

**M**y first stay at Goethe University Frankfurt was in 2015: I took part back then in a round table of development experts, the topic was NGOs in Burkina Faso in the face of economic constraints. I came to Frankfurt again in the autumn of 2017 with a scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service to compile a study on the contribution by NGOs to the development of Burkina Faso.

Despite the presence of many NGOs in Burkina Faso and despite the government's efforts to support vulnerable populations, major challenges persist. The motives for setting up NGOs are highly diverse: eliminating poverty, combating illiteracy and providing advice for women and young people, in particular with regard to better education. Some organisations also offer technical, civic and practical training for villagers as well as financial and technical support for implementing projects by farmers, as well as fostering economic activities.

During my stay, I was able to attend scientific lectures by colleagues in the department as well as the NGO colloquium entitled "Histories in Oblivion and Overlooked Lifeworlds".

## "A good place for African researchers"



**Professor Alain Joseph Sissao, 59,** is conducting research at the Institute of Sciences of Societies (INSS) at the National Centre for Scientific and Technological Research (CNRST) and is Research Director at Norbert Zongo University in Koudougou/ Burkina Faso.

The second phase of my stay consisted of visits and work sessions, for example with Professor Roland Hardenberg, Director of the Frobenius Institute. We talked about research

collaboration with Burkina Faso as well as a translation of an anthology of tales. I talked with Professor Mamadou Diawara, Deputy Director of the Frobenius Institute, about collaboration between Point Sud and the Institute of Sciences of Societies in Ouagadougou as well as the prospects for future collaboration with researchers in Burkina Faso.

It goes without saying that this community brought me a lot. I had perfect working conditions: an office with an internet connection, a library highly specialised in my field of work, fruitful contacts with competent and approachable colleagues. I also learnt a lot about how German research and science institutions work.

Goethe University Frankfurt is a good place for African researchers to work on promising research questions. The hospitality of university administration and my colleagues made my stay fruitful and pleasant. Exchange with European academics is important. Together we should find solutions for development issues. In particular, I'm planning joint publications with my colleague Professor Hans Peter Hahn, with whom I've been working on the research topic of NGOs in Burkina Faso since 2015.

## African Scholars at Goethe University Frankfurt

**I** arrived in Frankfurt on 21 October 2018, and the adventure of my research stay at Goethe University could begin. In my doctoral degree, I wanted to gain a detailed understanding of the role played by traditional female leaders in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Ghana. At the beginning of my project, I financed myself, later I received a scholarship from the Andrea von Braun Foundation as well as funds from Goethe University Frankfurt for field research. To preempt the outcome of my work: I found that female leaders, such as queen mothers, priestesses and female heads of families, although they are confronted with greater difficulties in local political affairs in Northern Ghana, have become important stakeholders in the fight against hunger, poverty, disease and environmental pollution.

Before coming to Frankfurt, I had completed my bachelor's degree in political science at the University of Ghana, then a master's degree in human security, a sub-domain of anthropology, at the University of Aarhus (Denmark). Frankfurt am Main, with its incredible skyline, bustling nightlife and multicultural diversity, was to become my

## "I can call myself a Frankfurter"



**Thompson Gyedu Kwarkye, 31,** completed his doctoral degree in June 2022 at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of Goethe University Frankfurt. The title of his thesis: Women in Local Governance; Exploring Nawuri Women Leaders in Human Security in Kpandai District, Ghana.

home for the next three and a half years. At the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of Goethe University Frankfurt, my interest in ethnological research grew more

and more. The outstanding professors here, the well-stocked library at the Frobenius Institute, access to a workplace, but above all the numerous colloquia, workshops and seminars have helped me to progress a lot.

As an African conducting research on Africa in Europe, collaboration, networking, participation in conferences and working groups were essential for my survival. I've gained important experience and acquired competencies such as project management, analytical, communication and presentation skills as well as proficiency in the German language. Exchanging with European academics has enabled me to learn how alternative approaches could lead to innovative solutions.

The biggest surprise for me was the persistent bureaucracy and paperwork not only at the university but also in the City of Frankfurt. Nevertheless, I'm very grateful to have been able to come to Frankfurt; the different people I met at the university (some of whom I'm proud to call my friends), the amazing food and drinks, and the modern aesthetics of the city delighted me again and again: I can call myself a Frankfurter.