

FINAL REPORT IV MICROCONFERENCE

Project number: 101055965, Call: CREA-CULT-2021-COOP, Milestone M3.4

4rd Deconfining hybrid microconference, held on 26th - 27th June 2026, in Chemnitz, in the context of the Annual Conference of the German Centre of the International Theatre Institute at the festival THEATER DER WELT.

The concept of the 4rd microconference

THE DOORS OF FUTURE.

Future pathways in EU and Africa Cultural Relations

During the first three years of implementing the Deconfining project, the microconference offered a platform for the critical debate of various facets of cultural relations between Africa and Europe.

2023 - Opening Doors to New Territorial Perspectives between Continents

In 2023, our focus was on territorial deconfinement, with an exploration of territoriality, networks, and multiple identities.

2024 - Female Views to Intercontinental Environmental Challenges

In 2024 we centred on social and environmental deconfinement, examining the specific areas of water and women through the lenses of ritual, policy, and practical experience.

2025 - Updated International Funding and Memory Frameworks for Overcoming Obstacles

The third microconference in 2025 dealt with political deconfinement, addressing it through the funding systems, and the work on archives and memory.

2026 - Deconfining Eco-Systems for Sustainable Intercontinental Culture Relations

Since the microconference held in 2026 was the finale one, we want to look back, take stock and provide an overview of the Deconfining project's work over the past four years and address the future of cultural relations between Africa and Europe.

To extensively address the question of *what the future of cultural relations between Europe and Africa will look like*, the fourth Deconfining microconference will be organised in close collaboration with the other Deconfining partners. On the one hand, it will be held in Chemnitz as part the Annual Conference of the German Centre of the International Theatre Institute at the festival THEATER DER WELT in Chemnitz, the European Capital of Culture 2025. Several



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activities will be organised in collaboration with the Deconfining partners; for instance, the following studies will be presented: the results of the *Shaping Crossroads* surveys, the *On the Move* study on mobility, the final policy recommendations *Why and how policymakers should invest in better Africa-Europe Europe-Africa relations to accelerate local sustainable development* and the final project evaluation on *intercontinental governance*. The conference in Chemnitz will be the final gathering of the Deconfining partners; the knowledge acquired will be shared and serve as a further point of reflection and debate about the future of intercontinental cultural cooperation.

Content / Context

The Deconfining project began in 2022 with the aim of significantly enhancing local cultural cooperation between Europe and Africa. The project has developed an impressive array of artistic collaborations and co-productions, including touring on both continents. These achievements were made possible despite growing international tensions and increased travel and visa difficulties, which also affect artists from African countries, who are often denied the right to travel in order to participate in residencies or exhibitions. Decision-makers on both continents must do much more to co-develop sustainable and favourable intercontinental ecosystems for cooperation and artistic exchange and encourage broad citizen involvement. This is even more necessary given the rapidly changing geopolitical landscape and its negative impact on opportunities for intercontinental cooperation. While the new *Culture Compass* for Europe aims to update the EU's international cultural relations strategy and create new opportunities, it ignores the reality of migration policies and fails to provide a platform for debate on just cultural relationships between the EU and Africa. The EU must adopt a bold approach to co-designing alternative pathways with like-minded partners worldwide in order to ensure its own relevance in international politics and ultimately strengthen freedom, security and prosperity within the EU and the world alike – because one is intimately connected to the other.

The fourth microconference gave us the opportunity to critically reflect on the European African cultural relations through the Deconfining project: what worked, what was achieved, what was difficult and needed to be changed, and what requires ecosystemic and policy answers? What can we learn, and what should we unlearn? We must critically confront reality in order to build a hopeful future.

The first panel discussion presented a key aspect of the Deconfining project: the artistic residencies. The discussion was be a practical conversation from the artists' perspective about their experience of cultural and artistic cooperation over the four years of the Deconfining project. The participants will be African and European artists and cultural practitioners. The aim of this roundtable is to create a space for dialogue and discussion



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about residencies as a form of collaboration between different continents. *How does artistic cooperation between different continents work, and how has it changed over the years?*

The second panel discussion provided a space for dialogue between three experts from Europe and Africa who have been cooperating within the Deconfining project. The conversation focused on the practical aspects of the project, providing a final evaluation from both continents. It covered what worked well over the four years, the challenges faced, and the valuable lessons learned. It has also considered whether there is anything that should be unlearned and how collaboration can continue after the project has concluded. The panel discussion included the presentation of the final evaluation *Intercontinental Governance Model* as well as the presentation of the *Arnie-Toolkit*, the handbook elaborated to support local stakeholders for better relations between Africa and EU/rope.

The section “Artistic testimonials” focused on the artistic projects implemented within the Working Package 3. A variety of multimedia artistic contributions showcased the multifaceted artistic works carried out between 2022 and 2026. Recordings of performances, rehearsals, documentaries and interviews offered insights into the intercontinental artistic projects that were funded as part of the Deconfining project.



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The recording of the whole conference can be found on the Goethe-Instituts' YouTube channel:

Day 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fz9RcmEZymk>

Day 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VbE1ViR8PQ>

Number of visitors:

During the whole day we could register a total attendance of 80 visitors in Chemnitz and online 15 on the days of the conferences (on 30 June the recordings was viewed 200 times).

Number of speakers: 5 speakers (5 women/ 1 men / 0 not-binary) of those 2 online (1 woman / 1 man) + moderators (1 woman)

Number of cities represented: 29

Berlin

Chemnitz

Dakar

Dar Es Salaam

Engerwitzdorf/Vienna

Johannesburg

Madrid

Buenos Aires

Athen

Paris

Lagos

Bangalore

Brüssel

Lusaka

Harare



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Kiev
Lima
Shanghai
Seoul
London
Teheran
Beijing
Dublin
Warsaw
Kaunas
Beirut
Cape Town
Esquel
Helsinki
Nairobi
Durban

Number of venues / plays / installations: 3

Hartmannfabrik, Chemnitz

2 panel discussions

1 exhibition of artistic contributions



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Moments of the 4th microconference, 26th and 27th June 2025

Welcome words and introduction of the 2-days conference by Samba Yonga (Ku-Atenga), Vydia Tamby (Editions Vives Voix), Malin Nagel (ITI Germany) as well as by Antonia Blau, director of the Goethe-Institut Madrid



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Panel discussion: **Intercontinental artistic residencies: A conversation about best practices, actual hurdles, and perspectives**

Speakers: Elgas (writer, Deconfining resident at Goethe-Institut Madrid, 2026); Ana Lessing Menjibar (dancer, resident at the Goethe-Institut 2024 with the Dry Ocean collective); Lilian Hipolyte (Nafasi Art Space, cooperating organization of the Deconfining partner Art Transparent and fellow of Deconfining *Shaping Crossroads*); Annika Turkowski (Opendorf Afrika, cooperating organization of European capital Salzkammergut in the framework of Deconfining, 2023-2024); moderated by Dr. Antonia Blau, director of Goethe-Institut Madrid.

This panel discussion brought together cultural practitioners and artists involved in the Deconfining project. The talk focused on artistic residencies, covering the experiences of the artists and the format itself, as well as the challenges involved in organising them (funding, visa, time, infrastructure).



Ana Lessing Menjibar: “The Dry Ocean collective (...) is not about an end result, it is really about an episode, we meet and we do not know what in these episodes will happen, it is about coming together, exchange of practices, bodies, histories. (...) It is much more the process of collaboration. Through these episodes our artistic work grows.”

Annika Turkowski: “The opera village’s structure is built like a snail. Because it is about slow development with time, with the community, with people that live and work there. (...) Residencies happen ones a year, usually for three-four months. (...) Three months, we feel that is the time you need to arrive to the place, not to just jump it, and do your work, be there, listen”.

Lilian Hipolyte: “I have learnt and taught myself and my body to be comfortable in uncertainty. Either for myself or on behalf of my artists. This always happens because you are not the only one holding all cards. The decisions are not being made when you are not there. (...) The first challenge for Deconfining, it took Karolina [Binek, Art transparent Deconfining partner]



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coming from Poland to Tanzania for me even to trust and understand Deconfining and what the Deconfining partners intended to do. (...) At the beginning I was very reluctant to take part as institution and as individual.”

Ana Lessing Menjibar: “How can we tell a funding system we want to try to establish an exchange where we learn and unlearn from each other (...) The most important thing was that it cannot be an end result from our episode. (...) We just continued. At the end the material developed during our time, step by step it began being an artwork. (...) Things could evolve very naturally. (...) Who gives the visa and money and for what? That is at the centre of our collective.”

Elgas: “You talked about space, about time. [During the residency] I had freedom. (...) To write you to have a free mind. (...) For me it was crucial to have that space, to finishing that book (...) I was happy to have this time [at Goethe-Institut Madrid], Madrid will be linked to this book, because it helped to give birth to this book.”

Annika Turkowski: “For year to year, we have to find funding from different sources. (...) What is a residency? (...) It is about dealing with uncertainty, personal stress for those institutions who want to make that exchange possible, they are fighting for it, coming to more entitlement, that was Deconfining taught us, it was two years in both directions. (...) There is a need to try getting to understand what artistic cultural practise is, why it is important to continue., what it entitles.”

Lilian Hipolyte: “Organizers and hosts of artistic residencies have to invest time in care, in knowing where they are inviting the people from (...) It is very important, if you are from a different culture, to learn what the other side is coming from, it can be in many ways (...) Maybe they do not even understand what you are trying them to get to do. (...) Learning these tiny things help making cooperation and exchanges a little bit lighter, friendly.”

Annika Turkowski [answering the question: *How do you define group of artists, who benefits from these residencies?*]: Since 2020 we have a curator, Akim Funk Buddha (...) Until now the exchange was very fruitful, of him suggesting (...) So, there is one point, he meets young artists and tells them about the programme [Opendorf Afrika]. We do not have a procedure developed. (...) The idea is that these things naturally develop. (...) First, you have to establish a program. And it takes some time to be known and to get artists to know that it exists. (...) It is more choosing artists (...) that could benefit from each other. (...)

Ana Lessing Menjibar: “I have been a couple of times at Goethe-Institut Madrid, researching. There is a collaboration with the Teatro del Canal (...) To be one month in a place and have access to a library, dance studio and living space, a luxury to have a studio, to work with sound, with body, not to be restricted to a table, which is often the problem for performing arts, that we have often not enough space to move, to be loud (...) These residencies that combine living together, you have the studio where you can work physically, but also have enough time to give yourself into the research, to dig into the place where you are, getting in contact with the society and culture. That was something very important for us.”



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Annika Turkowski: “We have the space (...) Every artist gets their own guesthouse. (...) We have a studio, an audio recording studio and a small library. (...) To be able to do that, you need to have a monthly fee to live off of, travel expenses paid and a small fee for transportation and a per diem. Living costs. And an extra fee for the production of any artwork. (...) If any of these things is not covered, we could not do it, we would not be able to offer it with good conscience.”

Panel discussion: **African-European cultural cooperation: future pathways, challenges and valuable lessons**

with Vydia Tamby and Samba Yonga, Sylvia Amann, moderated by Dr. Antonia Blau, director of the Goethe-Institut Madrid

The panel discussion brought together three culture policy experts who collaborated within the framework of the Deconfining project, developing several of its outcomes, including the Intercontinental Model for Sovereign Shared Governance and the ARNIE Toolkit. The roundtable also served as a concluding reflection on the Deconfining project as a whole, including its conception and the premises for its continuation.



Sylvia Amann: “There was an expert exchange on both continents to understand where we are with these relationships and how is this relationship perceived (...) we found that local to local is something that is very much underexplored. We have several partners not based in capital cities. (...) for them is of course a crucial topic how to bring forward international cultural relations. (...) How you do culture in these territories is very different from the urban center and metropolies.”

Sylvia Amann: “ARNIE means Accessibility, Reflection, Networking, Information and Empowerment (...) One accessibility’s element is mobility, know-how infrastructures,



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information, there are huge challenges related to accessibility. (...) Reflection (...) is more what do you do when you meet, how to connect, what topics you talk about when you connect (...) there is a lot of natural connectivity between the continents. (...) Networking (...) the need to be an organization organizing that people can meet. (...) Empowerment: based on this concept we have built all the work of the Cultural Policy Working Package (...) everything was developed in a co-development process.”

Sylvia Amann: “We need an integrated ecosystem, Africa and Europe, Europe and Africa could be the model region where an intercontinental fully functional ecosystem of international cultural relations is built up. (...) This ecosystem goes beyond funding. Not everything is about funding, if it is about funding, it is about cofinancing. (...) On the European side we have public funding, on the African side there is much more private initiative (...) How can we find matching situations that can be brought to another level? In order to achieve it, we need common governance.”

Samba Yonga: “(...) We looked on all reports that were created, analysed all activities over four years [of the Deconfining project] (...) Things that worked were horizontal engagements, partnerships, collaborations across counties. (...) There is a bad side: visa violence, deficit in funding, the unequal decision-making (...) One solution we came up with was to look at a sovereignty partnership model, that has three gears (...) we noticed that these three areas came over and over again (...): mobility justice (...) the second, resource sovereignty (...) the third one was the cycle of return, how do we ensure that we are continuing a cycle of knowledge production and building ecosystems where we are learning from each other rather than an extractive process, where building institutions continue and allow for a continuation of productions, which will then bleed into continuity and sustainability?”

Samba Yonga: “About artists’ s visa (...) it has been agreed that there is a need to share risk between the partners in the north and the partners in the south, to ensure that even there is a process of going to access visa, there is a support system, enough time (...) there is also sufficient funding allowed for both institutions, for the institution that is inviting and the institution that is coming to the continent.”

Samba Yonga: “What are we doing with all this leverage that we have? As a Deconfining partnership, we have a strong leverage. The partners, the public funders in Europe, the strategic partners (...) How can we come together and meet on the continent and ensure that we are looking in the right places to provide access and sustainability for our artists? In a way that provides a level of equality. (...) If money comes from one place, that is where the decisions are made, it is very hard to provide equal decision-making if only one side is making money. This financial sovereignty would allow for an equal platform to make decisions and to execute as well.”

Samba Yonga: “The thing to do is allow the room and space for that knowledge exchange, indigenous knowledge systems. How do we decolonize the way of thinking, the ways of



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understanding, of expressing ourselves, therefore the ways of producing knowledge? The cycle of return looks at examining all of that.”

Vydia Tamby [in French, here summarized in English]: “It is important to look at the terminology that is all too easily overlooked. For example, the concept of culture: there is a different approach between the EU and Africa. [...] Or CCI. [...] For the Senegalese context where industrialization has never taken place [...] it’s not the right concept to use [...] Then there is the territorial specificity. The EU is different, all its countries; but Africa maybe even more so. [...] Or we could talk about the project logic that in my sense doesn’t allow for sustainability. [...] So already with that you have very different perspectives as the basis for cooperation. [...] We started the African Capitals of Culture, inspired by the European program. But we decided to do it differently in Africa, without competition. We wanted to work together. [...]

Antonia Blau: “I do remember a lot of talks in Brussels, with people from the Commission, thinking where do we put this project? Where can we apply? Where are the funds that allows for an equal African European culture project. (...) The answer was Creative Europe, which in a way is already limiting, because the partners all are European organisations (...) The way it was constructed already there is inequality, it is very difficult when you start from that, then to get to somewhere else. (...) This was possible five years ago. (...) Where is the future of these international cultural relations?”

Sylvia Amann: “In Creative Europe there is a small window in intercontinental cooperation and this small window we opened it to the extreme (...) now we are having the next negotiations rounds (...) now the European Commission has proposed to close the small window on international cooperation. Now the question is where to get the money from, in order to go ahead with projects like that? (...) We have to build strategic alliances; we have to bring in the private sector. The Europeans can learn a lot from the African continent.”

Samba Yonga: “We have to be honest and courageous and ask us...if we are going to continue intercontinental cooperation with Africa, what would it look like to exclude having going through the process with the EU continuing with the cooperation? What are the alternatives and option available? (...) There is a lot of funds on the continents that do support (...) What is strategically attractive for African investment to invest in a project like this? Usually we look the other way around.”

Vydia Tamby [in French, English summary]: We have to admit that we live in a capitalist system. But culture does not respond only to that logic. We cannot transfer the rules of capitalism to it. [...] It is also important to think that culture works in its own system, in a sort of cultural value chain. [...] I have a publishing house and I know that I depend on many other people before being able to publish a book...

Sylvia Amann: “What we never did and I still support the idea we had many years ago, we never defined what we mean with the creative culture industries (...) We use it as a concept



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for political discourse. This topic opens doors that are normally closed. (...) It opens up more opportunities, doors that normally remain close.”

Samba Yonga: “Think about the creative industries on the continent as a whole. That’s never been a time like now that the creative industries have gone up. (...) And the world is converging around Africa. (...) How do we equip Africans to position themselves to be able to make those kinds of decisions on ownerships and to be part of the conversation as well. (...) Talking with European parliamentarians and key stakeholders, those are the things that can make actual changes, so there is equality when somebody comes to invest on the continent and this wider distribution of knowledge around what to do.”

Samba Yonga: “The tendency is to apply laws and frameworks that might not work in our context. (...) (...) We still want to maintain the idea of a collective community, collective ownership, collective sustainability and collective income generation. (...) We also have the advent of AI (...) AI take all information, put it there, regurgitate it. But in Africa there is a lot of information in oral archives, still in places where AI cannot access, unless it is put in there by somebody. At the moment, there are projects funding African scholars, African creatives, African technologists, to find that information and put it in AI. Very soon, there will come a time where we will have no control on what we can protect or not. We have to think now what we can do now to mitigate that (...) it is about traceability and ownership.”

Sylvia Amann: “There is the crucial role of intermediaries. (...) We talk about very complex things (...) we need umbrella organisations, national cultural institutes (...). There are big institutions mobilizing for culture in the UN context (...) these are the movements we need and they are in place, therefore the more we engage, the better it can be.”

Antonia Blau: “Intermediaries, these are the alliances, the complicities, that we need and that have been fostered in the project, now we have to use them and play with them, in a strategic and intelligent way. We need to pressure European decision processes (...) try to make sure that the international component of cultural cooperation will find its way in the new EU programmes.”



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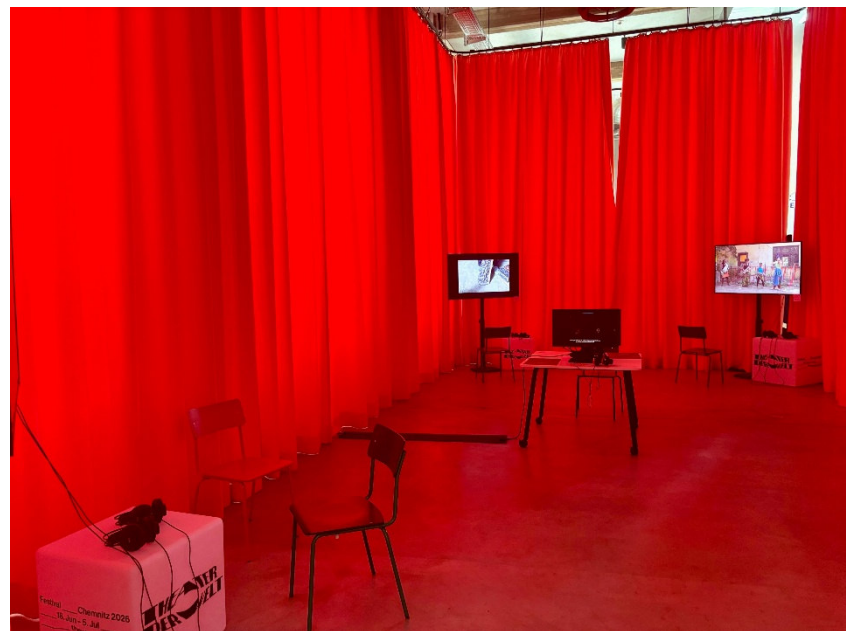


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The section “Artistic testimonials” at the Theater der Welt festival

A variety of multimedia artistic contributions offered insights into the intercontinental artistic projects funded during the Deconfining project.

The screen on the left showed the “Coffee Talk” with the Dry Ocean Collective, which stayed at the Goethe-Institut Madrid for an artistic residency in March 2024.



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Lesson learnt

Logistics challenges

Organisation of the closing conference outside our institution: we had to contribute financially to something that would have been available within our own premises (infrastructure, technical equipment) which had an impact on our budget.

During the IV microconference, the successful partnerships established within the project framework were evident. However, it also became clear that there are significant geopolitical and programme-related challenges to continuing it. The conference provided an opportunity to reflect critically on these challenges and consider possibilities for the project's continuation.



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The Deconfining project and the microconference on social media

Post published by the Goethe-Institut Madrid




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The Goethe-Institut Madrid newsletter sent to the subscribers



26 & 27 JUNE 2026 CHEMNITZ
BRIDGING THE GAPS
CONNECTING THE DOTS

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Conferencias | 26 - 07.06.2025 | Chemnitz + Online

Tendiendo puentes, uniendo puntos

Tras cuatro años, el proyecto europeo Deconfining llega a su fin con la conferencia híbrida «Bridging the Gaps: Connecting the Dots», que se celebrará en el festival Theater der Welt de Chemnitz. Echa un vistazo a las sesiones y regístrate para poder seguir en línea las mesas redondas y las ponencias de la conferencia.

Más



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Posts published by the Goethe-Institut Madrid in collaboration with the Deconfining Project



**26 & 27 JUNE 2026
CHEMNITZ (GERMANY)
BRIDGING THE GAPS
CONNECTING THE DOTS**

iti.germany und 3 weitere

significant milestone in Chemnitz, where the Final Conference — Bridging the Gaps. Connecting the Dots. — will take place as part of the #THEATERDERWELT festival. The gathering marks the culmination of an ambitious international initiative that has brought together cultural organisations, artists, researchers, and policymakers from across continents. We are looking forward to sharing artistic outcomes and research insights with you, and to engaging in discussions on building more inclusive, sustainable frameworks for international artistic cooperation.

Organised by Deconfining, ITI Germany and Goethe-Institut Madrid, in cooperation with THEATER DER WELT Chemnitz 2026.
Funded by the European Union, Kulturstiftung der Länder, and the

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23. April

Melde dich an, um mit „Gefällt mir“ zu markieren oder zu kommentieren.



Bridging the Gaps. Connecting the Dots.
CONFERENCE PROGRAMME
FRIDAY, 26th JUNE 2026 16:15 – 17:30

**#TALKS
INTERCONTINENTAL
ARTIST RESIDENCIES:**
A DISCUSSION ON BEST PRACTICES,
CURRENT CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

ELGAS,
LILIAN HIPOLYTE, ANA LESSING MENJIBAR,
DR. ANTONIA BLAU

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Artistic #residencies form a key part of the #Deconfining project. Adopting a participatory and egalitarian approach, the project has promoted collaboration and co-creation between European and African artists through residencies. For this conversation we invited artists and cultural facilitators who contributed in the past four years, to share their experiences. The roundtable will explore residencies as a form of collaboration between different continents, focusing on the associated challenges and potential best practices. Providing an overview of international artistic

Beitrag bewerben

37

3

Gefällt rosafiel_me und 36 weitere Personen

Vor 3 Tagen

Komentieren ...



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Posts published by Opendorf Afrika. The project coordinator Annika Turkowski participated in the IV Microconference

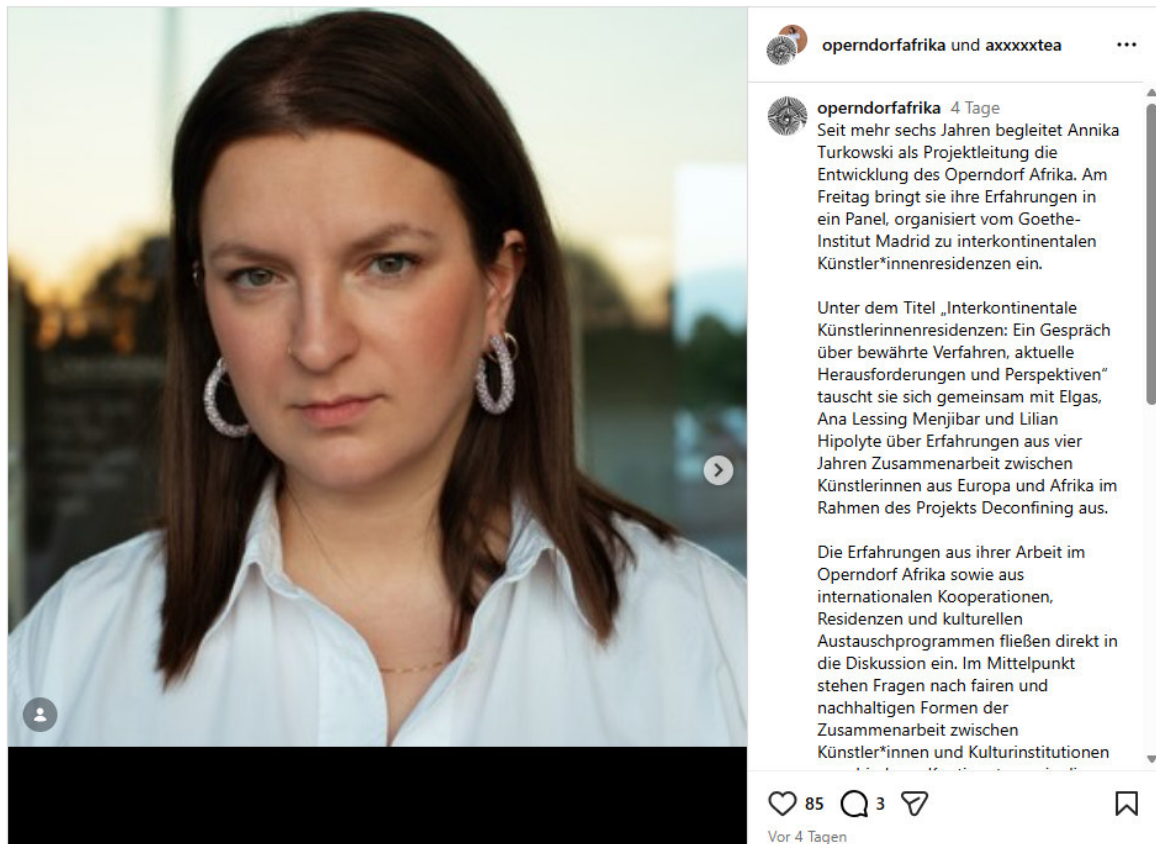


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