BRITISH INSTITUTE IN EASTERN AFRICA

ANNUAL REVIEW

2019 - 2020
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The British Institute in Eastern Africa has been active since 1960 and has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Institute exists to promote research in all the disciplines in the humanities and social sciences within the wider region of eastern Africa. It has a strong tradition of research in anthropology, archaeology, history and linguistics, and recent projects have embraced political, environmental and development studies, geography, public health, and art and performance. Its renovated research centre in Nairobi provides workspace and accommodation for researchers and visiting academics, an excellent reference library and seminar / lecture facilities.

The Institute is sponsored by the British Academy and has its London office at their headquarters in Carlton House Terrace. It is a company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital, and is a registered charity. It is governed by its Council, which is based in London and is elected by its members.
In addition to supporting our members from around the globe to be able to carry their own research in the East African region through affiliations, BIEA facilities and GAS support, we offer thematic research grants to early career researchers and those researchers who are unlikely to get funding from elsewhere. The Research Committee comes up with new research themes each year while retaining others from the previous years as a way of offering direction towards our research priorities to our members and grant seekers. For the year 2018-19 to present, the following themes have been prioritized.

**Epidemics, pandemics and epizootics**

COVID-19 and varied government responses, popular responses and narratives, and cultural, socio-economic, and political impacts, have provided a stark reminder of how diseases help to make history, but also how they help to bring various social relations and realities into the spotlight. This theme encourages research that looks at both of these aspects – namely, on the impacts of, and insights provided by, disease – in the context of COVID-19 or earlier epidemics, pandemics and epizootics in the region.

**Citizens and science**

At a time when big science approaches are increasingly being presented as solutions, we seek to encourage research that looks at heterodox and local forms of knowledge, and that seizes the opportunities provided by new technologies without surrendering an awareness of the importance of qualitative work, and of understanding values and perceptions as well as gathering numerical data.

**Knowing environments**

This theme explores and celebrates multiple, often heterodox forms of environmental knowledge and knowledge production. Representations, communities of practice, perceptions, and forms of incorporated memory important ways of knowing environments. There also exist more systematized forms of environmental knowledge production centred on empirical signatures of environmental conditions. Additionally, environments themselves are ‘knowing’ in terms of their enabling and responsive capacities.
Technologies of politics

Africa’s ‘digital revolution’ provokes fresh thinking on how power is mobilised, organised and exercised in eastern Africa. Social movements, street protests, democratic elections and state authority are being enabled and constrained in different ways as communication technologies, new and old, are innovated, imported, adapted and controlled. How are new communication technologies altering who has political power over whom in the region? What role are technologies playing in contemporary and evolving relations between social movements and states? What new global configurations of power in the region are emerging as a result of who controls the infrastructures of a digitally mediated world? The BIEA brings its commitment to empirically grounded and multi-disciplinary local scholarship to promote research that builds world-class knowledge on the digital age in and from the region.

Urban lives

Africa’s urban spaces are growing and changing. Often seen simply as problematic, this growth and change is also a driver of creativity and innovation. Cultural production of multiple kinds thrives in these spaces; such production, like much of everyday life, simultaneously works with and calls into question ideas of rural/urban difference and transformation. Lives span the imaginary between town and country; creative and accumulative strategies turn this imaginary to productive use, in ways that stretch from music-making to mobile banking. This theme encourages research that explores and questions imaginations of city life, and asks how people use these in multiple ways.

Retelling the past

The study of eastern African’s past faces a moment of challenge and opportunity. Challenge comes from a growing tendency in governments in the region to discount knowledge about the past and historicized ways of thinking. In institutions of higher education, the assumption that history is an unaffordable luxury, or is irrelevant to an African future – or both – has become established. Yet at the same time, historical narratives and knowledge play an ever more potent role in litigation and debates over land rights, citizenship and the politics of culture and heritage; the disconnect between official disregard and popular history-making is increasingly profound. At the same time, opportunity comes from a moment of wider debate over the very nature of scholarship: the decolonizing of knowledge has become a pressing concern. Challenge and opportunity are linked: the past – whether deep, or recent – must be revisited and retold from new perspectives. The BIEA will facilitate and promote that process, without seeking to dominate it, through pilot projects of partnership that encourage new representations of the region’s past.
This has been a year of challenge, but also of sustained progress. The new constitution for BIEA Kenya was formally passed during the year and the new Board of Directors is now fully established. I would like to thank the members of the Board who have been meeting under the able leadership of its Chair, Professor Catherine Ndungo. The Board initially consisted of five members but the membership has been increased to seven at BIEA Kenya’s first AGM on 16 October 2020.

Early this year, the BIEA Director, Dr Jane Humphris went on maternity leave and her position was filled by Professor Gabrielle Lynch, the Vice President of the Council and Chair of the Research Committee. I want to thank Gabrielle for her efforts in making sure that the Nairobi and UK activities have ran seamlessly and professionally. I also take this opportunity to congratulate Jane on being a mother and to express my best wishes to her, her baby and family.

Due to Covid 19 restrictions, we were unable to hold our flagship event in Nairobi, the Annual Lecture, which had been planned for the end of March. The talk, entitled “Decolonizing scholarship, using utu as theoretical framework”, was to be delivered by Professor Michere Mugo, Emeritus Professor of Syracuse University. We hope to have this lecture during our next annual event in early 2021. A major British Academy Knowledge Frontier Symposium scheduled for the same period was cancelled for the same reason. However, despite the Covid pandemic which saw us close our Laikipia Road offices in March, we have been able to deliver many of our activities through online platforms which have significantly raised our profile. Through this, our membership has grown, and the number of people attending our events has grown considerably too. Post-Covid, we will be continuing to use these online facilities, and make the most of new hybrid forms to expand the reach of our research. The Council, the Kenya NGO Board, and the staff continued to meet virtually, making it possible to have proper planning and administration of all aspects of our work.
At our Nairobi offices, I am delighted to welcome Mr. Prince Guma from Uganda as the Assistant Country Director/Research Fellow, Dr Alice Gathoni (Humanities Research Fellow), Ms Rose Belinda Migile (Finance Assistant) and Ms Loice Anyango (Projects Assistant). Their roles will greatly contribute to improving the service delivery to our ever growing number of partners and projects.

Finally, as always, I want to collectively and individually thank the whole of the BIEA work force in both Nairobi and the UK, without whom our year’s goals and aspirations would have been in vain.

Professor Henrietta L Moore

President
The Director’s report this year is unusual. It is not written by the Director! Jane Humphris, who joined in September 2018, started maternity leave in March this year. We all wish the very best to Jane and her son, Charlie, and look forward to her safe return to work in the New Year. In the meantime, it has fallen to me to fill the gap in this Review on behalf of Council.

Since March, we have all been deeply affected by the impact of Covid-19, both personally and professionally. For the BIEA, it has meant disruption to our normal range of activities and to many of our plans for the future. But we are doing all we can to ensure that we are able move forward strongly as soon as conditions allow.

In her report last year, Jane paid tribute to the team in Nairobi under our Country Director, Freda Nkirote. They continue to provide a first-rate service, with professionalism and dedication, and we are all most grateful for their contributions and achievements. The new management structure has settled down well and we have been able to expand the team to cope with increasing demands from the research community. Earlier this year, we welcomed Prince Guma as Assistant Country Director in Nairobi and also appointed Alice Gathoni as Humanities Research Fellow. Together they will greatly strengthen our in-house research capacity.

Jane’s report also covered the many positive and exciting developments over the past year or two – the burgeoning collaboration with our partners in Nairobi, the wide range of events in support of research activities, both in Kenya and in the UK, and her own efforts to raise the profile of the BIEA among the UK and wider European academic community. As a result, we have seen a welcome rise in the number of partnerships on research projects where the BIEA has been able to provide local expertise and support to international researchers operating in Africa.

The BIEA’s own direct contribution to the research effort is well documented in the rest of this Review. There are also ringing testimonies from students participating in our Graduate Attache Scheme and University Volunteer Programme in Nairobi. In London, the Annual Lecture was given by our President, Henrietta Moore, together with her colleagues, Professor Jaqueline McGlade and Dr Matt Davies, who provided fascinating insights into their PROCOL project under the banner of Building Prosperity for Africa.
We have continued to invest in our research centre in Nairobi. Following the upgrade to the seminar and meeting rooms, the library has been reconfigured to provide more work stations and reading space. The car park has been resurfaced and work is in hand to create better access to events and study facilities for our disabled guests.

One other step change has been the approval in March of a new constitution for BIEA Kenya by the NGO Co-ordination Board. This established a Kenya Board of Directors, with Professor Catherine Ndungo as Chair, to act as the “policy organ” for BIEA Kenya and to take more responsibility for operations in the region.

This year, 2020, happens to be the 60th anniversary of the BIEA. At the beginning of the year, plans were in place for a series of events to mark this milestone. In February, the Ethiopian Embassy hosted a lively presentation of BIEA research in their country.

And then our world was changed, like everyone else's, by Covid-19. In March, our centre in Nairobi was closed and all staff in London and Nairobi have since been working from home. Events and programmes were cancelled or suspended, including a British Academy international symposium in Nairobi. Travel and meeting restrictions mean that international research projects have been put on hold.

We adapted quickly. With the help of Zoom, we have held a series of virtual webinars and research seminars on a variety of topics, which have proved popular, attracting participants from around the world. The Zoom platform has helped Nairobi staff keep in touch and work together and has enabled virtual meetings of Council and the new Kenya Board. It has also been used to run regular meetings of the PhD forum and the BIEA reading group in Nairobi.

Nonetheless, the situation is frustrating for everyone. We look forward to the day when we can once more work with our research partners on a full range of activities so that our investment in a strengthened team and enhanced facilities in Nairobi can bear more fruit. All we need is something like normality!

Jeffrey James, Member of Council and Honorary Treasurer BIEA Kenya,

For Dr Jane Humphris, BIEA Director
Freda has continued with her Iron Age research at Ishiara, Mt. Kenya region, which aims at giving a higher resolution to the question of Bantu Migration and to offer a more nuanced understanding of this period. During the previous excavations, artifacts, bones and charcoal from 5 test pits were collected. Although the excavations were successful, the charcoal and bones that were collected for dating turned out to be insufficient for the purpose. During the field trip, two more test pits one close to the 2016 test pit and two in between the 2017 and 2018 excavations were excavated. From the former, the team was able to collect enough charcoal and bones for dating.

Also, several artifacts from both Iron Age period and Later stone age were collected attesting to the continued use of the site through different archaeological and historical periods. This excavation marked the conclusion of any further excavations at Kamuturi 4.

The samples are yet to be submitted to a dating lab since the process was interrupted by the effects of Covid 19. Curation, cataloging and packaging for deposition at the National Museums of Kenya was also halted but will continue upon reopening of our Laikipia Road offices.
Losing the hearts and minds the role of aid in counter-insurgency warfare in Kenya and Zimbabwe 1952-1980

Ms. Bethany Rebisz, PhD Student, (University of Reading)

During the period of February – May 2019 with the generosity of the BIEA in terms of funding and support, Bethany conducted archival research as well as oral history interviews in Nairobi and other areas in the central region of Kenya. She was looking at Britain’s implementation of forced resettlement during the Mau Mau conflict (1952-1960) and particularly to better understand better day-to-day life in the ‘new villages’. The work involved consulting of large range of the colonial government’s Department for Community Development materials housed at the National Archives as well as other files from church archives and organisations such as the East Africa Women’s League.

The main bulk of the oral history interviews were conducted on the outskirts of Nairobi and in the areas in and around Nyeri.

The lives, deaths and afterlives of John Garang: Imagining politics in a New Sudan

Ms Danielle Del Vicario, PhD Candidate in History (University of Oxford)

On 30 July 2005, a Ugandan presidential helicopter carrying John Garang, the then newly appointed Vice-President of Sudan and leader of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) which waged a twenty-two-year war against the Sudanese government (1983-2005), crashed in suspicious circumstances on the Sudanese-Ugandan border. All on board were killed, including Garang, the lynchpin of the recently signed Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the primary advocate for Sudanese unity in the upcoming referendum on southern secession.
This project, which is part of Danielle’s PhD studies, investigates Garang’s life, death and memorialization, examining how different actors have interpreted him in their efforts to give meaning to a nebulously defined ‘South’ or ‘New’ Sudan. The research is driven by three core questions: (1) How is Garang’s history being told in different circles in South Sudan and among the South Sudanese diaspora?; (2) What silences are necessary to uphold a version of the past in which Garang can stand uncontested as South Sudan’s ‘founding father’; and (3) What technological channels do people use to access and retell Garang’s history?

Retelling the modern past of the Tigrigna potters (Ethiopia)

Dr. Michela Gaudiello (University of Warsaw)

The project “Retelling the modern past of the Tigrigna potters (Ethiopia)”, funded by BIEA in the Thematic Research Grants frame “Retelling the past”, aims to document the marginalised caste of potters in Tigray and their endangered intangible heritage.

This research represents a continuation of 2 previous years of investigation in the city and environs of Adigrat (2013) and in the Menebeyti district (2014) where the Canadian team led by Catherine D’Andrea excavated the 1st millennium archaeological site of Mezber. The first researches were mostly interested to discover how many micro-regional pottery traditions are spread in Tigray, the correspondences and similarities between the old archaeological ceramics and the modern pottery productions (if any). Besides the recording of all the steps of the chaîne opératoire, this research looks at the actual economic situation of the craft, and as well as the socio-political contexts of the potter.
Farmers at the shoreline
by Dr Emma Loftus (University of Cambridge)

It has long been suggested that early food producers entered southern Africa from East Africa, following the so-called “coastal route” from Mozambique, and arriving in the KwaZulu-Natal region sometime around 300 A.D. Yet little is known about the lifeways of these early groups and their connections to agriculturalists in Mozambique and further north.

Many of the oldest sites associated with the first phase of agricultural activity in this region, the Early Iron Age (A.D. 300-1000), are situated within 10 km of the coastline. This, along with abundant shellfish remains preserved at these sites, indicates the potential significance of coastal environments while the wooded landscapes were transformed for stock rearing.

Surveys in iSimangaliso Wetland Park, supported by BIEA, will aim to detect and map the location of EIA sites relative to coastal and freshwater resources, and to excavate stratified contexts in order to refine our chronological framework for this crucial period. Additionally, we intend to seek evidence for contemporaneous hunter-gatherer occupation of the region, and to investigate the relations between these communities.

Iron Age Research in Rwanda
by Dr John Giblin (National Museum of Scotland)

The BIEA Thematic Grant awarded in February 2020 contributes to the analysis of archaeological samples from Kabusanza, Southern Province, Huye District, Rwanda excavated in November 2019. These are the only Urewe burial features ever archaeologically excavated in eastern Africa.
Excavations at Kabusanze by the grant holders in 2007 identified a burial feature with the partially represented, disarticulated and modified remains of an adult male, a near complete and unmodified neonate, and Urewe ceramics. The burial was dated by C14 from associated charcoal to c. AD 400 and contemporaneous pit features were found to contain early evidence of agriculture. The excavations from 2020 identified a second burial feature with the partially represented, disarticulated and modified remains of a second adult alongside a number of other large pit features with Urewe ceramics.

The analyses will include: isotope analyses of three sets of human remains from two burial features, analyses of palaeobotanic bulk samples, radiocarbon dating of charcoal samples from burial and other pit features, and aDNA analyses of samples of three sets of human remains from two burial features.

Understanding Poverty and Informal Labour Markets in Tanzania’s Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (Asgm) Sector: A Case Study of The Geita Region

by Mr Julian Goetz – PhD (SOAS)

This research explores the impact of artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) on rural livelihoods and poverty reduction in Tanzania with particular attention to the political economy of its sectoral labour market. Existing literature tends to neglect the role of rural labour markets and waged employment, and the ways in which political and social factors shape distributional outcomes. Reviewing works on the micro-dimension of the resource curse as well as scholarship on the nexus of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) and economic development in Tanzania, and sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), led me to detect the following gaps. First, regarding the former, political factors, which shape the outcome of resource abundance, are insufficiently integrated by economists.
Second, cross-country studies with large heterogenous samples in the tradition of Sachs and Warner (1995) do not adequately explain more nuanced country- and time-specific effects, which can be argued to shape the outcome of natural resource abundance decisively. Acknowledging these gaps, this research links the labour market structure and dynamics of Tanzania’s ASGM sector to questions of poverty reduction. Goetz's research not only aims to shed light on the nexus of employment types but also to relate to its effects on poverty within the 'black-box' of the informal economy.

Studies of the organizational contexts of PhD trainees within and beyond African countries

by Mr Kanyingi Benson Waiganjo, PhD Candidate, (Karatina University, Kenya)

This research by Benson employs descriptive and exploratory design as methodology to reach PhD trainees in the field of history in Kenya’s universities and beyond in order to contribute new knowledge on the process of career development and adaptation for doctoral trainees in and beyond Africa.

The researcher argues that internationalisation of higher education is seen as the best approach to enhancing knowledge production but, Africa’s engagement with internationalisation is questionable, owing to its weaker position in comparison to the rest of the world.

This is due to the substantial funding requirements, which most African universities lack raising the question as to whether local PhD trainees can hold a competitive edge over those trained outside Africa in prestigious and renowned universities in terms of their scientific output. Local and international PhD trainees face different organisational contexts that construct or re-organise how they interact and conform to realities in career development. Lack of social capital, peer support and enabling environments for local PhD trainees minimise exposure to a broad variety of related careers inside and outside academic research.
Financial inclusion, political inclusion, and social belonging in Kenya

by Farah Qureshi, PhD student (University of California-Irvine)

My doctoral research funded partially by the BIEA has allowed me to investigate historical and present divisions in economic, capital, and financial access in Kenya through racial and ethnic lines. While there are many distinct divisions along such lines, the study focuses on two dominant spheres of exchange in contemporary Kenya to understand representations of ‘inclusion’ itself. To do this, I focussed on two phenomena which contribute to the Kenyan development agenda. The first is a concept of political inclusion aimed at the Kenyan-Asian community who have been long settled in the region from the early 20th century. This is the first formal attempt to recognise Kenyan Asians into the political field and organisation of the country.

The second phenomena is a concept of financial inclusion which takes shape through technology hubs redesigning ideas of financial technology to satisfy an ideology of universal Kenyan financial mobilisation through technology.

The political inclusion phenomenon at the core of my project is a political movement which centres on the political inclusion of Asians in the country as the ‘forty-fourth tribe.’ These phenomena, while a significant step towards decolonisation, presents its own challenges as Asians are not themselves unified, and only some want designation as a tribe. Asians in Kenya are both economically dominant and politically marginal. Asians are known as ‘Asians’ or ‘Muhindis,’ a classification that groups together all ethnicities from the subcontinent. After mass migration following the indentured labor of Asians for the construction of the East African railway in the early twentieth century, the British colonial government racially organised labour so that Asians managed Kenyan workers.

As Asian wealth and power grew from their formation and management of translocal international infrastructures, Asian social belonging in Kenya became debated. Political inclusion aims to diffuse these long-standing tensions. Part of a national redevelopment project known as Vision 2030; Asian tribal inclusion is an explicit government program which grew from an Asian political campaign.
This is controversial even among Asians but is the first formal attempt to integrate Asians within the nation state. Instead, it has resulted in a fracturing of Asian identity in Kenya into those who accept and those who refuse the ‘tribal’ identification and inclusion. Some embraced a ‘Kenyan’ identity, reconciling their civic and economic roles by repatriating wealth to the country during a recent tax amnesty. Others dismissed the effort at political inclusion, choosing to maintain separate money flows in the translocal international network. This group will instead identify as diasporic or international.


by Mr Brooks Marmon, PhD student (University of Edinburgh)

Brooks Marmon, recipient of a 2018 thematic research grant, successfully defended his viva in May 2020. Marmon’s thesis examined the process by which the decolonisation of Africa in the 1950s and early 1960s shaped the politics of Southern Rhodesia (colonial Zimbabwe). Focusing on the era in which that colony was a member of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953-63), it reveals how Rhodesians became fixated by Africa’s political transformation. As European empires in Africa collapsed, Southern Rhodesia’s political equilibrium was irrevocably altered. Domestic political power struggles became driven by wider continental events.
Historical Archaeology of Luo Migration and settlement: Excavation at Yiro, Siaya County, Kenya

by Mr. Gilbert Oteyo (BIEA Research Affiliate)

Yiro Earthwork is in Yimbo location, Bondo District of Siaya County. Overall, this is an explanatory study that seeks to understand how complex historical migrations and settlement patterns within this Siaya County are reflected in the archaeological record. The methods used in this study were the field walking and EDM survey, test excavation and oral or historical surveys.

The work produced an EDM Survey site map, a site artefact distribution map, archaeological material recovery and analysis, archaeological features and use of space recording and historical information on how the settlement was abandoned and where the people went.

There was also surveys on environmental information, but the researchers are yet to carry out research to understand the spatial organization within the settlement.

Cowries and pottery: a pilot survey along the Red Sea coast of Sudan

by Prof. Anne C Haour (University of East Anglia)

Ports on the Red Sea coastline of Sudan are described in historical sources as playing an important role in medieval trade in cowries and pottery, linking the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean via the Nile. In particular, the islands south of Suakin have been the focus of scholarly interest for over a hundred years, yet they have never been systematically archaeologically investigated – partly because of difficulties in accessing the area.
With a view to assessing the potential for a large-scale collaborative project, Professor Haour from the University of East Anglia and Dr Ahmed Adam from the University of Khartoum (UoK), accompanied by colleagues from UoK, undertook a pilot survey along the Red Sea coastline of Sudan, aiming to identify archaeological sites of medieval date. The team, which was received with great warmth by local guides and youth associations, was shown a number of sites and introduced to local informants who could speak to the cowrie trade and past traditions of settlement.

The team also identified a dozen previously unknown sites, including extensive stone and coralstone walling on a prominent hill (see photo). Dozens of funerary monuments and tumuli were recorded and described and habitation remains mapped on the island of Bahdur. Limited surface collections yielded ceramics, glassware, cowries and metal fragments. At the conclusion of the trip Professor Haour was invited to deliver a seminar to colleagues at the Department of Archaeology at UoK. The hope is to develop this preliminary work into a larger-scale enquiry.

Are New Jobs Good Jobs?

by Ms. Julie Zollmann, PhD candidate (Tufts University)

This PhD dissertation project explores the extent to which livelihoods mediated by technological platforms are creating “good” work opportunities, particularly for young people in Nairobi. In the past year, in 52 depth interviews were conducted 52 young online and offline workers in transportation, retail, on demand labour, and digital outsourcing to develop an emic view of what makes work “good” and how different livelihood opportunities stack up. In particular, a six-week panel study of 450 drivers showed that almost no drivers are earning above minimum wage and are making ends meet only by working long hours. Additional qualitative follow up is on hold due to the coronavirus in Kenya, but working papers are still scheduled to be released in May 2020.
The Politics of the Census in Consociational Democracies

by Dr. Laurence Cooley (University of Birmingham) with Dr. Samantha Balaton-Chrimes (Deakin University)

Laurence Cooley visited the BIEA in January 2019 as part of a research project on the politics of population censuses in deeply divided and post-conflict countries, funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council. While in Nairobi, he interviewed a number of government and donor officials and civil society representatives, about the planning process for the 2019 Kenyan census. Together with Samantha Balaton-Chrimes (Deakin University, Australia), he organised a workshop at the BIEA about the census, attended by members of Kenyan civil society.

A communiqué summarising discussion at the workshop and making recommendations for the census process was sent to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. Laurence and Samantha are now working on a number of individual and joint publications drawing on their research in Kenya.

A Tale of Two Green Valleys

by Dr. Gianluca Iazzolino and Dr. Laura Mann (LSE)

This research project examines how digital technologies and big data are changing ways of doing, and thinking of, agriculture. It uses a political economy approach to examine digital innovation and the commercialization of digital data in agriculture across two inter-connected field-sites: Kenya’s Rift Valley and California’s Central Valley. The goal is to understand how different players (Tech and Agritech firms, farmers, farm workers, traders and Agribusinesses, policymakers and donors) collaborate or compete to advance societal innovation while at the same time, furthering their own ideas and interests. It explores this topic by addressing 5 main research questions: How are the ideas and interests of Tech and Agritech firms reshaping agricultural innovation networks and business infrastructures within and between the two valleys?

How do farmers, workers, traders and Agribusinesses assert their interests and ideas in relation to data-driven changes? How do policy makers use regulatory frameworks, trade policy, industrial policy and fiscal policy to strategically shape innovation and advance the commercial interests of their national economies (and/or specific interests within their national economies? and what role do ideas and domestic politics play in motivating their actions?
What role do donors and international development actors play in shaping innovation ecosystems and the commercialisation of digital data in developing countries? How might we re-conceptualise data as a strategic resource for inclusive growth in international development?

Initial findings from both regions, show that digital tech firms are attempting to find lucrative, commercially viable ways to integrate technologies into agricultural value chains. The emphasis in both regions is on profit and value extraction. There is less emphasis on using digital technology and data for (non-commercial) science and public interest goals. However, one big difference between Kenya and the US is that very few tech firms provide services free of charge to US based farmers. In the US, the model is business-to-business. In Kenya, smallholder farmers seem not (yet?) willing to pay for a service that they are not able to afford or for which they don’t see a clear business case. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of agritech firms in Kenya (that we have interviewed so far) adopt a business model to provide services free of (direct) charge but facilitating the extraction of digital data which then they deploy as a tradable resource for financial service providers.

**Biometrics from the Margins**

*by Dr. Keren Weitzberg* (University College London)

Supporters of digital biometrics argue that this technology will enable African countries to “leapfrog” to new stages of development. This project flips the script by showing that digital biometrics, though a novel technology, is layered atop an older, analogue history.

Questions of interests have been on how East Africans have harnessed, transformed, and subverted biometric technologies since they were first introduced in the early twentieth century, if identification and registration technique long associated with colonial extraction can be a means of accelerating political and financial inclusion for the world’s poor, as many proponents suggest and those at the physical and metaphorical margins of the nation (including migrants, nomadic populations, refugees, & border communities, who have historically struggled to access identity documents) navigated the new world of digital identity.
Rescuing the Social? Intimacy and Citizenship in Kenya
by Dr. George Paul Meiu (Harvard University)

Dr. Meiu’s project explores the links between intimacy, kinship, and citizenship by documenting how middle-class ideals of love, marriage, and family inform and are shaped by the social worlds of men and women inhabiting the country’s various socio-economic margins. He posits that, in order to understand how the rising middle class claims moral respectability through intimacy, family life, and kinship, more broadly, it is important to explore how such claims come into being amidst multiple, competing notions of relatedness and belonging in contexts of social and economic inequality. Why are intimacy, marriage, sexuality, kinship, and family life so central to contemporary debates over belonging and citizenship in Kenya?

The researcher has completed fieldwork in Mtwapa, Kilifi County, where he carried out interviews with NGO workers, entrepreneurs, teachers, traders, interview bodaboda (motorcycle cab) drivers, hustlers, sex workers, beach boys, and members of microfinance projects helping the poor.

Kenyan settlement schemes past and present
by Prof. Catherine Boone (Departments of Government and International Development, LSE)

This research is centred on collecting, geo referencing, and analysing maps of the approximately 550 settlement schemes created in Kenya over the 1962-2016 period. In cooperation with Fibian Lukalo, Research Director of the National Land Commission, Prof. Boone, succeeded in this endeavour over the last three years. The NLC obtained over 1,500 Registry Index Maps from Survey of Kenya, covering about 375 schemes. They supplemented with maps for about 50 additional schemes that some of which they were able to collect informally. The maps were georeferenced and digitized by the team at the NLC and University of Richmond (with Prof. Sandra Joireman). The work involved combining the digitized scheme maps with some basic Ministry of Land data on the schemes (year of creation, number of original settlers, scheme registration status, scheme type) to produce a geographic analysis of patterns of scheme allocation over time.
The role of patient capital in promoting firm performance and decent working conditions in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Kenya

by Dr. Christoph Sommer (German Development Institute), Dr. Radha Upadhyaya (University of Nairobi), Dr. Florence Dafe (Technical University Munich)

This research is interested in the financing of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and attempts to explore extent and ways in which the SMEs’ access to more patient sources of capital help to create more decent working conditions in sub-Saharan Africa. By patient capital the researchers refer to financing that is both more long-term and more ‘loyal’ and ‘understanding’ if recipients go through difficult times such as periods of economic and political instability. Patient capital can cushion firms against short-term fluctuations in product and financial markets and against the loss of long-term benefits for the sake of short-term financial gains.

This research was conducted through qualitative interviews with labour organisations, finance providers of different types and manufacturing firms in the second half of 2019. While the interviews are still ongoing, the quantitative survey with SMEs is yet to be rolled out.
Managing the heat in Nakuru, Kenya: A culture of energy in Menengai

by Mr. Nick Rahier (KU Leuven)

Rahier's fieldwork aimed to understand the literal and metaphorical resonances in reference to energy and heat in an African urban locale. He uses energy and heat as a heuristic to get an understanding of Nakuru's urban past, present and future. He explores different forms of energy and heat – both material and symbolic – and works towards his dissertation on the dialectics between technology, society, and culture in Nakuru. His fieldwork has been centred around following questions: How do new forms of energy infrastructure such as the geothermal exploration in Menengai volcano shape temporality in Nakuru and Kenya more broadly and which kind of (cooler) personal and urban futures are imagined through geothermal exploration in the region? How do people (re)negotiate multiple local, national, global, ethnical and non-human subjectivities and interconnections in their everyday interactions with different manifestations of increasing heat? How is heat, energy and vitality – understood as poly-ontological formations of actions, substances, technologies and histories – entangled with Nakuru’s urban now? What are the cultural conceptions about heat that live among Nakuru residents and how does this relate to ideas about urbanity, life and the body? How is heat transferred and transformed in Nakuru, shaping and affecting the lives of beings of different kinds?

Seeing' Conflict at the Margins

by Dr. Jeremy Lind (Sussex University) with Dr. Lotte Hughes, Makambo Lotorobo, Everline Parkire, Daniel Salau

Whereas the politics and governance of extractive and energy resource operations in sub-Saharan Africa have changed in significant ways since the 1990s, wider debate is stuck in a binary view of there being clearly opposing company versus community sides and interests. The project shows that this is a misleading way of understanding the far more complicated contestations, struggles and conflict that occur. Research processes carried out since 2017 with members of communities living with large-scale geothermal development in Ol Karia, and communities in and around the Lake Turkana Wind Power (LTWP) project in the Marsabit/Samburu county borders has uncovered various other ways of ‘seeing’.
These indicate that there are differentiated interests existing even at the community-level – from protecting health, natural and cultural resources and the environment, to (re)stating claims to land and resources, to equitably sharing the presumed benefits of resource development. In many cases, a singular public interest is difficult to find, much less in existence.

This diversity of interests means that a one-size-fits-all approach to community engagement, whether by companies or national state actors, is bound to fail. This research documents the ways in which company engagement strategies divide local opinion whether by location (village), social group (age, gender, clan/kinship grouping), or association with project benefits like work opportunities, small contracts and funding of social infrastructure such as schools and clinics. By privileging the private interests of selective individuals and groups in communities, a wider public interest is demotivated. This presents considerable challenges for grassroots mobilisation efforts. The co-option of local support in large-scale resource developments, at least in some environments, underscores the need to build solidarities, institutions and values that can provide a basis for more effective mobilisation around and in support of community-level public interests in these places.

Local facilitation teams working closely with scholars as well as advocacy and community organisations (Friends of Lake Turkana and Nadumu Africa) have produced participatory films and multi-media case studies highlighting community members’ experiences of and responses to large resource developments, uncovering different ways to mitigate tensions and encourage more effective recognition of and action based upon the interests and needs of area residents. Two rounds of in-depth training were provided to local teams and followed-up with accompaniment and subsequently remote support to build the confidence of facilitators in guiding community collaborators through such complex work. At the time of reporting, teams in both countries are part-way through a process of ‘horizontal exchanges’, which brings together participants from the different sites to explore each other’s experiences and views of focal conflicts using participatory videos, photos and illustrations. By documenting such shared experiences that identify a broader public interest that could unify different stakeholder groups, the project has reinvigorated and informed conversations at the community-level. At the level of investors and companies, the project has challenged the thinking and practices of developers and financiers concerning processes of consultation and seeking consent, resettlement, compensation and the governance of local content benefits. This is an ongoing effort and will continue through the remaining months of the project and beyond.

The project website includes a range multimedia outputs generated by local teams: https://seeingconflict.org/. The first publication from the research is currently available: https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2020.1716292.
Apart from the BIEA’s funded projects, BIEA researchers bid for funding in partnership with UK and other partners to carry out innovative research in Eastern Africa. The following reports concern some of the successful ongoing research project.

**Traditional Technologies of the Azanian Daughters of East Africa**
(Financed by Raising from the Depths Program)

*by Dr Freda Nkirote M’Mbogori (BIEA), Dr Matthew Davies (UCL), Ms Mercy Gakii (NMK)*

This project seeks to understand ‘how we can best promote, record, preserve, disseminate and utilize maritime-based traditional technologies of the Kenyan coast for economic benefits of women groups and for heritage’s sake. Targeted maritime women traditional technologies are those linked to the ocean and its shoreline namely basketry, weaving and pottery making. These technologies’ knowledge keepers who are mainly women produced vessels/containers which were used by maritime communities for domestic and income generation for centuries. Using data on Maritime’s women traditional technologies we will come up with innovative ways of improving the production and sales as well as create awareness.

Particularly we sought to document and promote the threatened crafts, to revitalize understanding of their value and re-empower the practitioners through introduction of value addition to the already existing traditional crafts, create craft’s women groups in order to improve bargaining power and collective marketing strategies, diversify forms and styles through market research and training in order to be relevant to the current market trends as well as involve the youth for continuity. The targeted handicrafts are pottery, basketry and traditional roofing materials.

The technological and functional attributes of these crafts benefit directly from ocean products which occur in nature and therefore are easily accessible. Currently, both the practices and the practitioners are threatened due to offshore development agendas, globalization and effects of climate change.
Following two field trips and continuous 3 months research by the community researchers, After establishing the groups, the team settled on 4 groups namely; Matsangoni and Chumani (makuti groups), Kilongoni (basketry group), and Mazuka (potter’s group). Together with the community researchers, and the artisans, sessions of brainstorming were held come up with innovative ways of improving their products through experimentation, making local dyes, diversifying shapes, borrowing ideas from existing products in the market, adding community values to the products e.g body marks and dressing etc.

The artisans of makuti, basketry, and pots were introduced to new ways of production geared towards better sales. At the end of the field work, they were able to exhibit their new products to the public through two exhibitions. The first exhibition took place during the launch of a marketing sign board while the second one took place during the biggest market day in Kilifi. Both exhibitions gave them visibility and they were also able to sell their products. From these exhibitions and the sign board on Kilifi-Malindi highway, they are now able to receive several orders for their products.
To promote the women, a signboard for Makuti weavers was made and erected along the Kilifi-Malindi road. The signboard bears the names of the groups, phone numbers and the logos of the sponsors (Rising from the Depths, BIEA, and the County Government of Kilifi). The board was unveiled by the Minister of Education Mr. Katana (in place of the Minister of Culture). During the launch, an exhibition was set up where samples of all the products were displayed by the women groups.

During the exhibition and launch, the artisans received a lot of visibility and sold several of their craft. After the launch, the items were taken to the Kilifi Saturday market the following day where they were displayed for show and sale.
Well Being: Indigenous Wells, Pastoralist Biocultural Heritage and Community Archaeology for Sustainable Development in Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia (Funded by British Academy GCRF)

by Dr. Freda Nkirote M’Mbogori (BIEA), Prof. Paul Jeremy Lane (University of Cambridge), Ms Mercy Gakii (National Museums of Kenya), Dr. Waktole Tiki (Ethiopia Civil Service University), Mr. Ali Gufu (Kivulini Trust), Mr. Katelo Abduba (Marsabit County Government) Local Communities (representatives), BIEA GAS and UVPs

This is a collaborative research project between archaeologists and pastoralist community organisations on the long-term history of indigenous water management and well digging in northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia.

Community archaeology on the biocultural heritage of extant and abandoned wells brings together stakeholders with diverse knowledge, skills, and experience to exchange understandings of pastoralist self-organisation and sustainable development in these arid but resilient landscapes. Overcoming intercommunity violence through dialogue about the shared past and promoting cultural heritage as pathways to security, identity, and dignity are key goals. Demand for water drives government and investor development in these arid regions and is focused on building infrastructure to extract new energy sources (oil, wind, hydroelectric) to the exclusion of pastoralist rangelands and water points. Community archaeology of wells can inform a variety of water management and governance decisions among contemporary pastoralists, fitting the SDG framework to community-determined values, procedures, and priorities.

The activities and findings reported here mark the second and third activities of the action plan as presented to the British Academy. The first activity which was scoping phase was reported in the 2018-19 Annual Review.

To chart the way forward after the scoping expedition, two stakeholder meetings were held in Nairobi and Marsabit respectively. These involved the PI, CoI, Kivulini Trust, NMK, Marsabit County government representative, community members from Northern Kenya, and research partners from Ethiopia.

These workshops gave us an opportunity to explain to the participants the main objectives of the project, to plan for the community archaeology training/heritage prospects management, and to establish a steering committee. A ‘what's up’ platform was established comprising of all the participants in order to help with project management issues and future discussions.
Other topics of discussion included: Introduction to Northern Kenya archaeological sites; Transition to food production and the spread of pastoralism in Eastern Africa, Government of Kenya Vision 2030; GPS mapping; Excavations and Ethics; Local & International laws; Cultural Heritage Impact assessments and Bio Cultural Community Protocols. Members of the steering committee became the point persons for the field research. They joined the team while in the field and also appointed the trainees within their communities.

To ensure continuity, two members of the steering committee were engaged throughout the field trip and during the community members’ training. While in the field, the research was conducted by three teams. Team one conducted community archaeology training—surveys and excavations, while team two and three carried out mapping of the wells and wells ethnographic research respectively.

Surveys were conducted on the hills, plains and valleys. This is because isolated archaeological artifacts including microliths and middle stone age tools could be encountered randomly anywhere on the landscape. Besides the moveable artifacts, the landscapes in this region host numerous stone cairns which are attributed (by the local communities) to the Wardai people.
The Wardai are believed to have been the ancient well diggers, also, described as giants who roamed northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia before the coming of the present communities. The cairns within Elmuda are of two types- ring and conical designs. In the other areas, however, we only found conical ones.

Due to a combination of possible factors, archaeological materials could not be easily identified on the surface. These factors include: the rocky terrain which may have obscured surface archaeological materials; the archaeological materials may have been covered by loose topsoil from wind and sandstorms from Chalbi desert, this is in addition to the fact that, all the wells are located on the banks of seasonal river beds prone to continuous silting during heavy rains which occur once a year. This situation may have compromised any possibility of surface material preservation and recovery. As a result of this, the team settled on excavating stone cairns. The aim was to get dateable material and samples for DNA analysis in order to offer empirical data on the deep histories and cultural heritage of Northern Kenya. 4 excavations- 2 at Elmuda, 1 at Balesa and 1 at Elhadi were conducted. At Elmuda, a ring cairn and amound which were closest to the Elmuda well were excavated. Each produced one intered individual. This too yielded a single individual (details of these excavations and finds will be published later).

It is worth noting that the cairns are found around the bottom of the ridges, and at Elmuda, they occur in alternating sequence of ring and conical shapes. The cairn at Balesa did not yield any skeleton or artifacts. Although this is not unusual, these results were unexpected so a geological trench was dug to establish the stratigraphy and to confirm the results. The geological trench yielded the same stratigraphic layers up to the bedrock at 180cm as the suspected burial. This indicated that the ground under the stone mound had not been tampered with hence raising new questions about the meaning of some of the Marsabit mounds. At Elhadi, an ancient settlement on a small hilltop which had 49 stone enclosures was traced and excavated. On the surface, several artifact including ostrich eggshell beads, pottery, bones, stone tools and a few metallic objects were found. Testpits yeilded pottery, stone artifacts, bones and beads at 0-10cm depth. Below this level, several middle stone age tools and ostrich eggshell beads were recoved. This is a rich site that requires further investigations.
GIS mapping of most of the wells located in Elmuda, Balessa, Elhadi, Holale and around Marsabit Mountain was done. This was done with an aim of producing a map that would inform further on the wells spatial distribution and their relationship with the other cultural heritage and sacred sites within these areas. In these locations, more than 100 wells were mapped.

Due to time constraints, only the big wells were mapped. In addition to mapping, measurements of various wells were taken for typological analysis.
Ethnographic research was carried out through interviews and focus group discussions. These were done to understand the relationship if any between the people who currently use the wells and the well diggers, as well as the cultural importance of these wells in pastoralist's economic resilience. This information was also essential in helping to link the wells with peoples oral histories and to understand how they have managed these wells over the years. Thus, answers to some of the questions will help to understand how the pastoralists in this region relate with their environment, what has enabled their resilience through long periods of droughts and other harsh conditions. The community members themselves were keen to have their histories, songs and stories recorded for posterity.

**Maternal Mortality in East Africa** (Funded by the UK's AHRC and MRC)

By Prof Benson Mulemi (CUEA, and a BIEA research associate), Dr Shane Doyle and Dr Jane Plastow (Leeds), Dr Saudah Namyalo (Makerere), and Prof Wenzel Geissler (University of Oslo)

Maternal mortality is one of the more intractable health challenges affecting East Africa, and so it brought together specialists from a range of disciplines (linguistics, medical anthropology, medical history, and theatre for development) in order to approach the issue from multiple perspectives. The research focuses on Kisumu and Siaya counties in western Kenya, partly because of the region's high prevalence of HIV and malaria.
In order to better understand how maternal health risks vary across different medical contexts, and to examine the efficacy of the region's referral systems this project partnered with a regional referral hospital, a county hospital, and village-level medical facilities on a number of key themes. For example, the miscommunication and the often-antagonistic relationship between maternity staff and patients, the precarity of adolescent mothers, maternal knowledge transmission across generations, the evolving role of Traditional Birth Attendants, and masculinity and maternal health. During this past year we have benefited from a close partnership with Lagnet, a community theatre NGO, which has enabled us to share project findings through vernacular radio and village-level performance of plays. Plans to disseminate findings to other stakeholders were interrupted due to COVID-19.
During 2019, Stephanie conducted excavations at Unguja Ukuu in Zanzibar as part of her Leverhulme-funded project. The overall aim of this work is to understand how early ‘urban’ sites in Zanzibar were integrated into local landscapes of resources, as well as how they changed the environment around them. To this end, excavations in 2019 gathered samples of wood charcoal, charred botanical remains, bone and sediment samples, all anchored in a set of excavations of early households at Unguja Ukuu. These samples are now under analysis in York and Aarhus, with a view to revealing the trees, reefs, and agricultural spaces used by the past inhabitants.

In addition, Stephanie continues to act as part of the committee on the Rising from the Depths network, which has funded a series of projects across the region focused on marine cultural heritage. At the end of 2019, she completed the Co-Production and Community Heritage (Conch) project in Tanzania, which developed various resources promoting coastal heritage in Pangani and Kilwa along with local communities.

During 2020 she has been working with Freda Nkirote on the project Women in African Archaeology, which is producing a series of biographies for pioneering women in the field as part of a special series with the website Trowelblazers.
The moral economy of elections

by Prof Gabrielle Lynch (Professor of Comparative Politics, University of Warwick, and BIEA Vice President), Prof Nic Cheeseman (Professor of Democracy and International Development, University of Birmingham), and Prof Justin Willis (Professor of Modern African History, Durham University and former BIEA Director and Vice President)

Polling station in Juaso, Asante-Akim South constituency, Ghana, 7 December 2016

During the year, they focused on writing up a book on The moral economy of elections in Africa: Democracy, Voting and Virtue for an ESRC-funded project on the impact of elections in Kenya, Uganda and Ghana for publication by Cambridge University Press. Using a mixed-methods study of post-colonial elections in Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, the book explores the moral claims made by officials, politicians, civil society, international observers, and voters themselves. This radical new lens reveals that elections are the site of intense moral contestation, which helps to explain why there is such vigorous participation in processes that often seem flawed.

Demonstrating the impact of these debates on six decades of electoral practice, they explain why the behaviour of those involved so frequently transgresses national law and international norms, as well as the ways in which such transgressions are evaluated and critiqued – so that despite the purported significance of “vote-buying”, the candidates that spend the most do not always win. The BIEA supported this project by providing excellent research assistance through the Graduate Attachment Scheme.

Dr Sharath Srinivasan (Council member)

Sharath is an interdisciplinary and applied researcher currently working on: digital technology and politics in Africa; media, communication technology and politics/development in Africa; the politics and accountability of international intervention in Africa (human rights, humanitarian/development, peace and security); the domestic and international politics of Sudan, South Sudan, East Africa and the Horn of Africa.
CRC Future for Rural Africa - Research

Future Energy

by Dr Clemens Greiner (University of Cologne)

In 2019 the Future Energy project, subproject in the CRC Future Rural Africa, made good progress. The project researches local impacts resulting from the implementation of infrastructures for geothermal energy generation in Baringo and the multi-level governance structures that facilitate and finance these infrastructures. The whole team visited Baringo in March 2019 to get an impression of the progress of geothermal development in the area, and David Greven, a PhD student, started the first phase of long-term fieldwork. In addition to this, David Greven was involved in the Baringo part of the implementation and execution of a large, multi-country household survey which was carried out by the Future Rural Africa consortium in all research areas (in Kenya, Namibia and Tanzania).

Living with the forest: conservation and shifting socio-ecological relations in Baringo, Kenya

by Ms Léa Lacan (University of Cologne)

This ongoing research explores the relationship between local communities and the forests and their conservation in Baringo, Kenya. It focuses on the Katimok forest, in the Tugen hills, West of the Lake Baringo and the Narasha forest near Eldama Ravine in South Baringo. In 2019, Léa spent nine months in conducting ethnographic research in the field in Katimok and Narasha with a focus on the socio-ecological transformations of the forests and their neighbouring human communities, looking at their history and the life people share with the forest. Archival research was also conducted in the Kenya National Archive and the Kenya Forest Service local archives. A second phase of fieldwork will take place in 2020.
Projecting futures: Resource-use conflict, intergenerational tensions and competing visions of future-making in the Kenya Rift Valley

by Dr Uroš Kovač (University of Cologne & WWU University of Münster)

As a part of the collaborative research centre “Future Rural Africa” based at Universities of Cologne and Bonn (Germany), the topic of this ethnographic research was future-making among Il Chamus in Baringo County. In particular, research has been conducted through interviews and participant observation about changing marriage patterns, livelihood strategies, and concepts of culture and Christianity among young Il Chamus men and women. The field research was supplemented with archival research in Kenya National Archives in Nairobi. The next steps for this project have unfortunately been limited by the current Covid-19 pandemic, as Uroš had to suspend his field research and confine himself to preparing publications.
Prosperity Co-Lab Kenya (PROCOL)

Prosperity Co-Lab Kenya: understanding social, economic and ecological prosperity and co-designing policy for change

Professor Henrietta L. Moore
Founder and Director, Institute for Global Prosperity, University College London

Dame Professor Henrietta Moore’s work aims to develop a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding the intersections of prosperity, health, environment and social change across the globe. Specifically, Henrietta integrates anthropological and socio-historical research methods with scientific examinations of biodiversity, climate change, agriculture and mental and physical health.

Henrietta’s work in Kenya and East Africa at large remains a cornerstone to this wider agenda. She has recently developed her research into a collaborative initiative called Prosperity Co-Lab (PROCOL) Kenya that brings together academic research with policy makers in county governments, business and local communities. Formally launched in November 2019, PROCOL Kenya itself conducts groundbreaking transdisciplinary research that challenge current economic and ecological paradigms with the aim of building contextually appropriate sustainable Prosperity (www.procolkenya.com).

Over the past year, Henrietta has continued to work through PROCOL Kenya and with several Kenyan counties (Elgeyo-Marakwet, Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Narok and Nairobi) to create new social and ecological metrics to inform policy making and to establish inclusive mechanisms of governance. In late 2019 and early 2020, research was undertaken with farmers in Elgeyo-Marakwet County to explore notions of prosperity and what this means to different individuals and communities living in different contexts. This pilot work will be used to begin creating a ‘Prosperity Index’ that will inform future development policy that has meaningful impacts on local livelihoods.
PROCOL Kenya is also working to integrate social science methods with biophysical analysis, ethno-botanical surveys and land health analysis to ensure culturally appropriate, yet scientifically robust recommendations, can be made regarding ecological resilience, food security and livelihoods, including under the UN Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity Framework (TEEB).

Many of Henrietta’s research themes have recently come into sharp focus in light of the COVID-19 pandemic that has caused unprecedented forms of socio-economic uncertainty. Indeed, the pandemic exists not just a health crisis, but a cascading set of failures that have overwhelmed fragile economic and infrastructural systems. Using this situation as an entry point into a series of strategic discussions for positive change, a four-part collaborative webinar series was held between the Elgeyo-Marakwet County Government and PROCOL Kenya over May and June 2020. Pressing topics such as the fragility of health and agricultural systems that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic provided a focused context in which to explore the potential of long-term initiatives aimed at substantially improving the livelihoods of county citizens. These forms of collaboration and strategic conversations will become ever more important over the coming year as the global pandemic continues to unfold.

A special thanks is due to all members of the PROCOL Kenya Team, including Professor Jacquie McGlade, Dr Matthew Davies, Dr Wilson Kipkore, Timothy Kipkeu, Solomon Ntaiyia, Humphrey Methenge, Eve Njau, David Leyian, Helena Chepto, Nelson Bailengo, Andrew Kibet Yano, Noah Kiplagat, Joseph Kimutai, Pelela (Jack) Moniko, Purenkei (Emmanuel) Karia, Raketa (Amos) Micheleei, Nkoleku (James) Mpeo, Lekaken (Robert) Pere, Koshal (Michael) Letura, Sopoyo (Musanga) and Titame (Jackson) Parsoi.
BIEA Graduate Attaché Scheme

BIEA graduate attachments offer recent graduates, with an interest in further studies in Africa, the opportunity to gain research experience and develop their networks. The participants who come from around the globe engage in various activities during their three months stay. These include library research, research assistants to our members, own research, reading group, Kiswahili lessons, organization and participation to seminars, workshops, conferences and other events at the BIEA among other activities. During the 2018/19 we hosted 5 participants. Three were able to complete their attachment before the coming of Covid 19 while the last two unfortunately left when the BIEA closed down due to the pandemic.

Junnan Mu (China)

I spent an intellectual and social enriching three-months with BIEA as a graduate attaché since July 2019. I helped coordinate the reading group, contributed to the digitalization of BIEA library archive, and assisted Dr. Freda Nkirote’s research on “Indigenous Wells” through collecting archival materials. I also planned a panel discussion on "Digital justice, an agenda worth pursuing in Kenya" with my fellow GAS. The tranquil BIEA library nourished my research project on smart urbanism in Kenya, which was later supported by BIEA to conduct short fieldwork in Machakos County. Through looking into the recent practices and discourses around the first smart city in Kenya - the Konza Technopolis, this research attempts to review some of the main political economic forces shaping current smart cities making in Africa and to understand the socio-spatial consequences of this project. Supported by the graduate attachment scheme, two-week fieldwork was conducted in Konza Technopolis. I will start my Ph.D. on African and African American Studies at Harvard University from September 2020.
With my MA research being remotely linked with the East African region, Fort Jesus in Mombasa, Kenya, I nursed a hope when I tendered in my application on 25th February 2019 that I would be accepted into the Graduate Attaché Scheme. The approval letter from Dr Freda Nkirote on 10th May 2019 was an entry point into the succeeding 3 months that positively influenced my academic and social perspectives and practical experiences.

My experience at the BIEA was surreal and critical to my development as an academic and researcher. I worked closely with the BIEA staff and Junnan Mu, my colleague attaché. In July, I participated in the research project - Well Being: indigenous wells, pastoralist biocultural heritage and community archaeology for sustainable development in Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia under the supervision of Dr Nkirote.

I contributed to this project through; the recording of coordinates, under the supervision of John Kanyingi, which was used in generating 3D rendered maps for the burial and/or archaeological sites, historic wells and surrounding heritage areas on the Chalbi desert, Moyale and Marsabit in northern Kenya; the documentation of the excavation process through photographs, collecting primary data through key informant interviews with locals on the Chalbi Desert and the opportunity to work with staff from the Cultural Heritage Department, Kenya National Museum, I participated in a summer school hosted by the BIEA for MA students from the University of Johannesburg, and conducted a brief personal field research on the topic Heritage Interpretation, Presentation and Community Participation: Case of Fort Jesus (a study that was deployed as a sample for a comparative analysis in the development of my MA thesis). Also, I supported Junnan in developing a panel discussion topic: Data Justice, an agenda worth pursuing in Kenya? Which was held on 22nd October 2019. Through the readily available resources including the free internet, I was able to complete a Google certified course: Fundamentals of Digital Marketing. A training/certification that I presently use for my freelance marketing gigs.
I was involved in the graduate attaché scheme between the months of January - March 2020. It was a challenge that provided me with new lenses to view the world and an experience that bridged the gap between my doubts and dreams about making a unique change. As an attaché, I got involved in organizing and coordinating events like the Kilifi (Mijikenda) Women's Arts and Crafts, the BIEA annual lecture, BIEA anniversary (BIEA @60), and a workshop and debate forum tagged 'REVOLUTION' which was put on hold because of the pandemic.

I also chaired the reading group with my fellow attaché Ibanda Joshua and the UVPs, and a whole lot more. In respect to Kilifi Project, I worked with Dr Freda Nkirote, Ms. Neema Katana of the Department of Gender, Culture and Social Services, Mrs Lydia Gatundu of the National Museum of Kenya, Mrs Mercy Gakii, Mr John Savala, and a host of many other community participants.

My personal research work while at the BIEA investigated the individualistic nature of art among the women of the Mijikenda community (Kilifi); how art is used as a major vehicle for expressing emotions and feelings. The opportunity to disseminate the results through a seminar in the “completion seminar series” was curtailed by Covid-19, however, I hope to be able to it online.

In sum, this programme (the BIEA’s Graduate Attachment Programme) allowed me time and space to find a common purpose in both my career and life. It gave me, to a large extent insight into myself, put me in touch with people I would never have met, gave me a sense of belonging through radical connections with people from different parts of the world, gave me an inspiring, fun-filled, and worth-while year, and fuelled the fire in my heart to be part of the change in the world, Africa and my country Nigeria.

I am currently working towards a master's degree that is focused on the impact of Sub-saharan African women in the promotion and preservation of indigenous crafts and heritage.
Through the program, I improved my qualitative research ability, gained valuable introductory skills in GIS surveying, enabled my appreciation for archaeological research and data collection, enhanced my practical experience in events organization such the preparation of logistics for the Religion and LGBT Activism in Kenya event by Dr Adriaan van Klinken, the library afforded me a plethora of literature that was used for my master's thesis titled, We Sold Slaves Too: The Disappearance Of Anomabo And Fort William In Public Narratives Surrounding The Atlantic Slave Trade in Ghana (proud to mention that this work has been nominated as one of the best thesis for this academic year). This thesis is will be defended on 30th June 2020.

In summary, my time as an attaché with the BIEA was extremely rewarding and instrumental to my growth and my recently completed MA thesis at Central European University. With this confidence and drive, I plan on pursuing my PhD hopefully next year.

Sylvia Wemanya (Kenya)

My experience at the BIEA was exciting, educative, eye-opening, enriching and productive. Together with Monica Wanjiru, I helped organise a panel discussion entitled, ‘Boy Child Disempowerment: a reality or simply an illusion of patriarchy’ which was a great success. I had the opportunity to work on my own project at the Kilifi cave sites titled, ‘Disassociation of the local community to caves: a major threat to natural and cultural heritage’ and presented the findings at the BIEA institute in Nairobi during my completion seminar. I also managed to collect secondary data for my master’s project and assisted Dr. Freda Nkirote in conducting archaeological excavations at Ishiara in Embu County.

As an attaché, I also had the opportunity to attend the 3rd ASAA Biennial conference on African and Africana Knowledges at USIU; a PhD conference on scientific subjectivities in contemporary Africa; and PROCOL Kenya Citizen Science workshop at the BIEA. During my time there, I chaired the weekly reading group discussions which gave me an insight to several African writers’ texts.
This year, my training as a graduate attaché at the British institute in Eastern Africa is the greatest opportunity that can happen to any ambitious student. Through my active participation in PhD forums, interaction with various academics, a well-coordinated staff, the reading group on key African texts, and unlimited access to the finest collection of rare books at the Institute’s library, my knowledge of research and proposal writing skills was greatly sharpened. First and foremost, I got an opportunity to participate in the “Raising from the Depths” project under Dr. Freda plus a wonderful team of curators from the national museums of Kenya and a contemporary Kenyan artist. The team plus GAS and UVP colleagues participated in several craft value addition tasks involving several coastal women groups.

It was such an opportunity to work with Archaeologists, Curators, Cultural officers, and Artists. The project climaxed with a well-attended ceremony of the launch of the coloured Makuti Matsangoni women’s project in Kilifi. Alongside, I redirected and improved my theoretical proposed research on Technopolitics embedded in Marakwet belief systems and indigenous technologies. Dr. Freda again linked me up with Prof. Henrieta Moore who introduced me to the team at the research station at Tot in the Kerio valley. My paper was now under close supervision by Dr. Mathews. I gained deeper insights into the Marakwet irrigation furrows and spiritual beliefs which have become defining aspects of the direction of my future research which I have shared with Dr. Prince Guma. I have directly and indirectly used my mentorship from the various senior researchers and academics at the BIEA to better my research and intentions to pursue further studies at PhD level. It was my desire to use my artistic skills to create a complex mixed media artwork on the theme of BIEA at 60, but this dream was crushed by the global pandemic leading to our premature evacuation. I have been fully engaged with writing proposals during the Covid 19 lockdown. I still believe the British Institute in Eastern Africa is the best place for those exceptional students who want to maximize their time regardless.
Undergraduate Volunteer Programme (UVP)

Every year, the BIEA offers opportunity to 6 humanities and social science students in their 3rd or 4th year of study from our partner universities. The students spend 3 months at the BIEA shadowing our GAS and as well as doing their own research using our library and online facilities. They also help with workshops, seminars and other events. Together with the GAS, they organize at least one panel discussion per quarter.

Lewis Mwangi Mwaura (Pioneer University)

As a student of international relations, I consider myself a global citizen, thus the UVP experience gave me the chance to build skills relevant in this regard as I was able to interact with people from different parts of the globe. Apart from my daily duties, I was also involved in planning events like the annual lecture and ‘BIEA@60’ celebrations that, unfortunately, had to be cancelled in line with COVID19 restrictions. I gained relevant managerial skills and was able to network with distinguished people and organizations through the esteemed reputation of BIEA when delivering event invitations. I was able to visit Kilifi County where I helped organize and actively participated in the launch of the Kilifi Women Cottage Industries, a BIEA project in partnership with Rising from the Depths.

Volunteering at the BIEA helped me discover key research areas in the field of international development, my major, and this has enabled me to develop an appropriate research topic that has since been approved for my undergraduate research project. The interaction with great polymaths at the institute most notably Dr Freda Nkirote, the country director, and Dr. Prince Guma, helped instil in me skills and knowledge that I will forever utilize and seek to pass to my peers. Helping great researchers like Gilbert Oteyo, Jeremiah Ojwang and Joyce Wangari in editing and professional proofreading of their work also taught me skills relevant for a career as a research scientist. Helping clean and catalogue archaeological materials with Ms. Cecilia from the Kenya National Museum with the guidance of Dr Nkirote also helped me to appreciate and better understand the field of anthropology and archaeology.

To the entire staff, I am forever indebted to you for your warm welcome and willingness to always support and direct me during through my UVP experience. I endeavour to continue utilising BIEA for I believe that becoming is better than being and the BIEA is truly a centre of holistic becoming.
Margaret Kuria (UVP)

My time as an Undergraduate Volunteer at BIEA was an unforgettable experience. I gained more exposure into my career field, and I also interacted with other scholars. I was able to interact with students from South Africa for the summer programme. I also got to work with Dr Freda in the Wells project in Northern Kenya which was my first ever experience in the field. I learned a thing or two about excavation and was exposed to field conditions, which for me, was the highlight of it all. I also got time for myself at the library, to further study and research on the field of archaeology. Familiarising myself with terms I had never heard of before, I got to learn about different cultures. The unforgettable book I read in the library was on the South Sudan Nubian people and their culture.

Monica Wanjiru (UVP)

My time at the BIEA as a UVP is one of those I will forever cherish. I was greatly impacted by all the opportunities that came my way. I got to meet a lot of people from various academic and socio-cultural backgrounds and this greatly expanded my social networks. I also experienced how offices operate through my interactions with the staff members. The reading groups and access to the library materials helped boost my reading culture. Helping in the library enabled me to acquire new skills.

I was privileged to go on an archaeological field work and this gave me an amazing first-hand experience of archaeology in practice. In addition, BIEA made it possible for me to attend various conferences held within and outside BIEA’s institute. Being part of the annual team building get-away was so precious.

With the help of some of BIEA staff members and a Graduate Attachés, I was able to organise and host a panel discussion on 'Boy Child Disempowerment, a reality or simply an illusion or patriarchy?'. It attracted audiences from various organizations including the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, Kenya and the National Gender Equality Commission, Kenya. For me, this was an achievement, a success of its kind.
Caroline Wanjiru Wambui (UVP)

My time at the British Institute Eastern Africa was incredible and amazing. I gained a new sense of professionalism. I was involved in weekly reading group which was effective not only to improve fundamental reading skills but also help to develop high level of comprehension skills and improved my attention to details. In the BIEA Library, I shelved and catalogued journals. I was privileged to work as a research assistant to Bethany Rebisz; a doctoral researcher whose research was on women who were forcibly resettled during the Mau Mau conflict. Together with my colleagues, we assisted in ushering events organized by BIEA. I was also involved in organizing and chairing the BIEA Annual Graduate Conference. The undergraduate volunteer program taught me more than I imagined. I am forever grateful for the opportunity. I am now able to work in a multi-cultural environment.

Christine Njenga (UVP)

I had a sensational time at BIEA. First, the employees there were very warm, welcoming, and eager to offer any kind of assistance to us. I got to indulge my time in diverse projects such as cleaning, arranging, and labelling archaeological materials by different researchers from the institution. This was to enable their storage in a museum. I also helped in planning of events such as BIEA @60 celebrations and the Annual Lecture which were unfortunately postponed indefinitely due to Coronavirus restrictions. We had a book reading group every once a week. It was one of my best moments as I love reading and listening to other people's perspectives on different matters. In fact, most of the next books I am planning to read were suggested during this. I learnt a lot, more than I even imagined.
The reading group meets weekly on Tuesdays from 3-4pm at the BIEA garden, although meetings have now been moved online due to Covid-19 pandemic. The group now meets on Zoom every Wednesday from 3:30-5:00 pm EAT. This has become a space where local and international researchers, graduate attachés, undergraduate volunteers, and masters and PhD students from all disciplines meet and have in depth discussions on a pre-assigned text.

This forum has greatly impacted all its members especially the attachés and volunteers who during their stay get to broaden their knowledge beyond their specific disciplinary focus and engage critically with important literature as early career researchers. The reading group often focuses on books based on African theories from a wide range of subjects. This includes politics, culture, anthropology, history and social theory. Members of the reading group take part in providing suggestions and voting process where a winning book becomes the next read. Over the past year we have managed to read the following books.

- ‘Ethno-erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money, and Belonging in Kenya’ by George Paul Mieu
- ‘Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa, 1850-1999’ by Justin Willis
- ‘Half a Yellow Sun’ By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- ‘Matatu: A History of Popular Transportation in Nairobi’ by Kenda Mutongi
- ‘Digital Democracy, Analogue Politics: How the Internet Era is Transforming Politics in Kenya’ by Nanjala Nyabola
The library has kept evolving with time to keep up with the needs of our members. This year, we created space for a new private reading area for six. Furthermore, we rearranged the library setup to have a seating area right by the window to allow users to enjoy a serene view of the garden below and to enjoy a whiff of fresh air. Beset with the covid-19 pandemic, we had to shut down the Library from March 15th. We look forward to having an improved user experience for our members when we finally open the office. We also have a new reception area to ease and improve interaction between the librarians and users. We have also facilitated access to the catalogue by providing a computer specifically for that task and acquired a new set of comfortable seats conducive for long hours of study, research, and work.

We would like to thank Peter Martell for the generous book donation he made to the library this year, we highly appreciate the gesture of goodwill. Members are also welcomed to make book recommendations to the Librarian for acquisition.


Stephan, C. (2020): (Im)possible visions of the future – Qualitative-methods as entry points to practices of imagination and images of the future. Special Issue in Social Geography.
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