

Personal Profile

Thomas Bierschenk is university professor of Anthropology and Modern African Studies at the Department of Anthropology and African Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz (retired in 2019). He works on the state and bureaucracy and is involved in the DFG-funded research project 'Police Translations - Multilingualism and the Construction of Cultural Difference in Police Everyday Life'. Another current research interest relates to 'Capitalism and Entrepreneurship in Africa'. He has conducted extensive field research in the Sultanate of Oman and in West and Central Africa, and has published on the social impact of oil production; the sociology of Islam; the anthropological analysis of development; the social organization of the Fulani (*Fulbe*); decentralization and the local state; the public service and professional practices of state officials; and on wider aspects of anthropology and African studies.

His publications include *States at Work. Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*. Leiden: Brill 2014 (ed. with Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan); *Anthropology in the 21st Century*. Berlin: Reimer 2013 (in German, ed. with Matthias Krings and Carola Lentz; *50 Years of Independence in Africa. Continuities, Ruptures, Perspectives*. Cologne: Köppe 2012 (in German, ed. with Eva Spies). Recent publications: *Bureaucrats as Para-Ethnologists: The use of culture in state practices*. An introduction, (with Jan Beek, accepted, *Sociologus* vol. 70, 2020); *How to study bureaucracies ethnographically* (with Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan), *Critique of Anthropology* 39 (2): 243-257; *World anthropology with an accent: The discipline in Germany since the 1970s*. *American Anthropologist* 118 (2016), 364-375 (with Matthias Krings and Carola Lentz; *Police and State*, in: Ben Bradford, Beatrice Jauregui, Ian Loader and Jonny Steinberg (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Global Policing*, London, Sage: 155-174; *From the anthropology of development to the anthropology of global engineering*. *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 139 (1): 73-98. For a complete list [see](https://uni-mainz.academia.edu/ThomasBierschenk) the texts can be found at <https://uni-mainz.academia.edu/ThomasBierschenk> and https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Thomas_Bierschenk.

He is chairman of the scientific advisory board of the Laboratoire d'études et des recherches sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local (LASDEL, Niamey, Niger), and member of the editorial board of the journal 'Anthropologie et Développement'. In 2010, he was awarded the Order of the Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Bénin by the Government of the Republic of Benin for his services to German-African scientific cooperation.

Before coming to Mainz in 1997, Thomas Bierschenk worked at Georgetown University (Washington, DC); Bielefeld University; Free University of Berlin; the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Marseille, and the University of Hohenheim in Stuttgart. Since then, he has held visiting professorships at the University of Bonn (2001/2), the University of Uppsala (summer semester 2006), the New School of Social Research (New York, 2007/8), the Catholic University of Louvain-La-neuve (winter semester 2014), and the Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Science Po) in Bordeaux (winter semester 2019). From 1994 to 1998, Thomas Bierschenk was Secretary-General and then Chairman of the Association Euro-Africaine pour l'Anthropologie du Développement et du Changement Social/Euro-African Association for the Anthropology of Social Change and Development (APAD). From 2008 to 2010, he was Chairman of the Association for African Studies in Germany (VAD). He was a member of the Scientific Advisory Council of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ, 2004 -2010). From 2014 to 2018 he was Dean of the Department of History and Cultural Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz and a member of the academic Senate of the university.

Thomas Bierschenk completed his studies of history and social sciences at the University of Bielefeld in 1977 and received his doctorate in sociology from the University of Bielefeld in 1983. This was followed by his *Habilitation* at the Free University of Berlin (1991). He studied at the University of Trier, St. Peter's College in Oxford, the London School of Economics (LSE), the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, London), the University of Bordeaux, and the University of Bielefeld.