

Personal Profile

Carola Lentz is a Senior Research Professor at the Department of Anthropology and African Studies at Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, and President of the Goethe Institut. Her research focuses on West Africa, and she is particularly interested in the relations between ethnicity and nationalism, the symbolic construction of nations, the politics of memory, elite biographies, and the emergence of African middle classes. After conducting PhD fieldwork in Ecuador, on Indian labour migration and ethnicity, she has been engaged, since 1987, in research in Ghana and Burkina Faso on ethnicity, the history of chieftaincy and colonial history, land rights, labour migration, the politics of belonging, and middle-class and elite biographies.

She was a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin (Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin) in 2017–18, leading the focus group “Family history and social change in Africa”; a result of this is a book she is currently writing, together with Isidore Lobnibe, on changing memories in a Ghanaian extended family of which both authors are members. Furthermore, she directs a research project on “Early-career funding in German African science co-operations”, financed by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2019–20). Since 2009, she has conducted research on African independence jubilees and national celebrations. She supervised a doctoral research group as well as numerous fieldwork projects by Master students, and headed the research project “Performing the nation and sub-national differences in African national days” (2013–19) in the context of the interdisciplinary research group “Un/doing differences: practices of human differentiation” (coordinator: Stefan Hirschauer) at JGU Mainz.

Carola Lentz is member of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW) and of the National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina. She served as Secretary of the BBAW’s Social Science Class (2016–18) and as Vice President of the Academy from 2018 to 2020. From 2011 to 2015, she has been president of the German Anthropological Association. Since November 2020, she is President of the Goethe Institut.

Her recent publications include the co-authored monograph *Remembering Independence* (London: Routledge 2018, with David Lowe) and *Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2013), for which Lentz received the Melville J. Herskovits Award from the African Studies Association for the best English-language scholarly work on Africa published in 2013. Further books include *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006) and several edited volumes: *Ethnologie im 21. Jahrhundert* (edited together with Thomas Bierschenk and Matthias Krings, Berlin: Reimer, 2013); *Staatsinszenierung, Erinnerungsmarathon und Volksfest. Afrika feiert 50 Jahre Unabhängigkeit* (edited together with Godwin Kornes, Frankfurt/Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2011); and *Landrights and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa* (edited with Richard Kuba, Leiden: Brill, 2006). Lentz has published numerous articles in leading international journals. She was, during many years, co-editor of the series “African Social Studies” at Brill Publishers, and served as a member of the editorial board of *Africa* as well as many other international journals.

Before coming to Mainz in 2002, Carola Lentz held assignments at Free University Berlin (1987–93) and Goethe University Frankfurt/Main (1995–2002). She was awarded fellowships at the Institute for Advanced Study and Research in the African Humanities at Northwestern University (USA) (1993), the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Wassenaar) (2000–1),

and the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University (USA) (2008–9). In 2012–13 and again in 2019–20 she was a fellow of the International Research Centre “Work and Human Life Cycle in Global History“ at Humboldt University (Berlin); in 2015, she had a fellowship at the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg/Hanse Institute for Advanced Study in Delmenhorst (Germany), and 2017–18 she was fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. Furthermore, as part of the ERASMUS Programme, she taught at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Marseille and at Roskilde University.

Carola Lentz received her PhD in sociology from the University of Hannover in 1987 and completed her habilitation in social anthropology in 1996 at the Free University of Berlin.