

Viewpoint

INTERVIEW WITH TILL STELLMACHER, RLC GLOBAL SECRETARIAT COORDINATOR IN BONN

"THE RIGHT LIVELIHOOD CAMPUS BONN HAS BECOME AN ESTEEMED PARTNER IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE"

ZEF has been a Campus of the Right Livelihood College (RLC) since 2011 and has hosted its Global Secretariat since 2014. What do you consider to have been the main achievements during this time?

It is quite amazing what the RLC Campus in Bonn has achieved during these first few years. A global network has been established based on exchanges with Laureates of the "Alternative Nobel Prize" and ZEF. Our PhD students are working worldwide in cooperation with Laureates. The RLC workshop series at ZEF are well established and are internationally recognized as high-profile education modules for PhD students from the Global South. More than 200 PhD students from 48 countries have participated in our workshops so far. The RLC Campus has become an esteemed partner in the sustainable development discourse locally here in Bonn and is also working with parties outside academia, for example on the international advisory board of the City of Bonn.

How many PhD students have been involved in the RLC research projects and can you give us two examples of their studies?

At the moment, we have five PhD students, one each from Malaysia, India, and Columbia and two from Kenya. All of them are working on case studies related to environmental sustainability and social justice. Our PhD student Juliet Wanjiku Kamau, for example, is currently conducting field research in her home country of Kenya, where she is studying aspects of sustainability in organic smallholder agriculture in partnership with Biovision Africa Trust in Nairobi, the organization founded by the "Alternative Nobel Prize" Laureate Hans Herren. Another example are the studies conducted by our PhD student Alejandro Mora Motta from Columbia, who is working on fundamental human needs in the context of large forestry plantations in Los Rios, Chile, together with the Laureate Manfred Max-Neef and our colleagues from the RLC Campus at the University of Valdivia, Chile.

What have been the main activities and highlights of the RLC Campus Bonn?

Our work is clustered into the areas of education, research and network activities, which are efficiently combined. Highlights are certainly our PhD students' one-year periods of empirical field research. The main highlights here in Bonn are our large-scale international workshops in which Laureates, PhD students and other scientists and practitioners work together on a particular topic on a transdisciplinary basis for a week. The workshops combine public speeches and panel discussions – at ZEF or other venues such as the Old City Hall or the University Club – with internal working groups and thematic sessions.

A real highlight for us was the workshop with Amy Goodman, US journalist, author and "Alternative Nobel Prize" Laureate, who visited ZEF in June 2014. PhD students from the Middle East and Africa, who are conducting research on the nexus between development and media in their home countries, teamed up in working groups with Ms. Goodman and other experts, public speeches were given at ZEF and parts of the workshop were held at and integrated into the Global Media Forum, in cooperation with the Deutsche Welle in Bonn. I would also like to mention the workshops with impressive Laureates like Sima Samar from Afghanistan and Nnimmo Bassey from Nigeria as well as visits by distinguished German authorities such as Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker. By the way, videos of all major RLC events are available on ZEF's Youtube channel.

Why is it important for ZEF to partner the activities of the "Alternative Nobel Prize" Laureates and the other Right Livelihood College Campuses around the world?

Over the past few years, 38 Laureates of the "Alternative Nobel Prize" paid a visit to ZEF. Each of them leads or represents development-oriented organizations and networks from around the globe. Most Laureates, however, have never previously been to Bonn – or have not known ZEF. As the Swedish Parliament honors new Laureates every year,



RLC team and students at the RLC campus in Bonn. From left to right: Till Stellmacher, Wagma Bromand, Alejandro Mora Motta, Divya Swaminathan, Wan Teng Lai, Tiemo Pokraka and Willis Okumu.

Facts & news

this is a dynamic and growing 'resource'. In addition, the RLC Global Secretariat at ZEF coordinates the RLC activities of development research institutes at seven universities worldwide, such as at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, Addis Ababa University, or the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies. This all strengthens ZEF's international position as an inter- and transdisciplinary development research and education hub.

The Campus and the Secretariat are funded by the DAAD and the Robert Bosch Foundation. Why is the RLC relevant to them?

The RLC's activities correspond to the goals and tasks of our funding agencies. All our education and research work is based on North-South and South-South dialogue and transdisciplinary cooperation between students, Laureates, scientists and civil society actors – based on the leitmotiv of 'change by exchange'. This enhances the qualifications of PhD students from the Global South in particular, enabling them to become responsible decision-makers, multipliers and change agents in the future.

Do you still have contacts with PhD students who have participated in your workshops?

Yes, certainly. The RLC workshop alumni network is striving to become a global pool of development and sustainability experts. Alumni make great use of our RLC blog (www.rlc-blog.org). Many gain remarkable positions after receiving their PhDs. Take, for example, Abdallah Possi from Tanzania, who participated in a RLC workshop on the rights of marginalized people in 2014, presenting his PhD research on the rights of people with albinism in Tanzania. As an albino himself, he was appointed Deputy State Minister for the rights of people with physical disabilities in Tanzania just one year later.

Imprint

Publishers: Center for Development Research (ZEF)
University of Bonn | Walter-Flex-Straße 3 | 53113 Bonn | Germany |
phone: +49 (0)228 / 73 6124 | fax: +49 (0)228 / 73 1889 |
e-mail: presse.zef@uni-bonn.de | www.zef.de
ISSN: 1438-0943

Editors: Irit Eguavoen, Mekbib Haile, Bernhard Tischbein and Alma van der Veen (resp.); Lynn Benstead (language editing)

Layout: Sebastian Eckert

Photos: ZEF. Cover photo: Janina Kleeman, ZEF.

Printers: Druckerei Paffenholz

Number of copies: 1,200.

ZEF news is published in English twice a year and can be ordered free of charge at presse.zef@uni-bonn.de



ZEF-IPADS international collaboration is strengthened by people's participation and cooperation

Six ZEF students have been visiting the International Program in Agricultural Development Studies (IPADS) at the University of Tokyo from March 11-20, 2016, for joint lectures, field training and exchange. Read more: bit.ly/IPADS-2016



Georg Forster Awardee Professor Soares-Filho now guest professor at ZEF

Professor Britaldo Silveira Soares Filho from the Federal University of Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, guest professor at ZEF, was one of eight awardees who received the Georg Forster Award from the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation in Bamberg on March 18, 2016. Read more: bit.ly/filho-ZEF



African network of DAAD excellence centers meets

Thirty-two representatives from the eight DAAD-sponsored Centres of Excellence in Africa gathered for the seventh DAAD Network Meeting in Accra from March 3-5, 2016. It was hosted by the Ghanaian-German Centre for Development Studies, which is run by ZEF in collaboration with the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) at the University of Ghana. Read more: bit.ly/GGCDS2016

Best Paper Award for ZEF researcher Oliver Kirui at the Indo-German Conference on Sustainability

ZEF's work on the Economics of Land Degradation was recognized with another award during the Indo-German Conference on Sustainability held at the India Institute of Technology, Madras, on February 27 and 28, 2016. Read more: bit.ly/Kirui

ZEF again in top positions among international Think Tanks

In the latest ranking of the University of Pennsylvania's "Global GO TO Think Tank Index Report 2015" ZEF is placed in excellent positions again. Read more: bit.ly/ZEFranks16

PAUWES visits ZEF

A second course for students from the Pan African University Institute of Water and Energy Sciences (PAUWES) based in Tlemcen, Algeria, took place in Bonn and Cologne. Twenty-two students from eight African countries participated in the Spring School held at ZEF from March 27-April 1, 2016. See: bit.ly/PAUWES16

Stay in touch with ZEF

facebook.com/zefuni Bonn

twitter.com/zef Bonn

youtube.com/zef Bonn

you can subscribe to our e-newsletter by sending an email to: presse.zef@uni-bonn.de