentee and mentor.

The regional network forum allowed me to meet with peers from Africa. Here we discussed the upcoming regional conference, which I am looking forward to. It will be held at the Wits Business School, in Johannesburg, South Africa from 14–15 May 2019.

As the old adage goes, all work and no play... Our hosts were very generous to afford us a canal tour around the city. The architecture is breath-taking and city layout is intriguing given that parts of Amsterdam are 4four metres below sea level. The innovative system of dykes, dunes, canals and barrages help to break the water and prevent the possibility of floods. The conference was also held during the 2018 Soccer World Cup and it was good to meet soccer lovers from other parts of the world. With some newly made friends I also took time to explore the city, watch soccer matches in pubs and eat out. The reception dinner at the Rijksm Museum was a spectacle and a great way to bring the curtain down on what was a splendid week of learning and having fun. Doing a PhD is fun and rewarding and even though my research might not change the world, this experience has indeed left an indelible dent and changed the way I see the world.

My Amsterdam Experience: A Reflection by Titilope Ajayi, PhD Candidate, University of Ghana.

I had attended two Africa regional conferences in Accra in 2016 and 2017 but the 13th International Conference and the preceding PhD seminar in Amsterdam were my first international ISTR events. My experiences turn on the following highlights:

Having participated in one PhD seminar during the 2017 Africa regional conference, I was keen to share my work with a more global audience and am pleased to report that the Amsterdam seminar exceeded my expectations. My student colleagues as well as our group facilitators, Anna Domaradzka and Pelle Åberg—both former seminar participants—were dynamic, friendly and supportive, and offered critical but constructive feedback that helped situate my research even more firmly.

I had met some members of the ISTR board in Ghana but Amsterdam showed me the community in its full international glory. There were people from literally all over the world (though it would have been nice to see more Africans) and it was a great learning experience to hear about their research and share mine with them. It was also a welcome opportunity to get involved with the women's affinity group and to take part in the Africa regional group meeting where I met Alan Fowler whose work I read when I first started doing civil society research and who completely unsettled me with his humour and humility.



Amsterdam was, like previous ISTR conferences, an invaluable networking opportunity that brought me into contact with scholars like Chris Pallas whose work on transnational activism I have read, as well as Kyungja Jung whose work on new feminisms in South Korea has strong parallels with mine on feminist activism in Africa.

The session on non-academic career options was an exciting innovation, one that I had to think twice about because I initially felt I was squandering an opportunity to attend a more 'academic' panel. In hindsight, it was one of the wiser decisions I made during the conference and I highly recommend that it be included in future conferences.

My final highlight was the stunning beauty and rich cultural experience of Holland in summer. In addition to the regular tourist experiences, I will not quickly forget the traditional Dutch food, canal boat rides, marijuana street cafes (no, I did not smoke any) or the elegant Rijksmuseum. I would like to thank ISTR for its support toward my participation and look eagerly forward to future events.

Member News

Dr. Bhekinkosi Moyo has been appointed as Adjunct Professor at Wits Business School, tasked with establishing a new Africa Centre for Philanthropy and Social Investment (ACPSI). 'In Africa, it is uniquely befitting that philanthropy be studied alongside social investment,' says Dr Moyo. 'The private sector is a key player as an engine for economic growth and as is normally the case, philanthropy gets its financial muscle from this sector. It will be the role of the Centre to influence how this money is ploughed back to communities.'

Before joining WBS, he was CEO of the Southern Africa Trust, and prior to that spent seven years with TrustAfrica as Director of Programmes, contributing significantly to the body of knowledge on African philanthropy and public policy. He is also currently a member of the Alliance magazine editorial advisory board.

‘My vision for the Centre is that it will be the ‘go-to’ hub of knowledge generation in African philanthropy. It will be a centre dedicated to interpreting the philanthropic and donor landscape in Africa, as well as a teaching platform and, importantly, a repository of recorded knowledge. Further, the Centre will explore the role played by small, medium and large enterprises in communities where they are located, and beyond.’

It is envisioned that the Centre will host a number of other initiatives, including a Master of Management in African Philanthropy, executive courses, PhD seminars and lecture series.

For more see: <http://www.wbs.ac.za/>

New Publications

Ebenezer Obadare, *Pentecostal Republic: Religion and the Struggle for State Power in Nigeria*, Zed Books, London, 2018.

Throughout its history, Nigeria has been plagued by religious divisions. Tensions have only intensified since the restoration of democracy in 1999, with the divide between Christian south and Muslim north playing a central role in the country’s electoral politics, as well as manifesting itself in the religious warfare waged by Boko Haram.

Through the lens of Christian-Muslim struggles for supremacy, Ebenezer Obadare charts the turbulent course of democracy in the Nigerian Fourth Republic, exploring the key role religion has played in ordering society. He argues the rise of Pentecostalism is a force focused on appropriating state power, transforming the dynamics of the country and acting to demobilize civil society, further providing a trigger for Muslim revivalism.

Covering events of recent decades to the election of Buhari, *Pentecostal Republic* shows that religio-political contestations have become integral to Nigeria’s democratic process and are fundamental to understanding its future. For more information: <https://www.zedbooks.net/shop/book/pentecostal-republic/>

Ebenezer Obadare is professor of sociology at the University of Kansas and Research Fellow at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa.

Launch of EPIC-Africa Civil Society Organisations Excellence Awards

Application deadline: December 31, 2018

The African CSO Excellence Awards is a joint initiative between EPIC-Africa and the Rockefeller Foundation. The Awards highlight the importance of organizational capacity to achieve program impact. The African CSO Excellence Awards reward organizations that demonstrate excellence across eight key elements of organizational capacity: Strategic Ability and Adaptability, Leadership and Governance, Financial Health and Management, Human Resources and Staff Development, Operations, Communications, Partnerships and Alliances, Monitoring and Evaluation. Please visit the awards website for application details and eligibility criteria: <https://awards.epic-africa.org/>