

Mit einigen Menschen habe ich Gespräche geführt, in Deutschland und in Ghana, um unterschiedliche Perspektiven und Ansichten zu dieser Thematik zu erhalten. Eine Auswahl dieser Gespräche findet sich hier:

Mit Matian van Soest (S. 21), einem Ethnologen und langjährigem Freund von mir, der für seine Promotion in Uganda forscht; mit Aaron Yeboah Jr. (S. 15), einem Grafik Designer und Verleger, der 2014 das Magazin African Lens gegründet hat, welches sich auf junge fotografische Positionen auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent und in der Diaspora konzentriert; mit Mutombo da Poet (S. 31), einem Spoken Word Künstler und Fotograf aus Accra; mit Theophilus Mensah (S. 3), einem Fotograf und Blogger aus Accra und mit Frances Ademola (S. 11), der Gründerin der Loom Gallery in Accra, der ältesten privaten Kunstgalerie Ghanas.

Theophilus Mensah ist ein Fotograf und Blogger aus Accra, Ghana. Momentan dokumentiert er Basketballkultur in Ghana.

[www.instagram.com/ofoli\\_kwei](http://www.instagram.com/ofoli_kwei)

Holger: In the project that I'm doing I'm examining the western views on Africa – how that translates into photography and how I'm influenced by that as a photography student coming to Ghana from Germany. I wonder, for you as a photographer, working in a creative scene here in Accra, what is your main interest?

Theophilus: I basically started photography because of basketball. I started blogging about basketball and along the way I was getting better at taking pictures. I looked out for photographers whose work I admired and a lot of them were very much into telling stories, especially telling the African story. There was a time when a lot of people were focusing on that. For a long time, apart from basketball, my photography was about showing the world what Africa looks like outside of the normal standard issue on BBC or CNN where it's always war and famine and hunger and all that. Even though the big media have changed drastically. If you look at Al Jazeera now, they started doing reports you wouldn't expect from such a big company, they really started coming down and telling true stories of the people.

Holger: Who were some of the photographers you were interested in?

Theophilus: The very first person that caught my attention was Nana

Kofi Acquah. I found him through Chale Wote Festival in Accra. I think he was the only photographer posting pictures about it. I was blogging about the festival so I started following him on social media, etc. Through him I got to know several other people doing the same kind of stuff, very serious photography about Africa. People traveling around Africa documenting or also doing assignments for big companies. Through Acquah I found out about the #everydayafrica movement, I think he's a big part of it and I found plenty other photographers on the entire continent. In Ghana apart from him, Francis Kokoroko, Rodney Quarcoo, later Mutombo came in. There's several really good photographers here.

Holger: Could you go a little more into detail about what you mean by telling the African story from the eyes of Africans? The images I've seen from Africa are usually from European or American photographers. I have to admit there's very few African photographers I had known before. There's some that got big like Malick Sidibé from Mali, James Barnor from Ghana or more recently Pieter Hugo who's a white South African photographer. How would you describe the African story?

Theophilus: Personally, my definition of African story has changed a

bit. On Instagram or Tumblr there's a lot of pretty night time shots, long exposure photos of nice buildings, from the top of an apartment complex or roundabouts and blurry lights and there will be comments such as "the Africa the media won't show you" and for a long time, that was in my mind like 'we need to show them the pretty stuff that the media won't show'.

As time goes on if we do that we're not only lying to them, we're also lying to ourselves. The story should be balanced. I live in Africa, I live in Ghana, in Accra. My parents stay here in Mallam, you did the trip here, you see how far it is, the roads are not very pretty. At the same time I play basketball at a very plush facility. I hang out with my friends in Osu, very nice neighbourhood. I've rented a place in South Labadi, a nice area. So when I'm going to show someone photos of everyday Africa it shouldn't just be the nice parts of Osu or the nice hotels or the nice schools or the beautiful restaurant or the basketball court. It should be a balanced one. After a while, I realized telling the African story means not just one story. People's stories vary. Depending on your background, which group you belong to, your story will be different. Especially when Africa is so diverse. There's 54 countries and within the countries there's very different people so how are you

going to describe 1 billion people with one story? What is the African story? What I really think is there's no single story and the stories that are told should be balanced by the photographers or whoever gets the opportunity to tell it, whether it be filmmakers, journalists...

Holger: I think sometimes, especially in documentary photography, the need for a good story makes people intentionally pick conflicts because it makes for more intense or dramatic content.

Theophilus: Sometimes people are doing that to get paid. The news agencies are also looking for stories that will sell. So maybe a place like Agbobloshie (the big electronic waste site in Accra) is a story people are chasing because of the place's significance on the world, the environment, health, the economy. I've photographed Agbobloshie before and I nearly got beat up by the guys working on the e-waste dump there because they say that so many photographers have come to take pictures or videos of them, almost every week there's somebody there to take pictures. After a while I began to understand how it felt. If I'm in my home and everyday someone comes to take a picture of me, because I'm in a bad situation and yet no difference is being made to change my situation, I'd feel exploited. People are

just coming for the story and then leave. Even though photographers are not the ones supposed to fix the problem but if telling the story doesn't lead to any improvement of the people's livelihoods, they become very hostile towards you.

## if you are going to show me burning e-waste, also show me that this is a good place to get good food

And the funny thing is when people go to Agbobloshie, they just go the e-waste dump where people are burning and cutting the cables out of computers and electronic waste from Europe that came disguised as donations. At the same time there is a residential part. Maybe it's not a A-class neighbourhood but it is an area where people are living their everyday lives. Photographers barely show that. You see people doing different things, some of them are traders, some of them have public tasks, there's clinics there, there's a police station. Right across the street there's banks. My mom goes there every week because you get the freshest, cheapest food in Accra. If you are going to show me burning e-waste, also show me that this is a good place to get good food, a place

where people are doing regular activities, everything.

Holger: I was talking to (stylist) Mawuli Quist and he said, it seems to him, a lot of foreigners coming to Ghana either have a romanticized view on things or they only see the bad stuff, like corrupt police, the waste. I'd say a lot of people don't take the time to get to know enough for a balanced look.

Theophilus: In my mind, it's really weird if you are in Europe or the US, or any supposedly developed country and there's virtually free Wifi, you have internet access all the time and you don't take the time to teach yourself about the place you are coming to. For tourists coming to town having certain perceptions, I'm gonna say they're being intentionally ignorant.

Recently I saw pictures of several diverse African students in New York and they were holding signs with facts about their countries of origin. At first, I thought it was cool but then I got really pissed. You don't have to do this! If the people in the west have the ability to see you online but don't take the time to check what Africa is made of, then don't bother.

In junior high school, in history lessons there was a lot of talk about colonialism, they mentioned names

of governors, rulers, district councils, who were white and stayed in Africa. We know how much time they spent in Ghana, what role they played. It's in no proportion compared to how little we learned about Kwame Nkrumah or people who fought for independence. European students should also be learning a chunk of things about Africa when they're in high school, cause if I'm going to learn about your leaders who came to take my country you should be learning about the people they came to fight.

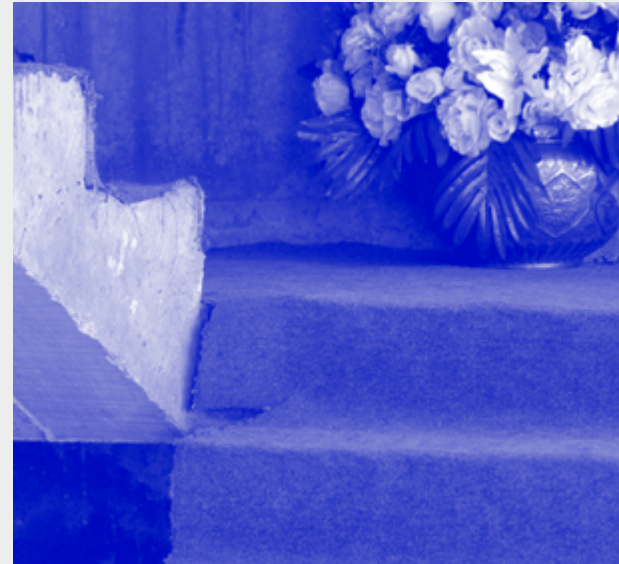
Holger: That's the funny part. We didn't learn much about colonialism at all in high school.

Theophilus: Exactly. That's it. If our education system was changed and be more about us people would grow up and realize there's something to own. Because when you learn about Sir Frederick Gordon Guggisberg, you learn about the Dutch, the Germans, the Spanish, by the time you finish high school in Ghana you definitely know Europe is not one country. Some people even do not feel good being African. There's so much skin bleaching, people wearing so many weaves, people are trying so hard to look like white people. Which in itself is a whole different story. If you turn on the TV in Ghana, half of the time you are watching films that are not made here. The films that are

made here are so difficult to make because we are not ready to fund them. Meanwhile TV stations show cheap telenovelas from Mexico. It's Mexican lifestyle and if you are a kid growing up and the whole time you're seeing a bunch of light skinned people with straight hair within ten years you think that's what it takes to be pretty, you want to look like that. I don't blame the filmmakers, those guys are making their films. But it's on us to educate and consciously try to teach people to identify with themselves and to be proud of who they are and where they are from. When I'm having a conversation with my friends, certain names will pop up of some European leaders and at one point I'm wondering why do you know so many of these people? If I mention some old Chanaian leaders let's see if anybody can say something about them. Education systems and a lot the styles and methods will have to change. It's not just a photography problem.

Holger: Would you say the scene of photographers and artists here in Ghana grew a lot in the recent years?

Theophilus: Absolutely, especially in the past 5-6 years. Let me take your phone, go on Instagram, hashtag Ghana. Mobile phones and their cameras have made a lot possible. People are doing amazing stuff with



their mobile phones nowadays and a lot more people have access to cameras. There was a time you had to have some good money to get a camera. Even the smallest digital camera cost a lot. Everyone has a camera now. It's crazy to see the amount of people in Accra doing photography, all kinds of photography: fashion, architecture, creative stuff, storytelling, documentary, filmmaking. (The website) Accra Dot Art has also been an amazing platform for artists, I've met a lot of guys through their website. At the last Chale Wote Festival, there were so many photographers, 5 in 10 people were holding a DSLR. So the scene has really grown. But it's also come with its own problems. There's a bunch of guys who don't

really know what they are doing, they tell all kinds of whacky stories. Sometimes you cringe, not just because of the pictures but also the captions they come with. Sometimes they're not sincere or not accurate.

But coming back to how I got into photography through basketball and my idea of telling the African story changing or improving, I should say, I can show you a range of things about Africa just using basketball. I can show really nice basketball courts in Accra, where you have to pay to play, I can go to another part of town and show a really run down basketball court. I also think there's several ways, that the story can be told apart from the regular idea of documentary photography. The

good stories are balanced and there are so many of them. But sometimes there are photographers that don't care about what telling the story means. They see something they think is nice to photograph and photograph it. They have good equipment or whatever but they don't have content, they don't have something to show or say.

Holger: Me, I never considered myself much of a storyteller. I feel like photography can tackle an issue with relatively few pictures that don't respect the dramatic rules of a movie for instance. But I guess you could also say that comes down to 'telling a story', it could imply that as well.

Theophilus: I think for us in Ghana or Africa who happen to be photographers it's the situation that requires us to be like that. You know how they say you're the product of your environment? For a very long time we have seen what's been shown to the world. There's a lot of talk, people have written certain things, documentaries and we don't like it. I belong to the biggest blogging association in Ghana, and we said we need to push more Ghanaian content online so that when someone googles for Ghana good stuff will come up. So that not just the old stereotypes are popping up. For us it's become more of a need rather than just wanting to tell a story. I

need to tell a story because I need to wipe away the wrong idea that people have of Africa, it's imperative. Of course if I'm born in Europe and I'm a photographer. The things that I want to show the world will be absolutely different. It depends on what I'm around a lot.

Frances Ademola gründete 1969 die Loom Gallery in Accra, die erste private Kunstgalerie des Ghanas, und betreibt sie seither.

Frances: So you would like to know about the history of this place?

Holger: Yes. Seeing the collective idea about Africa in Europe is often-times very limited in what people can imagine – I'm sure you have your views on that...

Frances: Well, I was a student in the UK after the war for eight years so I know how ignorant people can be about Africa. We were a British colony, so we knew all about the kings of England when nobody even knew where the Gold Coast was.

I was married to a Nigerian and lived in Nigeria for a while and art in Nigeria was very vibrant, in fact everything was a little larger than life and all the time I could not really talk about art in Ghana because my exposure had only been from when I had worked on the radio and interviewed a couple of artists. So when I returned to Ghana from Nigeria, I thought why don't I start a gallery, this is in 1969. Ghana had been independent for over 10 years at that point, Ghana was independent before Nigeria. So I started a little gallery to encourage artists to bring in their work and for me to see what was going on. And this turned out to be the first privately owned gallery in Ghana. We started I think with five artists. And after two months we had so many artists coming in and everybody

wanted to have their paintings sold. And over the years, one thing became quite clear, that most of our customers have come from Europe or America, outside Ghana anyway. Ghanaians don't collect art in the way that Nigerians do.

Holger: Ghana was still a relatively young country when you started, I would like to know what the political climate was like, what was society like?

Frances: Well, I went to Achimota School in Accra (reknown high school where different African leaders went) before I went to school in the UK and we had an art class there where we did pottery and textiles and painting, etc but somehow art didn't become a part of our lives. And one thing that Independence did was awaken a spirit of creativity. I don't know if you've seen the symbols of Ghana, there's the Sankofa bird. This bird is supposed to symbolize our going back and fetching our culture that was lost under the British reign. We had become very Anglicised, cucumber

sandwiches and tea at four and that sort of thing. Nigeria has no Sankofa because they never lost their past to the degree that we had in Ghana. So Nigerians didn't have a big transition back to fetch their culture because they never really lost it. But we did or maybe we didn't lose it but we abandoned it so there was the need for Sankofa.

And one result was that a lot of Ghanaian paintings at first had been of cultural things, fishermen, market women, chiefs, that sort of thing. Nowadays people are becoming more adventurous, more abstract.

Holger: I feel there is more of an interest internationally for African artists now, African artists become more known outside their home countries, taking part in big international exhibitions, the Venice Biennale for instance...

Frances: There are many reasons for that. In the early days, it was mostly the tourists that wanted something African, a painting of a mother with a child on her back, someone frying plantain, a chief sitting in state. I could see that the artists themselves had fallen into sort of a routine of producing what these tourists demanded. But somehow 10 or 15 years ago new spirits came in and they started making their own moves. And this also created an interest in the buyer. Everybody got

tired of 'mother with a baby on the back' at some point. And then the artists themselves made contacts through clients they had here with different galleries all over the world.

## we're here not just to sell paintings as though we're selling oranges

In fact one of them is in Denmark right now, giving a one man show. And for instance, one of my artists who has been a painter for a very long time, told me about his son, Serge Attukwei Clottey who is globetrotting the world with his art, which is good! This is what you're here for, we're here not just to sell paintings as though we're selling oranges but let something come out of it. I think the image of an artist in Europe is still a bit "solitary man starving in an attic".

A lot of the artists here are now doing art full time. A lot of them were teachers or working in an office and doing art in their spare time but many of them are now doing art full time which means it's beginning to pay off. People now are taking Ghanaian art or African art more seriously. This means they spend time to look. In every way that's been to our benefit.

Aaron Yeboah Jr. ist ein Grafik Designer aus Ghana. Er ist Gründer und Verleger des Magazins African Lens, das sich jungen fotografischen Positionen auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent und der Diaspora widmet.

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www.africanlens.co

Holger: Seeing you specifically work with artists from all over Africa, how would you describe the identity of young African creatives nowadays? Is there such a thing as 'African photography'?

Aaron: I'll say that we don't necessarily have on specific identity, that's one of main reasons why I started African Lens because there are different talented people, different creatives out there, telling different stories. The African story is not just one story. It's multiple stories, some that are not even uncovered yet, some that are not even told right. There are several sections and several factors and several aspects of Africa that are not told the right way or given the right attention that is needed. So from what I've seen so far, most young African photographers are telling their stories in any possible way they can. Whether it's social commentary photography, expressing themselves through creative photography, whether it's portrait photography, to showcase their identity and their lifestyle, whether it's cultural, any aspect really. They're basically telling their stories and their stories can be anything.

Holger: In an interview for the "Africa Issue" of Under the influence magazine in 2012, curator Okwui Enwezor said he was "fascinated by the recent rise of Africa and afrophilia in European magazines, (such as L'Uomo Vogue, etc...)" I also have the impression that especially in the last 4 years there has been a bigger interest from Europe and the US in African art and popular culture in general. Would you agree? And if yes, why do you think that is and what is your opinion on it?

Aaron: I'm sure there is interest but with each interest, there are some genuine ones and some that are just for hype. So whoever we collaborate with or whoever we associate with, we need to make sure our identity and our culture is represented right. As with anything, you have the good and the bad aspects. The good aspect is yes, the attention is on Africa now, there are platforms that are showcasing some aspect of our stories and of our culture. The bad part is some are just doing it for their selfish reasons. Even though there are some bad aspects, I believe the good will overcome the bad. As long as the attention is on it. Now, people like myself and other young people have the inspiration and will have the power to let people know to focus on us, focus on what really matters. I think eventually it will lead to something good that will benefit Africans in general. Whether



it's business wise, entertainment wise, cultural wise, education wise, as long as the spotlight is on us, as long as it is on the right things, it will lead to something good.

Holger: When western countries talk about Africa, there's still often the notion of one big place, marked by extremes, without paying much attention to detail and the differences within the continent (I'm thinking of 'the danger of the single story' as described by Chimamanda Adichie). Some photographers in Ghana told me, that at some point they found themselves actively working against the negative stereotypes of Africa, they sort of felt a need to exclusively portray positive aspects whereas now they rather find it important to create a balanced story.

What is your view on that? Do you find yourself working to break certain negative stereotypes? Do you think that is at all possible?

Aaron: That's the main goal of African Lens, to basically showcase the truth. The truth can be good, the truth can be bad, the truth can hurt sometimes. But the western media only focuses on the negative when it comes to what's going on in Africa. That brainwashes as far as their thoughts and their opinions on Africans go, like we are not civilized, all we have is war, famine, instability of political structures but it's not just that. There are plenty other aspects

of Africa, good things going on, creatives doing things, people doing great things, those need attention, too. If the spotlight is given to them, it will lead to a community of openness as in people will come in and trust us, invest in us, collaborate with us and work with us. To some extent it's frustrating because the negativity puts us in a light as not even humans but we are humans and within us, we have a strong culture, we have beautiful people, we have diverse languages, diverse cultures that I think need to be known.

We as humans need to learn a lot from each other but it's bad when only one side has been told. So as long as the truth has been told, it will make us all humans and it will open a lot of opportunities for a lot of people and as far as Africa, yes, my attention is not focusing on wild-life, famine, war and all that but the good aspects that's going on, people doing their everyday lives.

## if you won't tell the right story, we will tell our own stories

There's not much known about everyday Africans. There might be the next Steve Jobs in Africa, you don't know. The attention is not on it. And even as Africans in the diaspora go. I was in the US for 10 years and there are several African com-

munities over there that are doing great things but nothing is known about them. Us as young creatives using social media, using photography as a tool to tell our story and to express ourselves is a perfect way to let the world know "hey, this is us, this is our story. If you won't tell the right story, we will tell our own stories."

Holger: I got the impression that social media, be it Instagram, Tumblr or the like, play a bigger role now when it comes to art, especially photography from Africa. Do you think one could say these platforms perhaps do a better job at giving a fresh, less stereotypical look at Africa today than more traditional media outlets? (Take for example the #everydayafrica movement.) Why is that exactly?

Aaron: Definitely. African Lens would not have been possible without the internet, without social media, Tumblr, Facebook, all that. It's their tool, it's their power, the medium that they use to showcase the world what they're doing. Many publications are not featuring or helping/showcasing African photography, they're not opening their

doors for us to showcase our work so we have to create our own. And the cheapest and easiest and the most effective way for young African photographers is through the internet. So it's really helping us to showcase our work and once it's online, everyone all over the world can see it, it's not just limited to Africans, it's not just limited to Americans or Europeans. I've had people from all over the world purchase African Lens, from Europe, from Asia, from Canada and the US and it's fascinating that such a publication has an impact on people like that. It shows you the power of photography, the power of the internet, the power of communication.

Holger: How do you see the future of photography from and about Africa? Being in Ghana now, how would you describe the scene of photography there?

Aaron: The future is bright, it's promising. One thing that I personally want to do with African Lens is to not just be a publication but also organize seminars for photographers, organize exhibitions, travel all over Africa, do original editorial content. Motivate people, especially the youth, to use photography, creativity as something to express themselves and even build a career out of it. That's my focus, to move beyond just a publication but also be much more hands on on

the African continent. And hopefully African Lens will inspire other Africans to create their own publications in one way or the other. I'll be very excited to see other Africans in different countries creatively telling their own stories. And that's what they're doing all over the internet but I hope it won't just be the internet, it will be more projects that will help, inspire and also educate Africans. That's the premise, I'm not publishing the magazine just to show beautiful pictures or whatever but let it touch people, let it be impactful.



Matian van Soest ist Ethnologe und promoviert an der Universität zu Köln zum Thema Malaria in Zentral-Uganda.

Holger: Du bist zu einer ähnlichen Zeit nach Uganda gegangen wie ich nach Ghana. Wir haben oft versucht uns darüber auszutauschen, was unsere Vorstellungen und wie sie mit der Realität vereinbar waren, was für Erfahrungen wir gemacht haben. Ich kann mich noch gut erinnern, wie du gesagt hast, dass du es generell total kritisch siehst, als weißer Europäer in sogenannte "Dritte Welt" Länder zu fahren, gerade in Afrika. Es gibt ja durchaus Menschen, die explizit sagen, sie reisen viel lieber in ländliche Gebiete in Afrika und die USA reizen sie zum Beispiel gar nicht ...

Matian: Ich finde, das hat sehr viele Schichten. Ich mache mir schon seit längerem Gedanken dazu, dass ich es problematisch finde, als weißer Europäer in sogenannte Entwicklungsländer zu reisen oder Länder, die bedeutend ärmer sind als das eigene. Ich bin noch nicht so ganz im Reinen mit mir, aber erst einmal kommt mir der Gedanke, dass Mobilität ein Privileg ist. Wenn man das prozentual über die Weltbevölkerung sieht, ist der kleinste Teil der Weltbevölkerung mobil. Einmal finanziell: du musst es dir leisten können, reisen kostet eine Menge Geld. Dann auch rechtlich, politisch: die meisten Leute kriegen kein Visum um zu reisen. Die Selbstverständlichkeit mit der man im Westen reist, genießt nur ein ganz kleiner Teil der Weltbevölkerung. Dann gibt es so kluge Sprüche wie

"Reisen bildet", "man muss die Welt gesehen haben, das Leben ist zu kurz um nur in Europa zu bleiben", "die Weltanschauung der Leute, die die Welt noch nicht angeschaut haben, ist gefährlich" oder so. Auf Facebook sieht man ständig solche Sprüche. Sicherlich ändert sich dein Weltbild enorm wenn du reist, dein Horizont erweitert sich, du setzt dich mit Sachen auseinander und lernst natürlich davon aber es ist völlig arrogant zu behaupten, Leute die nicht reisen seien dumm. Die meisten Leute können das nicht, das steht gar nicht zur Debatte. Natürlich will ich die Welt sehen und finde es spannend, gerade als Ethnologe. Ich finde es superinteressant, andere Kulturen kennenzulernen und mich damit auseinander zu setzen. Gleichzeitig bleibt das Paradox, dass ich denke "eigentlich geht das gar nicht, du kannst nicht einfach zu deiner eigenen Belustigung oder zur Weiterbildung deines eigenen Intellekts irgendwohin reisen und Sachen anschauen, das ist gegenüber der lokalen Bevölkerung ein völlig ungleiches Machtverhältnis". Du setzt dich mit Leuten auseinander, die umgekehrt nicht das gleiche machen können. Du redest mit Leuten und lässt dich von ihnen belehren, wie es bei ihnen läuft aber umgekehrt ginge das gar nicht, die könnten nicht zu dir kommen. Und das ist eigentlich schon ziemlich absurd.

Holger: Aber wäre jetzt die Alternative, man macht das gar nicht mehr?

Matian: Wenn man konsequent wäre, müsste man sagen, man reist nicht in Länder in denen die Bevölkerung nicht auch nach Deutschland reisen könnte. Aber was heißt das dann? Wie gesagt, ich bin da nicht ganz im Reinen mit mir. Für mich wäre es vielleicht eine Lösung, anstatt von meinem Privileg zu Reisen abzusehen, mein Privileg zu nutzen, um an den Misständen etwas zu ändern.

Holger: Dazu würde auch gehören, dass du das erst einmal grundsätzlich mitbekommst. Ich denke die Leute, deren Erfahrung über einen Ort durch eine mediale Darstellung, also Bilder, Fernsehen, Erzählungen stattgefunden hat, haben nicht annähernd so ein Empfinden dafür.

Matian: Aber ich bin nicht der Meinung, dass man an den Ort fahren muss, um sich diese Fragen zu stellen. Sicher leuchtet das eher ein oder die Fragen drängen sich derart auf, dass du ihnen nicht aus dem Weg gehen kannst. Aber ich glaube man sollte sich generell kritischer mit solchen Fragen auseinandersetzen, bevor man überhaupt verreist. Wer kann denn überhaupt reisen? Was kostet das? Was ist das Geld, das du für deine Reise bezahlst, in deinem Zielland

eigentlich wert? Es gibt dieses Argument, was mich so stört, dass Reisen eine Industrie sei und wenn man nicht reisen würde, viele Leute kein Einkommen hätten. Ich finde das völlig absurd – eine Reise als Entschuldigung, weil Leute dadurch Arbeit haben. Wenn es darum geht, dass du dort Geld bringst, brauchst du dafür nicht zu reisen!

Holger: Ich finde dann interessant: Wie sehen sich die westlichen Reisenden? Ich schließe jetzt TouristInnen, Volunteers, ArbeiterInnen oder KünstlerInnen mit ein. Natürlich gibt es Leute, die mit viel Vorbildung reisen und mit einer bestimmten Fragestellung im Kopf arbeiten. Viele haben aber oft sehr einseitige Vorstellungen. Wie verhält man sich als weißer Mensch in einem afrikanischen Land? Was fällt dir auf, was schockiert dich? Das sind scheinbar immer wieder ähnliche Erfahrungen. Weiße fühlen sich oft missverstanden, falsch behandelt. Die Perspektive ändert sich. Auch oder gerade wenn man schon mit einer ganz kritischen Haltung dahin geht. Was waren deine ersten Eindrücke als du zum ersten Mal in Uganda warst?

**du bist der bunte Hund, du fällst auf, dagegen kannst du nichts tun**

Matian: Ein Schlüsselerlebnis ist sicherlich das Thema Hautfarbe. Das beschäftigt mich teilweise immer noch, das Weißsein. Du bist der bunte Hund, du fällst auf, dagegen kannst du nichts tun.

Holger: Dann merkst du zum ersten Mal, was das eigentlich bedeutet.

Matian: Aber auch mit umgekehrten Vorzeichen. Du sitzt am längeren Hebel, du bist die Person, die Geld hat, dahin reisen kann. Wenn ein Ugander hier ist, sind die Vorzeichen oft umgedreht, dann gilt der als nicht reich, ist möglicherweise illegal und hat viel weniger Möglichkeiten. Ich bin dort und kann alles. Aber es geht mir mehr darum, dass du auffällst. Du gehst nicht unter in der Menge und hast immer eine Ausnahmestellung.

Als ich einen Assistenten für meine Forschungsarbeit gesucht habe, habe ich die Bewerber gebeten, einen Treffpunkt vorzuschlagen. In drei von vier Fällen haben die mich an die nobelsten Orte geführt, 5 Sterne Hotels mit Parkanlage oder ein Café wo es für ein Schweinegeld europäisches Essen gibt. Ich versuche, diese Orte wie die Pest zu meiden und ihr wollt euch da mit mir treffen? Nicht, dass sie dort oft hingehen würden, sondern eher nach dem Motto, das ist ein Weißer, mit dem muss ich irgendwo hingehen, wo der sich wohlfühlt, wo der

hingehört. Ich kann mich dagegen sträuben, wie ich will, aber ich werde so gesehen. Ich bin weiß und habe Geld.

Das war das eine. Das zweite hat, denke ich, mit dem Afrikabild zu tun, das ich hatte, bevor ich überhaupt nach Afrika gefahren bin. Ich bin immer davon ausgegangen, Leute würden leiden, vor allem auf dem Land. Eine völlig arrogante Vorstellung. Natürlich ist das auch ein normales Leben dort und Leute leiden nicht in dem Sinne. Die

**ich bin weiß und habe Geld**

Menschen sind sich schon durchaus bewusst, dass ich in Deutschland mehr Geld habe, dass ich im Verhältnis zu vielen komfortabler lebe und natürlich wollen die das auch aber es ist nicht so, dass dort Leute sitzen, leiden und darauf warten, dass ihnen geholfen wird. Es gibt diese Vorstellung: Afrika, das bedeutet traditionelle Kulturen und Lebensformen. Diese Vorstellung ist auch inhärent in diesem Entwicklungsgedanken, in den Begriffen Entwicklungsland, entwickelte Länder und Schwellenländer. Das ist die Vorstellung, dass es eine Entwicklungsrouten gibt, die von agrarischen Gesellschaften zu industrialisierten Gesellschaften führt, über postindustrielle Gesellschaften

ten hin zur Moderne und dass jede Gesellschaft eigentlich ähnliche Entwicklungsstufen durchläuft. Demographisch heißt das, dass Leute weniger Kinder kriegen, länger leben, anstatt zu wachsen, wird die Bevölkerung kleiner. Das sollen Kriterien sein, an denen du festmachen kannst wie entwickelt ein Land ist. Was eigentlich völlig absurd ist. Das beinhaltet den Gedanken, ein Land sei "besser", je entwickelter es ist. Natürlich ist es erstrebenswert, dass eine Gesellschaft z.B. eine tolle Infrastruktur hat. Ich möchte nicht sagen, dass was man im Westen unter "entwickelt" versteht, nicht wünschenswert wäre aber der Gedanke, dass jedes Land sich zu diesem und jenem Punkt entwickeln muss und erst dann als modern gesehen werden kann, ist sehr ethnozentrisch. Afrikanische Gesellschaften leben genauso in der Moderne wie europäische, nur manifestiert sich die Moderne anders.

Holger: In Europa gibt es ja auch noch dieses Klischee von einem "Safari-Afrika". In der Rossmann-Filiale bei uns um die Ecke lag in der Fotoabteilung ein Buch mit dem Titel "Unsere Afrikareise" zur Ansicht aus. Das ging direkt los mit: "Wir sind nach Namibia und Botswana gefahren, wo wir die Big Five (Bezeichnung für Elefant, Nashorn, Büffel, Löwe und Leopard; früher in der Großwildjagd, heute im Safari-Tourismus gebräuchlich)

gesehen und endlich unser wahres Afrika erlebt haben ..."

Matian: Das ist ja auch auf diversen Ebenen absurd. Ich habe selbst einmal eine Safari mitgemacht. Dieses African Wildlife ist ohne Frage wunderschön und beeindruckend aber dieses Afrikabild, das in Europa besteht, ist ein Afrika ohne Menschen. Es geht nur um Tiere und wilde Natur. Auch der Gedanke, in Afrika gebe es noch Wildnis während "wir" in Europa unsere Wildnis kaputt gemacht hätten und Natur nicht mehr natürlich sei, ist total pervers. Wobei diese Wildnis in Afrika auch völlig künstlich ist, sie besteht nur in Nationalparks. Diese Big Five leben nur, wenn du sie beschützt, sonst wäre das Gebiet doch schon längst Ackerland. "Afrika, der wilde Kontinent, wo die Natur noch Natur ist und der Mensch so naturverbunden" oder dass der Mensch überhaupt nicht dabei ist, das Afrikabild sind Tiere, nicht Menschen. Das geht auch schon in die Richtung "die Afrikaner, die edlen Wilden". Das steckt so ein bisschen in diesem Afrikabild noch drin.

Ich habe also eine Safari gemacht, zu 95 % sind das weiße Teilnehmer, die du in den Nationalparks triffst weil sich die meisten Ugander das sich schlicht nicht leisten können. Dann sieht man da tolles Wildlife und es fallen Kommentare wie

"WOW, that's Africa" und man sieht einen Akazienbaum, Sonnenuntergang, Giraffe davor. Was auch schön ist, aber wenn du einen

## was wir Afrika nennen, ist ein menschenleeres wildes Afrika, was kein Afrikaner so kennt

Ugander fragen würdest, was Afrika ist, würde der sicher nicht so ein Bild zeichnen. Keiner von den Leuten, mit denen ich mich während meiner Forschung befasst hab, hat jemals eine Giraffe oder ein Nashorn gesehen. Die haben vielleicht in der Schule gelernt, dass es die Big Five gibt und dass Uganda stolz darauf sein kann, so ein tolles Wildlife zu haben, weil sich dort alles findet, was es an afrikanischen großen Tieren so gibt inklusive Gorillas. Uganda wurde von einem britischen Forscher (Henry Morton Stanley) mal the Pearl of Africa genannt. Kinder lernen in der Schule, warum das so ein tolles Land ist, warum es Pearl of Africa genannt wird und haben das noch nie gesehen, es sind völlig weiße Ideen. Was wir Afrika nennen, ist ein menschenleeres wildes Afrika, was kein Afrikaner so kennt. Weiße Touristen leisten sich ein Afrika, was sich viele Afrikaner nicht leisten können oder würden.

Die leisten sich ein Afrika, das sie sehen wollen. Aber das machen Touristen vielleicht sowieso immer.

Holger: In seinem Artikel in dem Buch "Afrika – Mythos und Zukunft" schreibt Hermann Schulz, man sage "in einschlägigen Kreisen, dass jemand, der auch nur zwei Jahre in Afrika war, als Rassist zurückkommt. Selbst Linke oder eingefleischte Dritte-Welt-Fanatiker haben spätestens nach dem dritten Glas unglaubliche Geschichten über ihre Afrikaerfahrungen (und die Unfähigkeit der Afrikaner) parat."

Matian: Wenn man sagt, nach zwei Jahren seien alle Rassisten, dann liegt das meiner Meinung nach daran, dass viele nicht in der Lage sind, Dinge zu relativieren. Kennst du die Konzepte Ethnozentrismus und Kulturrelativismus? Das sind zwei zentrale Konzepte der Ethnologie.

Ethnozentrismus – du nimmst dein eigenes kulturelles Paradigma als Maßstab, das du auf andere überträgst. Du gehst irgendwo anders hin und misst Sachen an dem Maßstab, den du selber gewöhnt bist. Du versuchst als Ethnologe eigentlich, den Ethnozentrismus zu überwinden und kulturrelativistisch zu denken. Kulturrelativismus bedeutet, kulturelle Handlungen und Ereignisse in einen kulturellen Kontext zu platzieren und damit zu relativieren.

Zum Beispiel Polygamie, Männer in Uganda können mehrere Frauen heiraten. Wenn du als Deutscher ethnozentrisch denkst, sagst du “wie kann das sein, völlig daneben, ihr seid Christen, da ist doch verankert, dass der Mann nur eine Frau haben soll?“ Kulturrelativistisch würdest du dann versuchen, das im kulturellen Kontext Ugandas zu erklären – wo kommt Polygamie eigentlich her, wie sind die Geschlechterrollen konstruiert? Warum heiratet man, was heißt Heirat? Man kann das Konzept auf jedes kulturelle Phänomen anwenden. Ein beliebtes Beispiel für Ethnozentrismus und Kulturrelativismus ist z.B. die Verschleierung der Frau im Islam. Manche Europäer sagen dann “das ist doch frauenfeindlich, die Frau muss sich vor dem Mann verstecken, was da überhaupt für Geschlechterrollen

## was bringt es denn, das zu relativieren?

dahinterstecken“. Die kulturrelativistische Analyse würde hingegen die Verschleierung der Frau aus einem kulturellen Kontext erklären. Es gibt Stimmen, die sagen du kannst es auch genau umgedreht sehen. Wie sich Frauen in westlichen Kulturen anziehen “müssen“ oder anziehen, ist genauso ein abartiges Frauenbild.

Was sagt der Bikini über ein Frauenbild aus? “90-60-90 Maße sind der Schleier des Westens“. Das ist auch ein Zwang. Muslimische Frauen argumentieren möglicherweise, der Schleier wird aus eigenen Stücken getragen, durch den Schleier sind sie überhaupt Frau und aktiver Teil einer Gesellschaft. Aber das ganze hat auch Grenzen. Zum Beispiel die Rechte von Homosexuellen in Sub-Sahara-Afrika, was bringt es denn, das zu relativieren? Das will ich gar nicht relativieren. Da gibt es nichts gut zu reden.

Natürlich ist es anmaßend zu behaupten, die eigene Sicht wäre die richtige und vor nicht allzu langer Zeit wurden Homosexuelle in Europa nicht viel anders behandelt. Aber dennoch ist es sinnvoll, da eine Meinung zu haben und diese Meinung auch zu debattieren oder zu sagen: das finde ich schlecht. Das halte ich für konstruktiver. Dann ist es durchaus problematisch, sich hinter einer weißen Schuld zu verstecken: “wer bin ich denn, etwas zu sagen, was haben wir nicht alles falsch gemacht?“ Es ist außer Frage, dass eine ganze Menge falsch gelaufen ist und dass in der Welt nach wie vor eine Menge falsch läuft. Es geht dem Westen so gut wie es ihm geht, weil er nach wie vor den globalen Süden ausbeutet. Ein deutscher Professor, ein Agrarwissenschaftler, der unter anderem auch in Uganda arbeitet, hat mich

mal gefragt, “du bist doch Ethnologe, du lernst doch Luganda. Was heißt denn Leistungselite auf Luganda? Oder gibt es eigentlich ein Wort für Effizienz auf Luganda?“ Das fand ich erstmal ganz komisch, aber da steckt eine Menge dahinter.



Als ich in einem Vortrag von Pauline Peters, einer emeritierten Harvard Professorin, saß, gab es eine Frage zur Grünen Revolution. In den 60er/70er Jahren ist in Asien die Bevölkerung rapide gewachsen und es gab Ernährungsprobleme. Die Grüne Revolution bedeutete, dass die Landwirtschaft durch bessere Dünger, effektivere Anbaumethoden usw. enorm viel effizienter wurde und Asien in kürzester Zeit sogar einen Überschuss erzielen konnte. Die Grüne Revolution hat praktisch überall auf der Welt stattgefunden, nur in Subsahara-Afrika nicht. Und es gibt ein Ernährungsproblem in

Afrika, da dort die Bevölkerung am schnellsten wächst. Und Land wird nicht größer, im Gegenteil: Es gibt viele ausländische Investoren, die in Afrika Land aufkaufen, da Afrika als das “Last Agricultural Frontier“ gilt. Da stellt sich die Frage, warum es diese Grüne Revolution in Afrika nie gab. Und diese Professorin sagte “let’s face it, Africa is an absurd continent“. Das ist der einzige Kontinent auf der Welt in dem Gesellschaften nie stratifiziert waren. Überwiegend waren das egalitäre Gesellschaften, Klasse ist völlig fremd in afrikanischen Kulturen gewesen. Es gab vielleicht Chiefs oder eine Art von König aber es gab keine Klassen. In Indien hattest du beispielsweise Kasten oder eine gebildete Elite, in Europa gab es Adel. Das einzige, was in Afrika irgendwo stratifizierend wäre, ist Alter. Außer in Äthiopien oder dem Maghreb gab es nirgendwo Staatsstrukturen wie wir sie aus Europa kennen. Das ist alles durch den Westen in der Zeit des Kolonialismus übergestülpt worden.

Was auch völlig absurd ist – Alle Miseren der Welt bündeln sich in Subsahara-Afrika, Aids, Malaria, Armut, das sind vor allem Afrika-probleme. Und Afrika ist auch der einzige Kontinent, der wirklich systematisch komplett von außen kolonialisiert und organisiert wurde. Diese modernen Nationalstaaten sind Konzepte, die von außen

kamen. Klassenbildung ist etwas neues. Nationalität gehört da dazu aber auch die Regierungsstrukturen. Die Machtstrukturen sind alle keine natürlichen, sondern Konstrukte von außen. Die Professorin Peters versuchte damit zu erklären, dass vieles was in Afrika schief läuft, ein Produkt von diesem Aufstülpen ist. Ich war erst schockiert. Wie kannst du denn sagen, Afrika ist ein absurder Kontinent?! Das ist auf den ersten Blick doch eine völlig arrogante westliche Haltung. Aber ich denke schon, dass es einem nicht weiterhilft, zu denken, "huhu, das darf man nicht sagen". Wenn du es nicht ansprichst, lässt sich vieles nicht erklären.

Holger: Jetzt mache ich meine Abschlussarbeit zur Rolle des weißen Fotografen in einem afrikanischen Land anhand von mir selbst. Ich fotografiere in Ghana – worauf lenke ich meinen Blick, weswegen tue ich das, wie sehe ich mich dabei selbst, wie werde ich gesehen? Einerseits sind das recht universelle Fragen aber gleichzeitig ist es doch extrem egoistisch. Vielleicht ist das auch ein weißes Phänomen. Man ist seit Jahrhunderten in einer privilegierten Position und jetzt stellt man auch noch seine kritische Selbstreflexion in den Mittelpunkt und zeigt allen, wie sehr man sich der eigenen Privilegien bewusst ist. Wenn ich in Ghana versucht habe, jemandem zu erklären, weswegen ich dieses

Projekt machen will, waren die Reaktionen dazu mitunter Gleichgültigkeit oder Stirnrunzeln. Das ist eben auch ein Problem weißer EuropäerInnen. Ich mache eine Arbeit, die ist einfach mein Problem, da müssen GhanaerInnen jetzt nicht unbedingt sagen, "Klasse! Find ich gut!" nur weil sich ein privilegierter Europäer Gedanken zu seinen Privilegien macht. Aber du hast bei deiner Forschung ja einen ganz anderen Auftrag.

Matian: Aber das kannst du schon übertragen, Wissenschaft ist als solches auch ein ziemlich westliches Ding. Dieses Begehren, wissen zu wollen, durchdringen zu wollen, ist ja schon ein westliches Konstrukt. Also Wissenschaft im Sinne von die Welt erklären zu wollen, ergründen zu können, was Wirklichkeit ist. Das Bedürfnis, die Wirklichkeit darzustellen und zu erkennen. In der westlichen Welt gilt Wissenschaft oft als ist die einzige valide Darstellung der Wirklichkeit. Alles andere wird als metaphysisch, spirituell, etc. bezeichnet, das zählt nicht. Wissenschaft ist durchaus westlich. Da gehört die Ethnologie auch dazu, da kommt die Ethnologie auch her. Anfangs waren das die Leute, die Kulturen vermessen haben, Schädelvermessungen durchgeführt haben. Später ging das darin über, Kulturen erklären zu können – wie funktioniert eine Kultur? Dann gab es Strukturalismus, in dem man

versucht hat, universelle Strukturen von Kultur zu extrahieren und dann gibt es den postmodern turn, bei dem du kritisch hinterfragst, was du eigentlich machst und versuchst, zu dekonstruieren. Was mache ich als Wissenschaftler, mit welchem Interesse gehe ich dahin? Aus welcher Position? Ein weißer Europäer, der nach Afrika geht und irgendwas erforschen möchte – für welchen Nutzen? Wer ist daran interessiert? Was für ein Weltbild wird damit eigentlich kreiert? Kann ich denn objektiv irgendetwas darstellen? Heute gibt es heute viele Ethnologen, die sagen, Objektivität besteht gar nicht. Es ist alles von der Perspektive abhängig und du kannst nur deine eigene Perspektive darstellen. Und dann wird alles ziemlich relativ.

Ist Kunst nicht ganz ähnlich wie Wissenschaft ein westliches Konstrukt? Die Preise, die gezahlt werden, was als relevante Ästhetik angesehen wird, was momentan diskutiert wird – wer bestimmt denn da die Maßstäbe?

Holger: Der ehemalige Chef von Puma baut jetzt in Südafrika das größte Kunsthaus für zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst und es wurde kritisiert, dass es ein weißer Europäer macht und der Kurator ein weißer Südafrikaner sein soll und die afrikanische Kunst sozusagen durch einen weißen Filter läuft.

Matian: Die Autorin Chimamanda Adichie meint auch, Bücher oder Texte über Afrika müssen von Afrikanern geschrieben werden. Das Kreieren von afrikanischer Geschichte sollte von Afrikanern verfasst werden. Ich schreibe über Afrika, die ganze Ethnologie Afrikas schreibt über Afrika, das sind großenteils weiße Menschen. Klar denke ich, sind es erstmal Afrikaner, die da Initiative ergreifen oder den Finger erheben sollten. Wenn es auf der anderen Seite um Critical Whiteness geht, denke ich, ist es doch Sache und Aufgabe der Europäer, sich zu dekonstruieren, das sollte kein Afrikaner machen müssen.

Wenn aber Adichie sagt, Afrikaner sollten über Afrika schreiben und nicht Weiße, dann kannst du das auch umdrehen: Wir haben genug damit zu tun. Afrika ist durch den Kolonialismus auch eine weiße Geschichte. Das heutige Afrika ist ein Produkt von einem Encounter und damit auch deutlich eine weiße Geschichte. Dadurch, dass du Geschichte festhältst, schriftlich oder fotografisch, konstruierst du sie auch. Aber es ist ja nicht die einzig mögliche Konstruktion davon, es ist eine Interpretation von vielen.

Mutombo da Poet ist ein Spoken  
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[www.twitter.com/mutombodapoet](http://www.twitter.com/mutombodapoet)  
<http://mutombodapoet.com/>

Mutombo: Before I went to the United States for the first time, I was hearing about how people there thought Africa was some big jungle, we live with elephants and lions, we live on trees and all that. And I'm like 'Are you really sure of what you are saying? Is this thing that I'm reading true that people in Europe or the US are believing this?' But I went there for myself and was like 'Wow!'

When I tell people I'm from Ghana, they're like 'Oh you are from Africa', a lot of times they think Africa is one country. There was just this one white man in Starbucks who said 'Oh Ghana, West Africa!' I'm like 'wow! Finally I have someone who knows of Ghana'. Or people think I'm from Guyana, in South America. On two occasions I was asked, if there are tall buildings where I live. I'm like 'yeah, don't you use the internet?' And they answer 'yeah, but do you have a big house, what is your internet like?' And I'm thinking "Wow, so all these things I was reading before I came here were true!"

I was hearing a lot about racism in the US. What I was reading and hearing affected me in a way, because before I went I knew how gun crimes were common in the US. Every now and then a black kid has been shot, there's guns everywhere, people are killing and all that. I was

scared to go out. When I was going out, I'd rather have somebody come with me, because I was afraid someone could just pull a gun on me. So in the same vein, it's quite similar.

## they think Africa is one country

They're thinking Africa, we live in the jungle because of what they are shown on TV. Anytime we're in the news it's about famine, it's about some poor kid drooling all over. That plays on their mind. And here what I see on CNN is killings, that plays on my mind. So in a way I did understand. It's all about what we see and hear.

Holger: I must admit I'm guilty of that myself. I found it really hard to get a good idea of Ghana before I came here for the first time. You hear about very poor areas and some very rich ones or that a certain area is a chaotic place and dangerous but it remains such a blurred picture ... Which I think shows you that you can't just easily get to know a place just through images. How much of a skyline will be there? What are the roads like? I'd ask myself banalities like that.

Mutombo: It's always best if you are in the spot that you were thinking about. The things you watch or read are coming from someone, someone



producing his or her own angle. A while ago there was a very bad article about Ghana in the Guardian, talking solely about negative aspects that got a lot of people pissed here. It will be best if you are there to experience it for yourself obviously. TVs lie, the radio will tell you lies.

Holger: In one of the recent issues of Foam magazine I read about how in documentary photography or photojournalism nowadays it becomes harder and harder for the recipients to really tell what is what since there's more and more pictures being produced. Where does it come from? Is there an agenda to the picture? What is the intended message and why? Even if it is an Instagram post or tweet you might think it is authentic and honest but maybe it's actually staged, there's money being made. I find it interesting to think about that, what do people want to show, what do people want to see? Because that is shaping the way we experience things and the way content is produced.

Mutombo: Are you talking about photographers from here?

Holger: No, photographers in general. But that's why I wanted to get to know more photographers from here. I feel like there's many European photographers who travel to African countries, and

even though their work might be technically great, a lot of it reproduces old clichés without intending to. You rarely see something about an African middle class for instance. I'm interested in photography that shows regular stuff that's not necessarily so striking but it tells you a lot about the little things in between. And when I see photography that depicts African countries, a lot of times it focuses on conflicts which exist of course but this practice of repeating a certain image just confirms the bad connotations in peoples' heads. I would be interested in what photographers from here focus on. Are there common denominators? Do you feel there is sort of a need to defy a negative stereotype or do you not care about that?

Mutombo: I try to stay away from some things because already the western media is talking about the bad sides so much but I'd say in my work there's a mix.

Some months back, two friends and me we formed this group where we would only talk about the good things here. We felt photographers were not showing those sides. Every time somebody is posting a picture of a kid going to school, the caption would be 'his mother has no money for school fees'. There are so many good things here, why can't we focus on those? We photographers think it's cool when we talk about some-

one poor. It makes us look deep. But at the same time talking about someone who just won an award, that's also cool but we don't focus on the good, we always focus on the negative. But it's changing. Quite recently I've seen photographers are steering their wheels off that path and I know that in the next year or two there will be a balance. I'm not saying we shouldn't talk about bad stuff, I believe we can use art to change, so from politics to health, to the economy, if there is something bad going on, we should talk about it, but that shouldn't be it. There should be a balance.

Holger: I think that's a good point what you said about photographers who think it's deep when they talk about poverty. Some might say a documentary photographer has the ability to help the weaker, by showing what their life is like, he takes a stand for them, he supports them in a way. I feel like that can be true but it can just as well have the opposite effect. It can be quite patronizing, maybe not the photography itself, but it can have the effect of people looking at it and feel pity and it kind of ends there. The repeating of a certain visual language becomes more harmful than helpful. For some people it becomes mundane and it doesn't change anything anymore.

Mutombo: And I really want to change. When I started spoken word

poetry seriously in 2005, there was no scene of poets in Accra, it was just me and another guy. Now there are so many spoken word artists and there are so many poetry events. I believe that if someone like me with the other likeminded people here, if we take this thing upon ourselves we can actively have an effect. You know what, this is what people think about us because of our photography, can't we affect this change through photography, through our photojournalism?

The power shortages for instance, how can we use photography to help fight it? That's what I'm really looking forward to doing. If you go on my site you won't see those lights-camera-action kind of photos. When I say that I mean, "bring a model, bring make up, put up flashy lighting". I'm not saying I'm never gonna do that, maybe one day. But most photographers here, that's what they do: Get a model, go and stand by the railway tracks and snap away. And that might get you money but you're not fighting anything with your art. There are so many photographers, if you check out their sites, it's photos of nothing. And I get sad. Okay fine, if you're doing your work, do your work. But let's try to help Ghana or our space with the little that we can, with our photography. Let's try to use it to help change something.

That's what I want to focus on. But right now if you ask me if photographers are doing enough with their art to help effect a change or to help with a good cause? Nah, I don't see it.

Holger: But in general I would say, there are plenty of photographers here in Accra. I guess a lot are working commercially in advertising for instance but there are a lot of others as well, no?

Mutombo: Oh yeah, there are some good photographers who are telling stories with their work. One is Nana Kofi Acquah who is going from place to place, he's been around for a long time and he's very good. He is the one that inspired me to get a camera and start shooting. I've had no formal training, I went on Youtube and watched tutorials. There are so many young guys like Kobe Bigs who is a developer and photographer or Ofoli Kwei who is documenting the basketball scene in Ghana. I pray those guys get recognized, not in the sense of awards but simply in terms of more people seeing their work because they're bringing new perspectives.

Holger: I was thinking of taking part in one of these walking tours of Accra. I would like to know what it is they tell the tourists and what the tourists are interested in. Just recently I was in Kumasi at the ceremony of the Ashanti chief with a couple photographers from Accra. There were so many tourists, many Germans, too. And they just went crazy, it was like a photography fest. At some point the police put up barriers to keep the photographers out of the ceremony. Of course, someone from Germany who has never seen the Ashanti chief should go and check it out, it's open for the public but I got the impression they are so happy to see something they were hoping to see. Like "Ah, this is something really African that I wanted to see and finally it's here!". So when these guys go through an urban space, they might not find what they were looking for.

Mutombo: For tourists in Accra, most of the time, the fishing district Jamestown is their spot. I don't really know why.

Holger: Well, I think Jamestown is considered picturesque, it has a romance about it. It's a creative space, it's also a fishing quarter, there's the light house, it shows a bit of colonial history. Some will consider that very intriguing. And for someone who might come from an affluent background in Germany,

they have never seen an area like that in real life. And they might think "Ah, people are poor but they are happy and they work as fishermen"...

## people still want to tell the story that Africa is poor

Mutombo: What I've been thinking is, most tourists would want to go to Jamestown rather than a residential area like East Legon because people still want to tell the story that Africa is poor, people live in simple wooden structures, all that ... But if you've been hearing this thing about Africa for a long time and now you are here, why show that same thing that has been edged in your brain for years, why still show it? A tourist will come from London or the US and won't have taken one picture of a tall building. But thousands of Jamestown, of some kids with no shirt going fishing. I wouldn't go to the states and fish out a place where someone just got shot with my camera ready in hand. But here I am tweeting during my US trip "oh, customer service was very good, people are nice, etc". Why can't we get the same? When tourists come here, why don't they show more of the good rather than the bad. There's plenty of bad stuff in the states, when you go to New

Orleans, plenty people are extremely poor. The most a tourist will do is go to the attraction sites here, take a picture of the waterfalls in Aburi or the national parks. They want to confirm their thoughts that have been there for a long time: "Oh I finally came to Africa and I went to this poor neighbourhood called Jamestown just by the sea where people are hungry, the kids don't go to school, they go to the sea to fish. No jobs, there's diseases..." Meanwhile you're in Accra and you see nice buildings but you won't show it. So it's up to us as photographers to tell our own stories.

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