



PRESS KIT

2020 TRANSITION IN THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT

1. PRESS RELEASE: CAROLA LENTZ NEW PRESIDENT OF THE GOETHE-INSTITUT (13 NOVEMBER 2020)
2. PRESS RELEASE: ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW PRESIDENT (30 SEPTEMBER 2019)
3. BIOGRAPHY OF KLAUS-DIETER LEHMANN
4. BIOGRAPHY OF CAROLA LENTZ
5. SPEECHES ON THE OCCASION OF THE TRANSITION OF OFFICE 13 NOVEMBER 2020
6. THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

Dr Jessica Kraatz Magri
Press officer and
Communications division head
Goethe-Institut Head Office
Tel.: +49 89 15921 249
Jessica.kraatzmagri@goethe.de

Viola Noll
Dep. press officer
Goethe-Institut
Capital Office
Tel.: +49 160 96 99 09 95
noll@goethe.de

**GOETHE
INSTITUT**

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.



PRESS RELEASE 13 NOVEMBER 2020

CAROLA LENTZ IS THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

Carola Lentz is the new president of the Goethe-Institut. After twelve years, the previous President Klaus-Dieter Lehmann handed over his office in a digital ceremony. Staff members bid Lehmann farewell with warm wishes from all over the world. The Minister of State in the Federal Foreign Office Michelle Müntefering and the Secretary-General of the Goethe-Institut Johannes Ebert recognised that his term of office pointed the way for foreign cultural and educational policy. Ebert sees Carola Lentz as the ideal successor who is taking office with “courage, drive and confidence.” The anthropologist was unanimously elected by the Board of Trustees of the Goethe-Institut in autumn 2019. In her inaugural address, she advocated a culture of openness that allows for complex identities and affiliations without disregarding power asymmetries: “We have to learn to listen carefully.”

In his farewell address, **Klaus-Dieter Lehmann** emphasised that the Goethe-Institut is shaped primarily by its staff members, saying, “These are wonderful people who are active in the world, who sense the issues and introduce them to the debates early on. But it is a community that does not sit in a bubble reflecting itself. On the contrary, it opens itself, exposes itself to other cultures, is open to discourse and develops alternatives instead of being fixated on conflicts.” At the beginning of his presidency, the Goethe-Institut was undergoing extensive restructuring and decentralisation. During his term of office, important new institutes opened, for example in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Yangon (Myanmar) and Novosibirsk (Russia). Deutsche Welle and the Goethe-Institut sent him off by dedicating the film *Lehmann – the Last Cultural Diplomat* to him. **Johannes Ebert** presented Lehmann with a book published jointly with the German Cultural Council with essays from ten years of foreign cultural policy and thanked him for the trusting cooperation, noting that he is a “gifted communicator – friendly yet efficacious.”

The Minister of State in the Foreign Office **Michelle Müntefering** recognised Klaus-Dieter Lehmann as someone who occupied his office with curiosity, tireless commitment and a great passion for culture, but also with a sense for the practical, the courage to make reforms and diplomatic skill. Of Carola Lentz, Müntefering said that she also stands for open and global dialogue. This is particularly important now, because the Goethe-Institut, with its worldwide network, is helping to find answers to global challenges. **Ebert** emphasised that Lentz, as a representative of academia, would enrich the institution’s content, noting, “You are the first president to have worked abroad for a long time: as an anthropologist for your research projects in Africa and South America, among other places. This is an important asset for the Goethe-Institut’s international work, especially in an era when the world is developing into a multipolar structure.”

Carola Lentz said in her inaugural address that she considers ambivalence a central concept in a time when the quest for clearly delimited memberships and one-dimensional identities is

**GOETHE
INSTITUT**

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.



flourishing again. “We all have multiple identities”, said Lentz. “In view of the fundamental openness and uncertainty of the human life experience, we need enriching cross-border encounters and cultural exchange. Multilingualism broadens our perspective on the world. This is where I envision one of the great tasks of the Goethe-Institut. The contingency of affiliations needs to be revealed and the plurality of identifications defended. Artistic productions playfully open up spaces for possibilities. They allow us to imagine the world differently and, in the best case, to discover our common humanity.”

Prof. Dr. Carola Lentz, born in Braunschweig in 1954, studied sociology, political science, German and education at the University of Göttingen and at Freie Universität Berlin. In 1987 she earned her doctorate at the University of Hanover und qualified as professor (Habilitation) in 1996 at the Freie Universität Berlin. From 1996 until 2002 she was professor of anthropology at Goethe University Frankfurt, and from 2002 until 2019 at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, where she is currently senior research professor. She served as president of the German Anthropological Association (2011-2015) and vice-president of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (2018-2020). Visiting professorships and fellowships have taken her to France, the Netherlands, the United States and South Africa. As a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute for Advanced Study Berlin) she led a focus group on the subject of Family History and Social Change in West Africa (2017-2018). Her research interests include ethnicity, nationalism, colonialism, politics of remembrance, middle classes in the Global South and labour migration. She conducted field research first in South America and, since 1987, regularly in West Africa. Her publications include *Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa* (2013) and *Remembering Independence* (2018).

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institute, active worldwide. With 157 institutes in 98 countries, we promote the study of German abroad, encourage international cultural exchange and convey a contemporary image of Germany. Through partnerships with institutions in numerous other locations, the Goethe-Institut has about 1,000 contact points worldwide.

**GOETHE
INSTITUT**

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.



PRESS RELEASE 30 SEPTEMBER 2019

CAROLA LENTZ ELECTED NEW PRESIDENT OF THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

Carola Lentz will be the new president of the Goethe-Institut. She was elected unanimously by the Goethe-Institut's Board of Trustees at its meeting on 27 September 2019. From 19 November 2020, the renowned anthropologist will take over the office of sitting president Klaus-Dieter Lehmann.

Federal Foreign Minister **Heiko Maas** confirmed the election of Carola Lentz as the new president of the Goethe-Institut and welcomed the decision of the Board of Trustees of the Goethe-Institut. Carola Lentz, professor of anthropology at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz and vice president of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, will succeed **Klaus-Dieter Lehmann** on 19 November 2020. Lehmann, who has held the presidency of the Goethe-Institut since 2008, was very satisfied with the choice of his successor, saying, "In our short-winded times, this early decision for my successor is an important sign of the esteem the Goethe-Institut enjoys. International cultural work needs reliability! I'm especially happy to know that a renowned anthropologist with an international network will hold the reins in future. I consider education and culture a dual concept."

Johannes Ebert, secretary-general of the Goethe-Institut, said, "I am delighted about the election of Carola Lentz as president of the Goethe-Institut. In view of rising international challenges, foreign cultural and educational policy is becoming ever more important. Therefore, it is crucial that the highest representative and chair of the supervisory body of our institution has dealt intensively with central issues of the global discourse on several continents and will make this knowledge and experience fruitful for the Goethe-Institut. I am also looking forward to another year working with Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, who will hand over his office to Carola Lentz in November 2020."

Carola Lentz studied sociology, political science, German and education at the University of Göttingen and at Freie Universität Berlin, graduating with two state examinations. She went on to study agricultural sciences of the tropics and anthropology. In 1987 she earned her doctorate at the University of Hanover. She was a post-doctorate scholar of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, became professor of anthropology at Goethe University Frankfurt in 1996 and has been professor of anthropology at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz since 2002. Visiting professorships and fellowships have taken her to France, the Netherlands, the United States and South Africa. She is presently vice president of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. From autumn 2017 to summer 2018 she was a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. Her research interests include ethnicity, nationalism, colonialism, memory studies and politics of remembering, middle classes in the Global South and labour migration. She conducted field research first in South America and since 1987 regularly in West Africa. Her publications include *Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa* (2013) and *Remembering Independence* (2018).

**GOETHE
INSTITUT**

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.



Prof. Dr. h.c. Klaus-Dieter Lehmann



Born on 29.02.1940 in Breslau

Brief biography

Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, born in Breslau in 1940, has been president of the Goethe-Institut since 2008. He studied mathematics and physics (graduating with the Dipl.-Phys. degree) followed by library science. In 1973, he became director of the Municipal and University Library in Frankfurt/Main and in 1990 director-general of the United German Library in Leipzig, Frankfurt and Berlin (later the German National Library). From 1998 to 2008, he was president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation in Berlin. Lehmann is a member of the Academy of Sciences and Literature Mainz and the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Science. He is an honorary professor for business informatics at the University of Frankfurt am Main and for library and information science at Humboldt University in Berlin. Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2001.

Education and career

- 1961-1967 Studies of physics and mathematics at the universities of Cologne and Mainz; degree: Diplom
- 1967-1969 Scientist at Max-Planck-Institut Mainz
- 1969-1970 Internship and degree (second state examination) in Library Science
- 1970-1973 University librarian in Darmstadt
- 1973-1978 Director at the Municipal and University Library Frankfurt am Main
- 1978-1988 Executive Director of the Municipal and University Library Frankfurt am Main
- since 1986 Honorary Professor for Economic Informatics at Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main
- 1988-1990 Director-General of the German Library in Frankfurt am Main
- 1990-1998 Director-General of the United German Library Leipzig, German Library Frankfurt and German Music Archives Berlin (later the German National Library)

**GOETHE
INSTITUT**

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.



- 1998-2008 President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation in Berlin
- since 2006 Honorary Professor for Library and Information Science at Humboldt University in Berlin
- 2002-2008 Vice president of the Goethe-Institut
- since 2008 President of the Goethe-Institut

Awards and honours

- Chevalier de l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques, Paris (1990)
- Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany: Federal Cross of Merit, 1st class (1996)
- Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana Grande Ufficiale (2004)
- Honorary doctorate from Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (2001)
- Order of Merit of the state of Berlin (2006)
- Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art, 1st class (2007)
- Kulturgroschen of the German Cultural Council (2008)
- Honorary senator of Humboldt University in Berlin (2010)
- Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany: Grand Federal Cross of Merit (2011)
- Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun Japan (2015)
- Gutenberg Prize of the International Gutenberg Society and the City of Mainz (2016)
- Golden Medal of the Humboldt Society for Science, Art and Education (2017)

Offices and memberships

Prof. Dr. h.c. Klaus-Dieter Lehmann is a member of the Academy of Sciences and Literature Mainz, the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Science, the Academy of German Book Prizes, a member of the jury for the Brücke Berlin Prize and the University Council of the University of the Arts in Berlin, and an honorary member of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts. In addition to many other honorary posts, he was chairman of the Advisory Board and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Cultural Foundation until 2020 and currently is chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Kulturfonds Frankfurt Rhein-Main, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg and member of the Board of Trustees of the German Academy for Language and Poetry Darmstadt. He is an honorary member of the Association of German Librarians and the Exchange Association of the German Book Trade. Lehmann is an honorary professor of business informatics at the University of Frankfurt am Main and for library and information science at Humboldt University in Berlin. Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2001. In 2010 he became honorary senator of Humboldt University in Berlin.



Prof. Dr. Carola Lentz



Born on 21.04.1954 in Braunschweig

Short biography

Carola Lentz, born in Braunschweig in 1954, studied sociology, political science, German and education at the University of Göttingen and at Freie Universität Berlin. In 1987 she earned her doctorate at the University of Hanover and qualified as professor (Habilitation) in 1996 at the Freie Universität Berlin. From 1996 until 2002 she was professor of anthropology at Goethe University Frankfurt, and from 2002 until 2019 at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, where she is currently senior research professor. She served as president of the German Anthropological Association (2011-2015) and vice-president of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (2018-2020). Visiting professorships and fellowships have taken her to France, the Netherlands, the United States and South Africa. As a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute for Advanced Study Berlin) she led a focus group on the subject of Family History and Social Change in West Africa (2017-2018). Her research interests include ethnicity, nationalism, colonialism, politics of remembrance, middle classes in the Global South and labour migration. She conducted field research first in South America and, since 1987, regularly in West Africa. Her publications include *Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa* (2013) and *Remembering Independence* (2018).

Education and professional career

- 1972-1979 Studied sociology, political science, German and education at the University of Göttingen and Freie Universität Berlin (first state examination for teaching at grammar schools)
- 1979-1980 Studied sociology at the University of Göttingen
- 1981-1982 Teaching internship and second state examination for teaching at grammar schools in Hamburg
- 1982-1985 Postgraduate course in agricultural sciences of the tropics and subtropics, University of Göttingen (degree: *Magister*)



- 1987 Doctorate in sociology at the University of Hanover
- 1987-1992 Lecturer at the Department of Anthropology at the Freie Universität Berlin
- 1992 Lecturer at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Marseille (ERASMUS programme)
- 1996 Qualified as professor at the Freie Universität Berlin (*Habilitation*)
- 1996-2002 Professor of anthropology at the Department of Historical Anthropology at the Goethe University Frankfurt
- 2002-2019 Professor of anthropology at the Department of Anthropology and African Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz
- Since 2019 Senior research professor at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

Fellowships and awards

- Fellow at the International Research Center Work and Human Life Cycle at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin (2020 and 2012-2013)
- Fellow at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study, South Africa (2019)
- Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, head of the focus group Family History and Social Change in West Africa (2017-2018)
- Fellow at the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg, Delmenhorst (2015)
- Melville J. Herskovits Prize of the African Studies Association for the book *Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa* (2014)
- Granted a chieftaincy title (Maalu Naa) in the Nandom Traditional Area, Ghana, Upper West Region (2013)
- Fellow at the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research and Fulbright scholar at Harvard University (2008-2009)
- Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale (2003)
- Fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Wassenaar (2000-2001)
- Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study and Research in the African Humanities, Northwestern University, Evanston (1993)

Offices and memberships

Carola Lentz is president of the Goethe-Institut as from mid-November 2020. She is a member of the advisory committee der German Federal Cultural Foundation. She was furthermore a member of the academic advisory board of the Einstein Center Chronoi (2018-2019), secretary of the class of social sciences of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (2016-2018), vice president of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (2018-2020) and chair of the German Anthropological Association (2011-2015). She was also a co-editor of the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* (2011-2015) and sat on the editorial boards of many other journals.



Publications (selection)

- 2020, "Doing being middle-class in the global South: comparative perspectives and conceptual challenges," *Africa* 90 (3), 2020: pp. 439-69.
- 2020, "[Wissenschaftskooperationen mit dem globalen Süden](#). Herausforderungen, Potentiale und Zukunftsvisionen." *Denkanstöße aus der Akademie. Eine Schriftenreihe der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 3 (with Andrea Noll).
- 2019, [Unabhängigkeit und Erinnerungspolitik](#), Federal Agency for Civic Education.
- 2018, *Remembering Independence*, London: Routledge (with David Lowe).
- 2017, "Culture: the making, unmaking and remaking of an anthropological concept." *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 142: 181-204.
- 2017, "Die Aufführung der Nation und die Einhegung von Ethnizität in afrikanischen Nationalfeiern." Stefan Hirschauer (ed.), *Un/doing differences. Praktiken der Humandifferenzierung*, Weilerswist: Velbrück, 119-43.
- 2013, "Ghana@50: celebrating the nation, debating the nation." *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 211: 519-46.
- 2012, "Education, careers and home ties: the ethnography of an emerging middle class from Northern Ghana." (with Andrea Behrends), *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 137: 139-64.
- 2013, *Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- 2013, *Ethnologie im 21. Jahrhundert*, Berlin: Reimer (ed. with Thomas Bierschenk, Matthias Krings).
- 2006, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP.
- 2003, *Histoire du peuplement et relations interethniques au Burkina Faso*, Paris: Karthala (ed. with Richard Kuba, Claude Nurukyor Somda).
- 1988, 'Von seiner Heimat kann man nicht lassen'. *Migration in einer Dorfgemeinde in Ecuador*, Frankfurt a. M.: Campus.

For further publications, see www.goethe.de/praesidentin.



SPEECHES ON THE OCCASION OF THE TRANSITION OF OFFICE ON 13 NOVEMBER 2020

Check against delivery

Speech by Prof. Dr. h.c. Klaus-Dieter Lehmann

We are on the threshold of a remarkable anniversary. Next year, the Goethe-Institut will be seventy years old. I was able to help shape it for twenty years, twelve of them as its president. It was a fulfilling and immensely exciting time. You may wonder why the Goethe-Institut was and is so close, so familiar and so important to me.

The Goethe-Institut and I were both shaped by the aftereffects of a totalitarian era and by the statement: *Never again!* It was an unusual decision for the young Federal Republic of Germany to place foreign cultural and educational policy in the hands of an independent organisation rather than subject it to direct state responsibility. Germany learned from its past. It was a success story even if the story contained chapters not only about the lightness of being, but also chapters about the labours of the plains.

Personal independence was also one of my values, it runs like a golden thread through my life. We were a generation that had grown up among the silence about the recent past, a political generation that grappled with and used democratic possibilities, that was curious about the world, that crossed boundaries, even in the literal sense of national borders. We were probably the first generation for whom borders were not insurmountable barriers, but transitions leading to encounters – at least for a large part of the world – who understood that you only get to know people when you go to them to find out about them. Many of us, including me, hitchhiked through Europe, took part in youth exchanges, especially with the United States and France. There were many new beginnings, there was dialogue and joy in diversity. That made me a staunch mediator in my various career phases.

As for independence of mind, it was also decisive for the Goethe-Institutes. The institute directors made the social debates in Germany the programme of their work abroad. In this way, they lent democratic Germany a high degree of credibility. This also included the bitter findings from the Auschwitz trials, which confronted the world with the sheer barbarity of the Nazi era. To be a cultural mediator is not a representative task, but a stance characterised by openness and partnership. This view offered a great opportunity to form learning communities in the world. And the Goethe-Institut took advantage of it.

Another experience that I made on my career path and that I found again at the Goethe-Institutes: The cultural scene and educators are among the most effective civil society forces. Art and culture

**GOETHE
INSTITUT**

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.



are not the playground of intellectuals, they are not a decorative element for economic promotion and they are not instrumentalised propaganda. They are an essential part of society, not just an aesthetic category, but a formative social force. The Goethe-Institut is part of civil society and aggressively represents an open, liberal society and advocates the freedom of art and science with conviction.

One of my early influences in thinking and acting was to understand Europe as a spiritual and cultural basis. It is quite natural for the Goethe-Institut to see itself as having a European responsibility and to act against nationalism and mutual isolationism. With all our basic views in common, it is no wonder that I feel at home at the Goethe-Institut and sense something akin to a spiritual community. These are wonderful people who are active in the world, who, like scouts, sense the issues and introduce them to the debates early on. But it is a community that does not sit in a bubble reflecting itself and amplifying its own signals. On the contrary, it opens itself, exposes itself to other cultures, is open to discourse and develops alternatives instead of being fixated on conflicts. That is a dynamic that faces reality. This behaviour is best described with a Goethe phrase: "Only that which changes will remain."

And the changes of the past three decades have been major ones: reunification, the change from a bipolar world to multipolar structures, the Arab Spring, great migration flows, decolonisation and post-colonial trends, wars and conflicts, climate change, digitisation, racism and anti-Semitism, a pandemic. These are not just technical, political or economic problems. They are also cultural phenomena because they directly affect how we live together. They involve us!

At the beginning of my presidency, it was important to project the changed global structures in the activities of the Goethe-Institut. The worldwide Goethe network was neither structurally nor financially up to date. We were able to tackle far-reaching reforms with the then Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Central responsibility became decentralised responsibility, close to the people, cooperation in networks, diverse forms of access to education. Three levels are intertwined: the local level with its innovative potential, the regional level with its ability to bring together the Goethe-Institutes in the regions for large projects and interactions, and finally the head office with steering, advice and its close relationship with the cultural and social scenes in Germany. We were able to continuously improve our budget and once again the establishment of new institutes became possible.

These were good prerequisites for gaining trust in an increasingly confounding world, making the world more legible again and strengthening the respective civil societies. Working with civil societies became a clear focus. This also corresponds to the present view of German politics of moving from a foreign policy of states to a foreign policy of societies. For a more stable order we need the dialogue between people.



Geographically during my time in office, our neighbouring continent of Africa was a focus of my work. Eight new institutes were founded. All institutes worked together as network nodes in continental networks and platforms such as Moving Africa, African Future, Music in Africa, etc. This also enabled us to represent the difficult issues of colonial and post-colonial questions competently and credibly. The declared goal must be the decolonisation of the mind. This also applies to the political and economic asymmetries and injustices that still persist from the colonial era.

In addition to its civil society activities, the expansion of the Goethe network and the promotion of the German language, the Goethe-Institut residency programs were of particular interest to me. They offer space for new viewpoints by giving artists the opportunity to work in another country and culture for a while. The Goethe-Institut is the largest provider in this area. Particularly noteworthy are the residencies in Istanbul – together with the Foreign Office –, and in Kyoto and Salvador de Bahia. I have had the privilege of opening all three. They are not ivory towers, but rather base camps for artists, opportunities to meet and share artistic experiences. Lasting relationships of cultural dialogue develop through working contacts. That is what makes them so valuable.

When the world changes, and with it the institutes abroad, the head office has to change constantly as well. With its move to the city centre of Munich in June 2019, the headquarters of the Goethe-Institut initiated a transformation process with which the digital infrastructure, which had been in operation for quite some time, received a robust boost towards Goethe 4.0, which can replace the traditional work processes and their hierarchies with new agile forms of work.

The first practical test was passed in a completely unexpected context, the global Covid-19 pandemic, which broke out in March 2020 and forced the Goethe-Institutes in Germany and around the world into a lockdown. Thanks to our existing IT applications, the internal work processes could be converted very quickly into digital work processes. Wherever the relevant health requirements allow, around half of the institutes are now again open to the public, new programmes have been developed in digital formats for language, culture and education and global communication between colleagues has been technically implemented through effective forms of video conferences and even worldwide staff meetings. We faced down the pandemic.

Despite all these precautions, there are still restrictions due to quarantine requirements and financial loss of income from language work and exams. We are also observing an increase in populist influences, in censorship and the manipulation of opinion in a number of countries. I am quite aware that much of the work being done by our colleagues involves some personal hardship. The commitment and responsible actions, the unified willingness with which this crisis has been mastered by everyone is impressive. The Goethe-Institut does not have great monetary wealth like corporations and banks, it does not have collections like museums or libraries. Its assets are its people. To be able to experience that and to be part of this community has been a wonderful experience for me for which I am deeply grateful. In my immediate work environment, I would like



to especially thank my assistant, Anita Galic, for twelve years of prudent and strong-nerved cooperation and my aides Laura Hartz, Christiane Jekeli, Pia Entenmann and Christina Steenken, who passed each other the baton over these twelve years and supported me in the best possible way.

Even if none of this is possible without the people, nothing lasts without the institution. That is why the Goethe-Institut needs long-term support and sustainably secured structures. Our successes, even now in the time of crisis, have only been possible thanks to our long cooperation in the host countries and the exemplary support of the Bundestag and the Federal government due to our mutually gained trust.

My presidency began with a critical situation that, together with politicians, we could successfully overcome through smart decisions and enduring structures. My presidency ends with the Goethe-Institut again in difficult waters due to the pandemic. I am convinced that everyone understands that it is worth every effort to give the Goethe-Institut secure future prospects in order to promote access to culture and education in the world, an important anchor for a free society.

In this context I would like to close with a quote from our Federal President, who said of the Goethe-Institut: "Every dialogue needs a home, a space where there is freedom, creativity and understanding. There is a name for these spaces of dialogue in Germany and moreover, their name resonates. They are called Goethe-Institutes."



Speech by Prof. Dr. Carola Lentz

Anyone strolling through Kaneshie Market in the Ghanaian capital of Accra will be impressed by the metres-high stacks of colourful fabrics offered there. “Come in,” the sellers call after the bypasser, “I have real wax for you,” in other words the genuine batik-dyed fabrics. “You’ll look like a real Ghanaian in it,” they add when a European woman stops by. Some of the samples of the so-called wax prints that they advertise are new creations. Others have been around for many years, and they bear names like “Back of the turtle” or “If you want to get married, ask me.” Every woman in Ghana, and other African countries, is proud to possess many different cloths and outfits made from them for all sorts of occasions. If they can afford it, they wear “Real Dutch wax.” The non-batik “fancy prints” are a cheaper alternative.

In Ghana, wax prints are considered “traditionally Ghanaian.” In Central and South Africa, they are labelled as “West African,” in Europe or the United States as “typically African.” But they are actually of Asian origin and part of a long, eventful history of global entanglements. Economic profit interests and political power relations are woven into them as well as wilful consumer decisions and creative appropriations.

Since the sixteenth century, first the Portuguese then the Dutch East India Company traded in ornate, handcrafted fabrics from North India and Java. Asian batik fabrics and calico became increasingly popular in Europe. But they also played an important role as a currency in the slave trade. Not only European women, but also wealthy West Africans wanted to wear these colourful fabrics. Various British and Dutch companies therefore tried their hand at industrially manufactured imitations. They initially failed. Only after thorough research into African preferences and improved production techniques were textile manufacturers in Manchester able to produce a product that was acceptable in West Africa.

During the nineteenth century, African demand was booming, and Javanese-style batik cloth became increasingly popular. Around 1900 the Dutch company Vlisco finally managed to convincingly imitate the Indian and Javanese batik art using industrial processes. “Real Dutch wax” became a great commercial success – a success based on close cooperation between European producers and African consumers.

After Ghana’s independence, local textile factories were set up producing “real wax” and “fancy prints.” Since the 2000s, however, fabrics produced in China have been increasingly entering the African markets. But the customers remain stubborn and distinguish very precisely between different fabric qualities. Chinese producers, too, can only be successful if they work closely with African designers, importers and customers, as did Vlisco and the Manchester companies before them.

Wax prints are part of an entangled history with different actors all around the world, a history of asymmetry and violence, economic exploitation and competition, but also self-confident cultural



appropriation and aesthetic value judgments. People use clothing to stage cultural preferences and mark social belongings in the public space. The Javanese-Dutch-Ghanaian-Chinese wax prints can, however, evoke different meanings. Nigerian-British artist Yinka Shonibare, for example, works in his installations with clothing in the European-Victorian style, but made from African cloth to denounce colonialism; in “Scramble for Africa”, sixteen headless figures dressed in wax prints recreate the Berlin Congo Conference of 1884/85. A completely different example: two Cameroonian women in Munich make Bavarian *dirndls à l’africaine* made from wax prints – “a creative, exciting exchange of world cultures,” as the designers write on their website.

Why am I telling you these fabric stories? Because they show that cultural traditions are fed from many sources and are repeatedly appropriated and reinterpreted. Culture is a fabric made of elements of different origins, with a variety of patterns and colours. Many producers contribute to it. Under certain historical conditions, however, some communities ignore this complex production process. They claim its result as their very own tradition, which is clearly different from that of their near and distant neighbours. Then there is talk of Ghanaian identity, German way of life, British mentality or French habitus, or “European civilization” is contrasted with the “Islamic world.” Today in particular we seem to be living in a time of simplification and exaggeration. The boundaries between nations and religions are drawn tighter and marked as non-negotiable. Many social movements also claim the difference around which they organise themselves – be it gender, skin colour, regional origin, religion or political ideology – as their core identity. Diversity within the group is then downplayed or even denied.

Yet we all have multiple identities. We always belong to different groups or communities at the same time. We never share all conceivable social characteristics with other people. We are never radically different from other people in any way. Which affiliation, which similarity and which difference are foregrounded depends on the sphere of action. At school, for example, we are sorted according to age, in professional life according to performance, in love according to attractiveness, in hometown associations according to regional origin, on social media according to political orientation. In addition, the importance of different affiliations varies in different phases of our biography. Finally, we emphasise different belongings in different situations and with different audiences. Someone who just played the team-capable entrepreneur on a TV talk show may become an authoritarian patriarch at home and a sentimental karaoke singer at the pub. In short, multiplicity and ambivalence are typical. Establishing clearly delimited memberships and one-dimensional identities, including the corresponding enemies, requires enormous effort. This can be seen in the energy with which religious sects or dogmatic social movements try to keep their members away from “contaminating” contacts.

This is where I envision one of the great tasks to which the Goethe-Institut can contribute through its worldwide work. The contingency of affiliations needs to be revealed and the plurality of identifications defended. In view of the fundamental openness and uncertainty of the human life



experience, we need enriching cross-border encounters and cultural exchange. Multilingualism, as promoted by the Goethe-Institut, broadens our perspective on the world. Artistic productions playfully open up spaces for possibilities. They allow us to imagine the world differently and, in the best case, to discover our common humanity.

This vision of culture does not mean denying the oppressive reality of violence and power imbalances in our world. Time and again, authoritarian governments, intolerant religious leaders or unscrupulous warlords draw rigid borders, exclude foreigners and demand unconditional loyalty. Unambiguous ascription of identities can have fatal consequences. Think, for example, of racial profiling, as it is branded by the Black Lives Matter movement, of anti-Semitic attacks by right-wing extremists, or of the Islamist-motivated murders of Christians. In order to politically act in such contexts effectively, many social movements and discriminated groups temporarily rely on “strategic essentialism,” to take up a concept coined by the literary scholar Gayatri Spivak. In the interest of the political ability to act, internal heterogeneity is then downplayed and the common identity emphasised. But Spivak sees this as a strategic and tactical option for some time, not a long-term goal.

In order to build a peaceful world that is worth living in, we need – I am convinced of this – an open-minded vision of culture. We should imagine culture as a colourful, multi-threaded fabric like the wax prints from Ghana, as a polyphonic structure, changeable, open to the future and, above all, connecting, not dividing people. As president, I look forward to supporting the Goethe-Institut in future in promoting such polyphony, enabling encounters and thus helping to shape a democratic, non-violent, tolerant world. That means, to use Goethe’s words, “treating the impossible as if it were possible.”

First of all, I want to jointly rethink Germany’s role in a post-colonial era. We have to learn to listen carefully. What do people in the former colonies and in the Global South in general have to say to us? What can we learn from our European neighbours? How can we approach language and cultural work together with our partners around the world? Transparent communication and an open discussion of the asymmetries, the power imbalance in which such transcultural and transnational encounters take place are important.

Secondly, it is important to me that we explore the experience, expertise and cultural productions from the numerous locations of the Goethe-Institut and make these treasures from all over the world known and fruitful here in Germany. In my preparations for my new office, I was able to get to know some of the institute’s many extraordinarily interesting projects. They give me the certainty that we can make some progress together on this path over the next few years.

Mr Lehmann and members of the Board of Trustees, I am grateful that you would entrust me with such a well-positioned institute as its new president. To be your successor, Mr Lehmann, is easy and difficult at the same time. It is easy because you have carefully set the course, also during the



coronavirus pandemic, and because you are smoothing my pathway with good advice and plenty of guidelines. It is difficult because you have set the bar very high.

Mr Ebert, Mr Pollack, I am confident that you will actively support me in fulfilling the expectations placed in me. Together we will master the many challenges that the pandemic, but also the changed global political environment, mean for the work of the Goethe-Institut.

But not just a team of three is needed for this! I am therefore also looking forward to working with the many colleagues at the institute, to a lively exchange of ideas and mutual learning.

And last but not least, I look forward to meeting and cooperating with my colleagues at the Federal Foreign Office, with the members of the Bundestag who have so often supported the work of the Goethe-Institut, and with the cultural and educational partner organisations at home and abroad with which the institute works. Together we can produce a colourful, multi-threaded “fabric” that protects and adorns, like a wax print from Ghana.



Speech by Johannes Ebert, Secretary-General

We all imagined the handover of the Goethe-Institut presidency a little differently. At least the business director of the Goethe-Institut Rainer Pollack and myself did and I speak on behalf of both of us today. We had planned a lavish celebration at the Münchner Kammerspiele with VIPs from culture, society and politics, festivities with lively conversations over coffee and champagne. And, of course, an opportunity for the staff to meet the outgoing and the new president.

It turned out differently. We all know why. Now here, in the library of the Goethe-Institut, I am satisfied that at least I have the two guests of honour in person in front of me today: Carola Lentz, the future president of the Goethe-Institut, and Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, the outgoing president. The digital celebration gives us the opportunity to bring in our staff live from all over the world.

“The world’s most wonderful honorary post” is how Jutta Limbach once described the presidency of the Goethe-Institut. Of course, there are – at least in normal times – edifying journeys from Madrid to Myanmar, from Beijing to Porto Alegre. The presidential office involves inspirational encounters with artists, intellectuals, politicians and the global public. And, of course, with our committed staff members all over the world.

Beyond that, however, the most wonderful part of the office – at least that is how I have perceived it with all presidents – is the opportunity to take on responsibility: responsibility for the Goethe-Institut, one of Germany’s largest and most influential cultural and educational institutions abroad – with 157 locations today and over 3,800 employees. This responsibility, which the president assumes in concert with the general assembly, the board of trustees, the board of directors and the staff, is what makes this office so wonderful.

Part of this responsibility lies in representation: to represent the Goethe-Institut in public, in culture, society and politics. And to represent it in such a way that demonstrates the meaningful and peace-building role of the Goethe-Institut as the independent cultural mediator of our nation in the world. To represent it so that the Goethe-Institut is recognised and promoted as a pioneering actor in German foreign cultural and educational policy.

The second part of this responsibility lies in the chairmanship of the board of trustees, the supervisory body of the Goethe-Institut. Here the president must accompany, support and sometimes critically question the plans, programmes and strategies that the board of directors works out and promotes with the personnel.

The third part of this responsibility is the impact on the institution itself. The president stands as an internal role model for our institute, for our approach and for our vision.

The Goethe-Institut has undergone extensive modernisation and change in particular over the past fifteen years. It has restructured itself. It worked out answers to crises and addressed important



future issues, things like Europeanisation, digitisation, sustainability, links between the inner and outer workings of the institute, diversity, migration and much more. And it has shown great willingness and ability to change and develop further. Especially in the COVID era, which presents us with major and unexpected challenges, I am very impressed by the performance and innovative strength of our institution. Change processes will continue to determine our work in the future because at the pace at which the world is changing, the Goethe-Institut must act, react and set new courses.

Mr Lehmann,

Where do I even begin? With a photograph from a journey to Cuba, I suggest. In the middle is a huge old American automobile. On one side we see a beaming Mrs Lehmann, on the other side Klaus-Dieter Lehmann in jeans, visibly enjoying the unfamiliar surroundings, candidly, I dare say casually. Another photograph: Klaus-Dieter Lehmann – in tails, highly official, earnest – pays his respects to Japan's imperial couple as a member of the Premium Imperiale. Between these photos there are countless facets of a personality who has had a lasting impact on cultural life in the Federal Republic in recent years.

You were and are widely recognised and exceedingly esteemed in your offices and as a cultural policy-maker. You fully took on and fulfilled your responsibility as president of the Goethe-Institut. You have been an approachable president, open to everyone inside and outside the Goethe-Institut. A gifted communicator – friendly yet efficacious. At this point, I would also like to expressly thank your wife, who has accompanied and supported you on all stages of your journey. Thank you very much, Mrs Lehmann.

I don't want to say much more because we will be shedding light on your work today in a different way. As we were deliberating over what to give you as a farewell gift, the usual ideas came up: Festschrift and so on. Then, when I telephoned our vice president Christina von Braun about this, Ms von Braun had a much better idea: Why not make a film? I was thrilled and called my colleague Peter Limbourg, the director-general of Deutsche Welle. We immediately agreed it should be a joint film about thirty years of cultural development in the Federal Republic using the example of Klaus-Dieter Lehmann's work. The film *Lehmann – The Last Cultural Diplomat* will premiere at this ceremony in an abridged form. My thanks go to Peter Limbourg, the screenwriters Rainer Traube and Willie Schumann and the teams from Deutsche Welle and Goethe-Institut.

But then we thought that we still need a written publication. So, together with Olaf Zimmermann, the managing director of the German Cultural Council and publisher of the newspaper *Politik und Kultur*, we examined the stages of foreign cultural policy over the last ten years based on articles by you and important contemporaries. My heartfelt thanks go to Olaf Zimmermann and our teams who made the book possible. If you leaf through the volume with the catchy title *AKBP*, you will remember a debate or two.

**GOETHE
INSTITUT**

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.



Mr Lehmann,

We have worked together closely for more than eight years. Therefore allow me a few personal words, as well. I believe we have fulfilled our roles as president and executive committee of the Goethe-Institut over these years in a way that was very committed, successful and with great mutual trust. We have overcome crises and set a new course. Even if there were – rarely enough – differences of opinion, we discussed them and resolved them openly. I learned a lot from you and always knew that the executive committee could rely on you. I would like to thank you very much for this and for our personal closeness and trust.

And on behalf of Rainer Pollack and all staff members around the world, I would like to thank you very much for having occupied the office of president so completely and responsibly.

We wish you good fortune, health and strength in the many things that you have planned now.

Ms Lentz,

On behalf of all staff members, I would like to congratulate you on your new office as president of the Goethe-Institut. We are very happy and grateful that you have agreed to take on this role, which is so important to us, especially because the circumstances under which you will formally take up your office in the coming week are different, more difficult than last summer, when the board of trustees unanimously elected you. This requires courage and confidence. I am looking forward to it because in the conversations we've had over the past few months I have gotten to know you as a courageous and confident person.

After Jutta Limbach, you are the second woman president at the head of the institution and I think this sends out an important signal. You are the first president to have worked abroad for a long time: as an anthropologist for your research projects in Africa and South America, among other places. This is an important asset for the Goethe-Institut's international work, especially in an era when the world is developing into a multipolar structure where we have to listen better and more carefully in order to understand and work out common answers. You are an outstanding academic, most recently chairing the German Anthropological Association and vice-president of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. You know the ropes of committee work – an important presidential function – from these and other contexts. I therefore am pleased that you have now been appointed to the advisory board of the Federal Cultural Foundation. You contribute a broad academic network to our institution. This will enrich our content and carry us further.

We've had numerous meetings and conversations about the Goethe-Institut over the past few months. In them, I have gotten to know and appreciate your profound knowledge of science and culture going far beyond your own field, your thirst for knowledge, your openness, your drive and your willingness to play in a team.

Ms Lentz,



I look forward to our future cooperation and wish you much strength, courage and above all a steady hand as the new president of the Goethe-Institut.

**GOETHE
INSTITUT**

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES AT THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

The Board of Trustees elects the president of the Goethe-Institut for the duration of four years. The President is head of the Board of Trustees, which is responsible for supervising the business conducted by the Goethe-Institut as well as making decisions in matters of fundamental importance. The tasks of the Board of Trustees include adopting resolutions for guidelines on the work of the institute and long-term conceptual planning. It consists of the president, six representatives elected by the General Meeting, one representative each from the Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry of Finance, and three elected employee representatives.

Members of the Board of Trustees

- Prof. Dr. h.c. Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, President of the Goethe-Institut e.V., former President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Munich
- Prof. Dr. Christina von Braun, 1st Vice-President of the Goethe-Institut e. V., cultural scientist, writer, film-maker, Humboldt University in Berlin
- Dr. Tessen von Heydebreck, 2nd Vice-President of the Goethe-Institut e. V., Former Member of the Board of Deutsche Bank AG
- Prof. Dr. Marion Ackermann, Director General of Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen, Dresden
- Prof. Dr. Ulrich Raulff, President ifa, Stuttgart/Berlin
- Prof. Dr. Joachim Rogall, President and CEO, Board of Management Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH, Stuttgart
- Prof. Dr. Oliver Scheytt, KULTUREXPERTEN Dr. Scheytt GmbH, Essen

Representatives of the Federal Government

- Federal Foreign Office, MinDir Dr. Andreas Görgen, Head of the Department for Culture and Communication, Berlin
- Federal Finance Ministry, RD Jürgen Rinne, Head of Division II C 5, Berlin

Employee representatives on the Board of Trustees

- Mikko Fritze, Goethe-Institut Amsterdam
- Mathias Adelhoefer, Goethe-Institut Berlin
- Thomas Stumpp, Goethe-Institut, Zentrale

Guests

- Petra Drexler, Federal Foreign Office, Head of Division 606, Berlin
- Prof. Dr. Joybrato Mukherjee, President of the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service), Bonn



PREVIOUS PRESIDENTS

- Klaus-Dieter Lehmann (2008-2020)
- Jutta Limbach (2002-2008)
- Hilmar Hoffmann (1993-2001)
- Hans Heigert (1989-1993)
- Klaus von Bismarck (1977-1989)
- Hans-Heinrich Herwarth von Bittenfeld (1971-1977)
- Peter H. Pfeiffer (1963-1971)
- Max Grasmann (1962-1963)
- Kurt Magnus (1951-1962)