AFRICA AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

Module “Regions in Globalization: Africa and the Near east”
Wednesday, 9-11 am
NSG, S 113
Moodle: https://moodle2.uni-leipzig.de/course/view.php?id=659

Dr. Ute Rietdorf
E-mail: rietdorf@uni-leipzig.de

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The term ‘Knowledge Economy’ was already coined by Peter Drucker in 1969. Yet, it took some time to enter academic discussions about the changed foundations of economic growth and competitiveness. It is in widespread use today, being taken for granted. Nevertheless, its bases, components and the consequences for different world regions are not always clearly understood. This seminar deals with aspects of Africa’s integration into the global economy; resting on knowledge as the most critical resource. Issues like education, innovation systems, investments into ICT-infrastructure, and societal framework conditions for reaping the economic benefits of accumulated knowledge will play a central role. In addition, the reality of knowledge generation and transfer in Africa is highlighted in case studies across the continent, including among others indigenous knowledge systems and intellectual property rights. The seminar closes with a review of the spatial features of knowledge production, and the discourse patterns inherent to the discussion in the African context.

SYLLABUS

Session 1: Introduction
Topics: Course objectives, course requirements and readings, overview about upcoming topics and their relevance, discussion of assignments

Session 2: Knowledge
Topics: Definition of ‘knowledge’; the economy of knowledge and its limits; knowledge policies in Africa and their link to sustainable development

Literature:

Session 3: The Knowledge Economy
Topics: Development, characteristics and signs of the ‘Knowledge Economy (KE)’ at a global scale; pillars of the KE and methods of measuring them; regional disparities; Africa’s status in the KE and future prospects
Literature:


Session 4: Knowledge Economy - Pillar I: Education
Topics: Relationship between education and KE; educational systems in Africa; educational policies in Africa; the link between education and ICT

Literature:


Session 5: Knowledge Economy - Pillar II: ICT
Topics: Relationship between ICT and KE; the ‘Digital divide’; ICT in education policy and practice in Africa; ICT and economic development

Literature:


Session 6: Knowledge Economy - Pillar III: Innovation Systems
Topics: The meaning of ‘innovation’; relationship between innovation (systems) and KE; innovation and innovation systems in Africa; sectoral approaches to innovation in Africa; challenges and opportunities for innovation systems in Africa

Literature:


Session 7: Knowledge Economy - Pillar IV: Institutions & economic incentives
Topics: Defining ‘institutions’; the Institutional Economics’ approach to economic development; the role of incentives for economic development; the relationship between institutions and KE; governing the pillars of the KE

Literature:

Session 8: Intellectual capital & economic development in Africa
Topics: The term ‘intellectual capital’; the European approach to measure intellectual capital; intellectual capital and firms’ development; policy making for supporting intellectual capital formation, accumulation, and disclosure in Africa

Literature:

Session 9: A: Indigenous knowledge systems
Topics: Defining ‘Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)’; research on IKS in Africa and its application in the global KE; managing indigenous knowledge in and for Africa’s development

Literature:

Session 10: B: Research and Development in Africa
Topics: General trends of research and development (R&D) in Africa; the link between R&D, knowledge production and economic development; agricultural research in Africa and agricultural innovation; incorporating indigenous knowledge into R&D
Literature:


**Session 11: C: Intellectual Property Rights**

**Topics:** Intellectual property rights and economic development; international systems of protecting intellectual property; nature-related indigenous knowledge, its economic use and protection

**Literature:**


**Session 12: The Spatiality of Knowledge Production**

**Topics:** The spatial context of knowledge production; proximity and virtuality; knowledge spillovers and technology transfer; the spatial governance of knowledge production and its political economy

**Literature:**


**Session 13: The ‘Knowledge Economy’ and the Transformation of Space: E-commerce & m-Pesa**

**Topics:** Defining ‘e-business/e-commerce’; linking e-commerce with intellectual capital; challenges and opportunities of e-commerce in Africa; m-pesa: the Kenyan way of transforming economy and society

**Literature:**


Session 14: The Discourse about ‘Knowledge Economy’ in Africa
Topics: ‘Knowledge Economy’ reviewed; critical reflections on knowledge as the key resource; knowledge and the politics of discourse

Literature:

Session 15: Summary and Final Discussion
Summing up; outlook to future areas of research