

# **The role of the African diaspora in the internationalisation of German companies in Africa**

Authors:

Sonja Mattfeld and Tilo Halaszovich  
Jacobs University Bremen



JACOBS  
UNIVERSITY

on behalf of the German Africa Foundation



**Deutsche Afrika Stiftung e.V.**  
**Fondation Allemande pour l'Afrique**  
**German Africa Foundation**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Initiation and motivation

The German Africa Foundation sees a well-founded interest in linking the topics of "promoting German economic activities in Africa" and "African diaspora in Germany" in order to identify future potentials and challenges and to address them in politics, business and society.

As business economists, we can only share this interest, as it is not yet explainable from an economic perspective why German companies, which are normally very export-oriented, are so underrepresented on the African continent. Investigating this question from the perspective of the African diaspora and thus expanding both the holistic macroeconomic and the traditional company-centred perspective is an appealing multidisciplinary challenge that we are happy to take on.<sup>1</sup>

Since we are entering new territory with this study, we have chosen an explorative approach by using qualitative research methodology in order to get to know the research field in depth and to be able to classify it theoretically (see chapter 3). The conceptual framework for us is the internationalisation process theory including dynamic capabilities, whereby we focus particularly on social and cultural capital as well as discourse-based approaches. Other relevant sub-topics of internationalisation in this context are trust building, knowledge transfer and competence development to identify opportunities (see chapter 2).

Against this theoretical background, we ask ourselves the following practical questions, which we answer empirically in chapter 4 through the interviews with seventeen members of the African diaspora in Germany:

- a) What does the current engagement of German companies in Africa look like from the perspective of the diaspora? Which internal and external factors are relevant?
- b) What concrete contribution can members of the diaspora make or are already making to internationalisation in companies?
- c) How do members of the diaspora see their individual roles and the position of the African diaspora as a whole? How are they perceived in Germany?
- d) How does the African diaspora assess the measures to promote German economic activities in Africa - especially with regard to the involvement of the diaspora?
- e) How does the involvement of the African diaspora at private and public level compare to other countries, especially France?

In chapter five, we will first combine the empirical data about the questions at the company level with the theoretical concepts mentioned above in order to draw deductive conclusions. This foundation enables us to elaborate clear recommendations for action to all actors - the private sector, the diaspora, the political actors and also society as a whole (chapters 6 and 7).

With this study, we are pleased not only to reveal deep insights into the everyday life of companies and the perception of the diaspora, but also to provide clear results that are equally supported by theory and empiricism and link the two fields of action mentioned at the beginning, "African diaspora in Germany" and "promotion of German economic activities in Africa".

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the diverse perspectives (e.g. from social sciences, psychology, history etc.) contributing to the topic, the theoretic discussion in this study will focus on the analysis of companies as the central object of investigation in business and management studies and the place where the internationalisation of economic activities take place.

The aim of this study is to give the African diaspora in Germany a direct voice in order to raise the discussion about the economic activities of German companies in Africa to a new level. For this reason, we gave an above-average amount of space to the quotations in this study, which we consider necessary for understanding the results.

1.2 Economic and political relevance

According to statistics from the German Bundesbank, there were fewer than a thousand German companies that invested directly in Africa in 2019. This means that the amount of foreign investment and the influence of German companies on local economic development remains quite small.

Many German SMEs in particular start their foreign engagement through export activities with local partners and are thus indirectly involved in local value creation. However, as table 1 shows, Africa's relevance in the foreign business of German firms is also very low. If we apply the ratio of 1.8% of the export volume to the total number of approx. 350,000 export-oriented companies in Germany in 2019 (Institut für Mittelstandsforschung, Bonn, 2021), this means that approx. 6,300 companies export to the entire continent, whereby this figure drops again to approx. 3,500 if we only consider sub-Saharan Africa and is even lower if we exclude South Africa.

Tab. 1: German exports to Africa in 2019 and 2020 (in million euros)

Region	2019	2020	Change 2019/2020
Northern Africa	10,041	9,476	- 5.60%
Sub-Saharan-Africa	13,586	10,589	-22.10%
Western Africa	2,363	2,310	-2.30%
Central Africa	138	179	30.40%
Eastern Africa	1,164	1,010	- 1.3%
Southern Africa	9,921	7,091	-28.50%
Africa	23,627	20,065	-15.10%
World	1,328,152	1,205,045	-12.8%
Share Africa	1.80%	1.70%	

Source: Own creation based on: GTAI, German Trade & Invest (2021)

Interestingly, the share of the African diaspora in the total population of Germany is also estimated between 1 and 2%. Here, too, there are limitations to the data available. For example, the statistics of the Central Register of Foreigners (as of 31 December 2021) show that 650,665 people from Africa lived in Germany last year - regardless of whether they were born in Germany or immigrated. However, these figures do not include people who also hold German citizenship (Statista, 2022). Thus, neither naturalised persons of African origin nor their children born in Germany are included, nor are the children of binational partnerships who have not immigrated independently. Members of the African diaspora with French passports are also not listed here. This automatically leads to a serious underestimation. Following the German Afro Census (*Afrozensus 2020*), we therefore estimate the number at over one million people (Aikins et al., 2021).

A clear reproduction of numbers is further complicated by the fact that the African diaspora in Germany is not a homogeneous group. The cultural imprint and relations to the region of origin are very different (ADAN, 2020). For a conceptualisation of the term diaspora in this study we would therefore like to refer to the definition of the African Union: "The African Diaspora consists of people of African descent and heritage living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and who remain committed to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union. (African Union, 2022)

Consequently, the concept of diaspora goes beyond the so-called migration background meaning that it is based on self-identification and thus includes experiences of different generations and references to the African continent. This understanding is also compatible with the approach taken in the first German Afro Census (Aikins et al., 2021).

There are hundreds of organisations of the African diaspora in Germany. Most of them are cultural associations that serve the cohesion and mutual support of certain, mostly national, sometimes also religious groups. Then there are the associations that serve the exchange with members of the white majority society as well as organisations that are mainly supported by Afro-Germans. In addition, there are projects initiated from Germany by the diaspora for economic promotion and social dialogue with countries on the African continent and the relatively young organisations of refugee resistance, in which African people are significantly active (Bollwinkel, 2014). According to the *Afrozensus 2020*, members of the African diaspora are more engaged than average<sup>2</sup> - especially in the social sector (Aikins et al., 2021).

### 1.3 Visibility of the diaspora at the (economic-)political level<sup>3</sup>

At the political level, the migration landscape in general is still weakly represented in Germany. Since 2017, there is the Bundeskonferenz der Migrant\*innenorganisationen (BKMO) as a regular discussion forum with clear political and social topics. An example of their work is a draft law for the equal participation of people with a migration history (Bundespartizipationsgesetz) which was developed by the BKMO (BKMO, 2022). Individuals and associations of the African diaspora are also actively involved here, but there is no explicit Africa and/or economic focus.

In order to examine the inclusion of the African diaspora in the topic of economic development in the sectoral ministries, we researched the webpages of the ministries that are most likely to come into contact with it, i.e. the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF) and the Federal Foreign Office (AA).

However, we would like to start with a brief look at the education sector, as this is where the foundation for the careers of young members of the African diaspora is laid. At the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBWF), for example, we find references to the BMBWF's Africa Strategy, which was presented at the end of 2018 by the former Minister Anja Karliczek with the involvement of the diaspora. "We want to attract bright African minds who live here today in the

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<sup>2</sup> Out of the nearly 6,000 respondents for the *Afrozensus 2020*, 46.8% reported being active as volunteers (Aikins et al., 2021).

<sup>3</sup> In the following, we will not elaborate on the backgrounds of the initiatives „Compact with Africa“ and „Marshall Plan with Africa“ presented in 2017, but will focus on current programmes and offers without going into the details of the individual measures.

diaspora to pass on knowledge they have acquired in Africa and to help develop science systems on the continent. " (BMBF, 2022). The strategy was developed with the participation of German and African stakeholders and focuses particularly on cooperation in science and research, rather than on the economy (BMBF, 2022).

Hence, the Economic Cluster Africa Research (WCA) is not funded by the BMBF, but by the BMWK and BMF (BMWK, 2022a). On the information pages of the BMWK, which is primarily responsible for promoting the economic activities of German companies in Africa, there is also information about many other instruments of foreign trade promotion with a more or less direct focus on Africa, for example the Market Development Programme, Foreign Trade Fair Programme, Manager Training Programme, Hermes Cover, Energy Partnerships, Africa Business Guide and others (BMWK, 2022b). However, we could not find any references to the inclusion of the diaspora in the design and/or implementation of these programmes. It is thus apparently left up to the implementing agencies (e.g. Business Network Africa, Network of Foreign Chambers of Commerce, IHK Network Office Africa, GTAI, etc.) to decide to what extent they integrate the diaspora.

In addition to the AfricaGrow and AfricaConnect programmes for financing business in Africa, the Africa Business Network mentioned above is part of the Development Investment Fund, which was launched in 2019 and is supported by the BMWK and BMZ with the involvement of various other actors, such as DEG (Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft), KfW Bankengruppe or the Agency for Economic Affairs and Development (AWE) (Agentur für Wirtschaft & Entwicklung, 2021). Here too, we were unable to identify any involvement of the diaspora in the design of the funding measures.

On a positive note, some initiatives of the BMZ should be mentioned, which discovered the topic of migration and development relatively early on and, for example, commissioned studies on the Cameroonian and Ghanaian diasporas in Germany through the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in 2007, 2009 and 2015. Furthermore, the programme "Migration & Diaspora" (PMD) promotes the engagement of people with a migration history in Germany in order to sustainably advance social and economic development in 22 partner countries, including the following six countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Ethiopia, Ghana, Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal. Worth mentioning here are the programmes "Diaspora Professionals" (short-term voluntary assignments in countries of origin), "Returning Professionals" and "Business Ideas for Development" (support for start-ups in countries of origin). Furthermore, they support diaspora organisations committed to development policy with the organisation of non-profit and -development-relevant projects in the partner countries (BMZ, 2022a).

However, these diaspora initiatives seem to be relatively detached from the economic promotion measures, where the BMZ has also become very active in recent years. In addition to the aforementioned AWE, examples include the Strategic Partnership for Technology in Africa (SPTA), Invest for Jobs, develoPPP.de, leverist.de, the Import Promotion Desk (IPD), the German Desks or the Business Scouts for Development, all of which have either a complete or partial focus on Africa (BMZ, 2022b). We could not identify any involvement of the diaspora in these business initiatives.

On the other side, there is the BMZ project WIDU.africa, which was developed in cooperation with members of the African diaspora in Germany in 2019. Through the influence of the diaspora, the

initiative, which was originally planned as purely charitable, became an economic approach to support small businesses in Africa with financing and coaching. In the meantime, this concept has been implemented in several African countries and also involved members of the African diaspora in other European countries (WIDU, 2022).

The Foreign Office will certainly not publish its diplomatic interlocutors inside and outside the diaspora. Moreover, the local implementation of economic promotion activities is up to the individual embassies. It is interesting to see that the introductory article on the website of the Federal Foreign Office on Africa's economy starts with the words "Africa is bursting with potential" (Auswärtiges Amt, 2022) and then also explains the importance of Africa as a business location. The BMZ and the BMBF are mentioned as cooperation partners at the end of the article. The BMWK or the African diaspora are not mentioned (Auswärtiges Amt, 2022b).

However, we did find an explicit mention of the diaspora on the AA website. In autumn 2017, the series "Africa Dialogue" took place, in which current topics and challenges of German and European Africa policy were discussed. The target group was academics, representatives of civil society and others interested in Africa. One event in the series was dedicated to discussions with representatives of the African diaspora in Germany (Auswärtiges Amt, 2022b).

## **2 Theoretical embeddedness in the research field International Business**

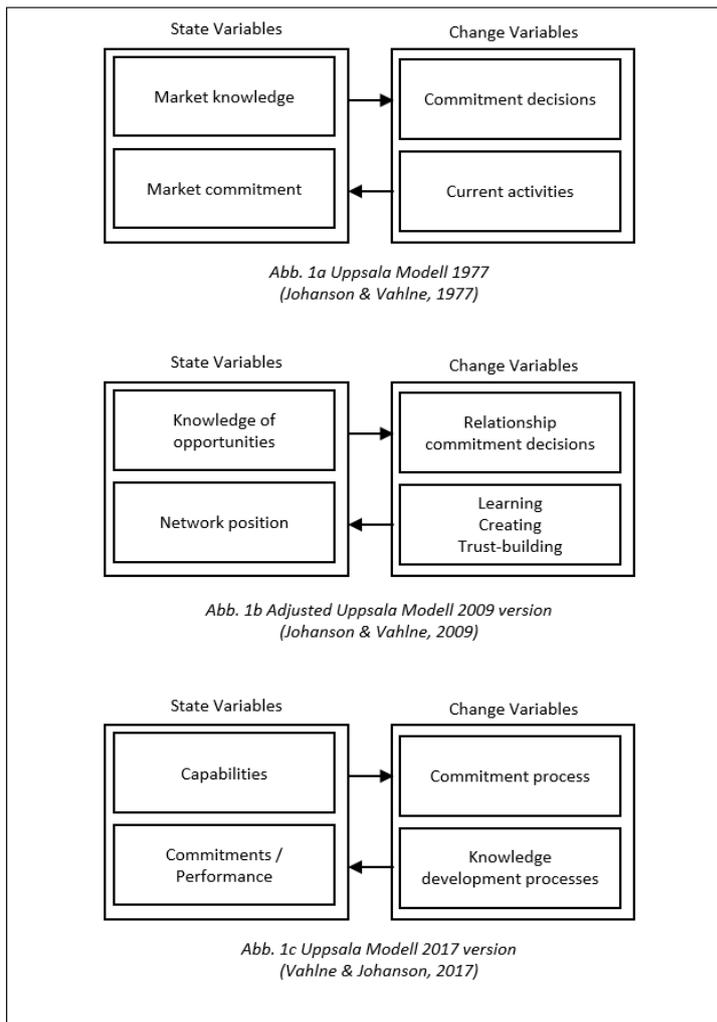
The research field of international business (sometimes also international management) is a sub-discipline of economics and is characterised by a multidisciplinary approach to the questions of the international development of companies and countries (Swoboda et al., 2022). The focus lies on issues arising from cross-border economic activities for companies, national economies and institutions.

### **2.1 Internationalisation<sup>4</sup> and dynamic capabilities**

One of the best-known models of the internationalisation process is the Uppsala model (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977), which describes how companies develop their foreign activities incrementally. A central factor of the theory is the interplay between learning from experience (experiential learning) and the firms' commitment abroad. Over the last decades, the model has adapted to the changing realities in the globalised world by seeing the firm's embeddedness in local networks through trust-building and learning processes as the key route to successful market entry in the host country (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). In order to take into account the growing importance of micro-processes in companies, i.e. to include the prominent role of strategic decisions at management level, and also to recognise the changed learning process in a globalised world, the concept of dynamic (managerial) capabilities has most recently been integrated into the Uppsala model (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017; Vahlne, 2020).

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<sup>4</sup> We understand internationalisation here to mean any form of foreign activity - from pure exports to local investments.



The dynamic capability approach focuses on how companies build and sustain comparative competitive advantage in dynamic markets by successfully adapting to changing market conditions through their ability to change (Teece et al. 1997; Nagel, 2015). In this context, capabilities are divided into three steps: perceiving opportunities, seizing those opportunities, and changing the firm's tangible and intangible resources (Haapanen et al., 2020). "For analytical purposes, dynamic capabilities can be disaggregated into the capacity (1) to sense and shape opportunities and threats, (2) to seize opportunities, and (3) to maintain competitiveness through enhancing, combining, protecting, and, when necessary, reconfiguring the business enterprise's intangible and tangible assets." (Teece, 2007).

Individual competence development at the organisational but also at the personal level is critical for recognising and exploiting opportunities in the internationalisation process, especially since individuals mostly operate in an uncertain context, which influences the risk-taking behaviour of decision-makers (Kahnemann, 2003). This also applies to German companies that want to identify and seize market opportunities in Africa and have to prove themselves there in a competitive environment.

## 2.2 Knowledge and learning in ambidextrous conditions

In the internationalisation process, access to information and the development of knowledge<sup>5</sup> is relevant not only to reduce uncertainty, but also because market knowledge in particular quickly becomes obsolete in emerging dynamic markets such as African countries (Villar et al., 2014). Furthermore, there is a lot of tacit knowledge in unfamiliar markets that is embedded institutionally or in local networks (Halaszovich & Lundan, 2016). This aspect is even more important, because Germany is shaped mostly by SMEs where knowledge resides in the people themselves and is not systematically managed in the organisation as such (Villar et al., 2014).

The subjective knowledge of decision-makers, their individual skills and competencies are therefore an integral part of internationalisation in order to build relationships and make the knowledge development process flexible and thus successful (Vahlne, 2020). Experimental learning is thus as much a part of successful strategic management as maintaining operational routines and organising existing resources (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). This entrepreneurial balancing act is called ambidexterity and can in itself be described as a dynamic capability (Teece, 2014): "ambidextrous organisations (...) are capable of simultaneously exploiting existing competencies and exploring new opportunities" (Raisch et al., 2009).

This simultaneous pursuit of exploratory and exploitative approaches, when applied to market entry into new countries, means experimenting with new, alternative models and possibly learning new skills, while at the same time exploiting existing resources and applying and expanding known competencies (Filippini et al., 2012). In the traditional view of internationalisation motives, companies from developed countries are assumed to pursue a pure exploitation strategy in their overseas activities, while companies from less developed, emerging countries are said to pursue an exploration strategy and see internationalisation itself as an opportunity to acquire new knowledge and develop new competitive advantages (Sinkovics et al, 2018; Wu & Johanson, 2021). However, taking into account the dynamic capabilities (DC) approach, the learning process in new markets becomes very important for all companies, including those from already established and export-experienced countries such as Germany.

A very different perspective on knowledge transfer in less developed countries is described by Levin & Barnard (2013), who found in an empirical study with managers in South Africa that knowledge generated through interpersonal relationships with foreign countries is more useful than that from local sources. Thus, information is actively generated by members of the South African diaspora to address local challenges (Levin & Barnard, 2013). Even if this finding is not directly related to the internationalisation of German companies, it underlines the role of the diaspora in Africa's economic development and the thesis of a 'brain circulation' instead of a 'brain drain' (Saxenian, 2005). On the other hand, it shows the immense importance of trust building and interpersonal relationships as a prerequisite for a successful knowledge development process (Vahlne, 2020; Levin & Barnard, 2013).

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<sup>5</sup> Even though a differentiation of the different types of knowledge (e.g. market knowledge, business knowledge, institutional knowledge and relationship-specific knowledge) can be very relevant in individual cases - especially in countries with less developed institutions - we do not want to go into the different types of knowledge in more detail due to space restrictions.

## 2.3 Global dynamic managerial capabilities and cognitive perception of public discourses

Some elements of the DC approach can indeed be solved at the organisational level of the company; but as already stated, a large part of the capabilities lie at the personal level, i.e. within the managerial staff (Teece, 2012). Based on this insight, the DC concept has been extended several times, first introducing dynamic managerial capabilities (DMC) (Adner & Helfat, 2003), before Tasheva and Nielsen (2020) developed the global dynamic managerial capabilities (GDMC) specifically for competencies in the field of internationalisation.

Both DMC and GDMC refer to assumptions of the upper echelons perspective, according to which the top managers of a company interpret situations on the basis of their personal experiences and perceptions, and thus shape an organisation through their decisions and strategies (Haapanen, 2020; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). In concrete terms, the competences of managers consist of three components: a) (international) human capital - for example, in the form of the stages of the curriculum vitae, b) (international) social capital, which lies in networks and relationships of individuals, and c) (international) managerial cognition, i.e. the decision-making behaviour of managers based on subjective information processes and beliefs (Tasheva & Nielsen, 2020).

The latter cognitive processes of an individual are also socio-culturally shaped. Although we do not want to go into the factor of cultural shaping in more details, we will briefly introduce the concept of the social narrative (or discourse). There is currently a controversial debate in the IB academic community on how a discourse-based perspective can be taken into account in the process of internationalisation (e.g. Trevino & Doh, 2021; Hakanson, 2021; Ault, Newenham-Kahindi & Patnaik, 2021). It is undisputed that both, the internal company and the public discourses or narratives (most of which have developed historically), have an impact on decision-makers, their perception of the world and thus the strategic direction of internationalisation (Trevino & Doh, 2021; Hakanson, 2021).

How individuals interpret and cognitively process certain external circumstances, such as the Africa narrative in Germany, also depends on the configuration of the two other capabilities within the GDMC. For example, international human capital is valued more highly by leaders with international education and work experience abroad, as previous studies have shown that this human capital endowment provides an advantage in perceiving opportunities and risks, as well as greater sensitivity to formal and informal institutions (Tasheva & Nielsen, 2020).

## 2.4 Change from social to intercultural capital in bicultural persons<sup>6</sup>

Research attributes also a great importance and value to the second source of GDMC, the social capital, since the embeddedness in international networks and the resulting interactions and confrontation with (new) knowledge are a great support for managers to make decisions under uncertain conditions (Tasheva & Nielsen, 2020). Especially against the background of the complex interactions between headquarters and foreign branches, studies show that the need for transnational bridge builders or boundary spanners (with high social capital) will increase in

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<sup>6</sup> In order not to go beyond the scope of the study, we will not look further into the diverse contributions and theories of culture and (inter)cultural identities from psychology, sociology, communication research and other disciplines, but will concentrate on a rather short explanation of the idea of the intercultural bridge builder based on the concepts of social capital, biculturalism and boundary spanning.

the future (Kostova & Roth, 2003; Reiche, Harzing & Kraimer, 2009), which could also become interesting for the African diaspora.

As early as 1998, the management researchers Nahapiet and Ghoshal examined the significance of social capital on the economic performance of companies and nations and divided the concept into structural, relational and cognitive capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Some authors refer to the relational level as the core of social capital (Lew et al., 2013), with trust playing a central role for knowledge creation and transfer and for reducing uncertainty (Li, 2005; Johanson & Vahlne, 2006).

The functions of social capital become even more relevant in the international context, when the social capital of bicultural individuals gives rise to an intercultural capital<sup>7</sup>, which allows migrants and diasporas to become intercultural bridge builders, as they have often grown up under the influence of two (or more) cultures and can draw on diverse knowledge and networks in the countries of origin (Barmeyer & Grosskopf, 2019). This idea is based on the concept of boundary spanners, in addition to social capital and biculturalism. Boundary spanners are individuals who initiate or facilitate the transmission of information at strategic interfaces in organisations (Richter et al., 2006). This function applies both within organisations and between different actors (Piaskowska et al., 2015).

In their article, Barmeyer and Grosskopf (2019) further point out that bicultural people, especially migrants, can in principle be intercultural bridge builders, but that success depends above all on the use of linguistic and intercultural competences (such as empathy, openness and flexibility) as well as on individual cultural intelligence, i.e. awareness of one's own cultural and other-cultural imprints, and a high level of self-motivation and enthusiasm (Barmeyer & Grosskopf, 2019; Genkova, 2018; Earley & Ang, 2003).

## 2.5 Summary of the theoretic framework

As a short theoretical abstract of the research object, it can be said that the successful internationalisation of companies in unknown markets (which in this case include African countries) depends above all on access to local knowledge, on the basis of which decisions about further engagement are made. Knowledge is created through learning processes and trust, the development of which, especially in emerging markets, strongly depends on the dynamic (management) capabilities of an organisation. For this, it is crucial not only to sense new opportunities in an explorative way and to seize them flexibly, but at the same time to exploit existing resources. In this strategic trade-off, managers do not act rationally in the sense of a homo oeconomicus, but are socially and culturally shaped (for example through discourses or biculturalism), which has an impact on their perception and decision-making processes.

This theoretical context can be seen as analytical framework for the internationalisation of German companies in Africa, in which we will now examine how the African diaspora perceives the activities of the companies and what role their members play there. The methodological approach and the empirical findings will be presented in the next two chapters before we return to the theoretical concepts discussed here with our model in chapter 5.

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<sup>7</sup> The concept of intercultural capital is derived from Bourdieu (1986), who linked three types of human capital: social, economic and cultural.

### 3 Methodological approach

As already pointed out, there is not only a lack of theoretical approaches for integrating the various above mentioned approaches shown on the topic of internationalisation in general, but also specifically on sub-Saharan Africa and here in particular on the role of the African diaspora in Germany. Furthermore, due to the poor data situation, hypothesis formation and its quantitative verification is hardly possible in such an environment. For these reasons, we opted for a qualitative research design. This exploratory approach allows us to gain insights into the research field, in this case the activities of the diaspora in the business management of African countries. Additionally, the processing and interpretation of this condensed information allow us to draw both empirically sound and theory-based conclusions.

The empirical data is based on ethnographic interviews with seventeen representatives of the African diaspora who were either born and/or grew up in Germany or came to Germany at a later date to study, as refugees or for professional or private reasons. Two of the interviewees are currently living on the African continent again. When selecting the interview partners, we ensured that there were connections to as many different countries and regions of sub-Saharan Africa as possible, so that a total of thirteen different country backgrounds are covered by our informants. Six interviewees have roots in the Francophone countries of West and Central Africa, four in Anglophone West Africa, five in East Africa and two in Southern Africa. We have explicitly excluded the North African countries and South Africa from the scope of the study, as the economic relations of German companies in these countries are predominantly not comparable with the wider countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Halaszovich & Mattfeld, 2020).

When selecting the interviewees, we took care to make sure that the majority of the persons were active in the German-African economic context, i.e. that they were either consultants themselves, employed in German companies with a connection to Africa or worked for public or private institutions (e.g. economic development initiatives, non-governmental organisations). It should be mentioned that one of the interviewees does not belong to the German but to the Dutch diaspora, and another person is not economically but journalistically active in the German-African context. The aforementioned content-related criteria took precedence over gender in our selection; which is why there is a slight imbalance here<sup>8</sup> (five female vs. twelve male interviewees).

The selection of the interview partners followed a step-by-step, purposeful sampling strategy in order to present the research field in its complexity with as rich and relevant information as possible (Patton, 2002; Flick, 2007). Since the empirical field itself is already quite narrowly set by the research context, the main concern here is to gain access to the most in-depth analyses possible through the interviews. For this, a relationship of trust between questioner and interviewee is crucial, which we were able to represent in the form of the ethnographic interviews.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, it was important to us to go into the breadth of the research field,

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<sup>8</sup> Whether this imbalance is also representative of the activities within the diaspora community or pure coincidence is something we do not know and should not be the subject of this study or cause for speculation.

<sup>9</sup> The open framework of this interview form was possible because the researcher herself had been working in the research field (promotion of economic activities in Africa) for several years and thus the conversational situations could largely be designed as 'friendly conversation' with ethnographic explanations and questions (Spradley, 1979) for the explicit purpose of the study. Thus, the atmosphere during the interviews was predominantly one of trust and openness.

i.e. to include different perspectives and backgrounds. This was achieved through the step-by-step selection of informants.

For reasons of anonymity and anti-discrimination, we have decided to present the sources of the quotations in this study completely anonymously without drawing conclusions about gender, field of activity or connections in Africa. We do not consider this information relevant for the validity of the quotations. Should the reader nevertheless have questions of understanding or doubts about the authenticity of the statements, we are happy to disclose the anonymised transcripts or further information.

In practice, the interviews in this study were recorded with the consent of the interviewees and transcribed with the help of AI-based software. Subsequently, the transcripts were coded and categorised in the MAXQDA programme. The method of open coding was used with the aim of structuring the text and summarising described phenomena in codes (Flick, 2007). In a second step, categories were formed that resulted from the codes themselves and were condensed through the practical and theoretical pre-understanding and with the help of the frame of reference of the study questions.

The interpretation of the data, which serves to develop the theory model, was done by repeatedly asking new questions towards the text or towards the individual codes (Flick, 2007) and thus trying to reconstruct the intended meaning. With this inductive way of abstracting and evaluating, we follow the hermeneutic research tradition (Mees-Buss et al., 2022).

#### **4 From the perspective of the African diaspora: The internationalisation of German companies in Africa and the involvement of the diaspora**

In this chapter we would like to let our interview partners speak and include original quotes on the following topics:

- a) What does the current engagement of German companies in Africa look like from the perspective of the diaspora? Which internal and external factors are relevant?
- b) What concrete contribution can members of the diaspora make or are already making to internationalisation in companies?
- a) How do members of the diaspora see their individual roles and the position of the African diaspora as a whole? How are they perceived in Germany? What role does the discussion about the brain drain play in this context?
- c) How does the African diaspora assess the measures to promote German economic activities in Africa - especially with regard to the involvement of the diaspora?
- d) How does the involvement of the African diaspora at private and public level compare to other countries, especially France?

##### **4.1 Assessment of the activities of German companies in Africa**

With regard to product decisions and distribution structures in African export markets German companies often follow the familiar thought patterns and experiences from existing markets. Some companies seem to perceive the differences of the African countries but put their own

concepts and views above a market analysis. In any case, access to market information seems to be difficult for German companies for various reasons.

"When I started at the company (...), colleagues before me tried to work the African market as such. They copied our distribution system from Europe and wanted to 'paste' it one to one. It didn't work because the concepts that work in Europe are mostly useless for Africa, which means the distribution channel via dealer and supplier. Much more has to happen in the background so that the African can comfortably expand the business. And when I came, we had to discard the whole thing and develop individual solutions, because it was assumed that Africa is like Europe - homogeneous." (Interview No. 13)

"However, there is also the other side, because (...) people in Germany often don't know what's going on. (...) A very big problem is that product decisions are made in Germany without even asking the local market. I have experienced that a few times. And then you wonder. Then the product comes here and nobody buys it." (Interview No. 10)

"Many German companies have wonderful ideas and I always think that's great. (...) But they think that you don't need a market study or due diligence, that you will just go there with your idea and everyone will say "Yes, great, I'll take the idea and I'll invest in it." That just doesn't work. If you have an idea, if you want to sell a product or you want to build something there, you have to do a normal business plan, do a due diligence study. Who are the competitors? Is there any competition at all? Is there even a need for the product? (...) And then they say, I have a great idea, I want to talk to the president, I'm going to revolutionise everything. But do they do that in America? Do they do that in France? Do they do that in other countries? Why would they do that in a country in Africa? You have to do a proper market study, a feasibility, an analysis, so that you know, ok, I have a product that also interests, and I know what I have in terms of demand and also who I can talk to about it. I think they are often unprepared." (Interview No. 7)

"My boss always says, (...) the industry (in Africa) has not yet arrived at that point. Most small companies in German are missing the knowledge about the respective regions. You don't find this knowledge of what is actually happening there anywhere in Germany. (...) People don't know enough. As a managing director or as a manager, you need tools to be able to present specifically why you are entering a certain market." (Interview No. 13)

One reason for the ignorance and perhaps naïve approach to African markets seems to lie in the social discourse. Not even high executives in German companies can avoid the influence of the Africa- image conveyed in society on their perceptions and decisions.

"And they (the African companies) always have a need for technologies, but mostly they are not really noticed, when they send enquiries to Germany or knock on the door of the German manufacturers. Most of the time they don't even get an answer, and if they do, the offers are just so banally sent, although the intention is already right. (...) I also know that when such an investor from Africa inquires at German companies, most of them are not noticed. That is the reality. That has nothing to do with xenophobia or something like that. It's not a real priority for many companies." (Interview No. 5)

"Whether consciously or unconsciously, an association with African countries is first made as overall generalisation. (...) Most of those who grew up in the 70s, 80s, 90s, who are now on the move in a professional environment, have also absorbed the stereotypes communicated with African countries from that time. That means 'Eat up your plate, otherwise the children will starve in Africa'. All these things that you can smile about. But they are burnt into the subconscious. And in the same way, most African countries are also associated with war, clay huts and hunger. That means that in the winter months, when Christmas is approaching, we always have aid agencies, such as 'Brot für die Welt' campaigning with a starving African child waving a slice of bread. That does something to people. (...) These are topics where I think that if there were more media coverage, it would also help business managers to get a more realistic picture of how things work on the ground. (Interview No. 1)

"I believe that, if companies are seriously interested in this (Africa), then they really have to assign someone to do it (...). In (my former) job, there was always the issue that someone who managed, let's say, South- East Asia and India and maybe Latin America, would now get the African continent on top during the next annual appraisal That's just not going to work. So, I think you have to deal with it in a determined way". (Interview No. 9)

"Because I realised that there was a disconnect between Germans and Africans. On the one hand Germans think Africa is one country, they think most Africans still stay in the bush. They don't really know much about Africa. So, I felt that they needed to know that Africa is 55 countries. It's diverse. There are educated people, there are people who are doing big and innovation and all that." (Interview Nr. 16)

"And that is why we just want to place a different image of Africa and we, or I personally even back then with (previous employer), I am every day a bit shocked how some people still talk about Africa or what they also just don't know." (Interview No. 9)

A concrete example of how perception structures and cognitive information processing work is illustrated by the following examples regarding risk perception. In connection with the often-cited German security culture, this seems to be a major problem for German companies, which in turn increases their own perceived insecurity.

"One of the things that I have been struggling a lot or discussing a lot with the customers or sometimes also with the company where I was, was the perception of risk, because risk is always the big topic when you are discussing Africa." (Interview Nr. 11)

"Africa is unsafe, high risk, a lot of corruption, these are always the conversations I have. When I talk a bit, people say, "Yes, but just between you and me, isn't there total corruption?" Then I can only say: Well, what is the corruption like here when tenders are issued for certain companies? So, it's exactly the same with a different look. It's just presented and practised differently. But we have the same thing here. It's just that if I hire a craftsman and give him a few euros in cash, that's just as wrong as if I were to give something to a government official in order to get some business. So, similar topic, but the moral compass is completely different, but there (in Africa) it is attributed in the sense of high risk." (Interview No. 1)

"And this triple security culture that you have in Germany leads, to a large extent, to the fact that you will have fewer and fewer chances as a German supplier in these countries." (Interview No. 5)

Another challenge is apparently the adaptability to African market conditions. Although German companies often emphasise that they are interested in long-term business relationships, it seems that due to the current low importance of African business, it is difficult or impossible for them to overcome the need for structural changes, product adaptations etc. Furthermore, they struggle to recognise the long-term benefits of those adjustments. Flexible, dynamic companies have a clear advantage over rigid structures here.

"Anything structured is usually very difficult to change for them (German companies). Whenever that is something that requires time, effort, money, you usually can see people are reluctant to change. Whenever you have to think about a new product development or whenever it's like 'okay, let's change the structure in order to make sure that we win more projects there', it usually takes a lot of time for people to actually adjust and go there. And sometimes it takes either for them to see a competitor from another country who is doing better than them on the markets, for them to realize, ok we have to change something (...) Unfortunately, it is that part where it's not always an easy conversation in German companies when you have to have an adapted structure or model for Africa. Because Africa is young. Usually, the business is much smaller than anywhere else. They make much more money elsewhere. So, whenever the discussion is rather on terms of potential, these are things that do not always work. So these are difficult discussions I must say." (Interview Nr. 11)

"I think German business is rigid. Germans are not people who like change. They like the way they do things, they did it for hundred years, so it works. But then that is the essential problem in terms of when going out to other markets. One size does not fit all. You need to adjust and adapt to the markets. (...) But the problem now is some of these big German manufacturers don't want to subsidise their pricing. They act as if they are still working with big German companies they supply to. Now, look, Africa in 20 years time we have a 2.5 billion population. A quarter of the world will be staying in Africa. So, if you have a long term vision, if you are already there now helping the small ones, trying to go big in Africa, then it gives you a foothold when Africa becomes a quarter of the whole world. So, I think German companies are not looking long term. They are ignoring the African market at their own loss. (...) German companies are still rigid in their approach. They are not going to the market with the market fit. They are looking to impose what they already have, which does not work in those markets." (Interview Nr. 16)

"The other thing is understanding how to do business with each other in the long term. There are examples where Europeans, given their cultural background, simply say "OK, I'm more interested in doing business for the long term, I'll build it up slowly and so on". And my experience is, especially with small entrepreneurs in Africa, they tend to push the one-time business, which is what I have today. And then I look at what comes after that. And these different approaches have to be reconciled somehow." (Interview No. 1)

"The bottom line is that I think family businesses have it easier in Africa than large corporations, because in the latter you find a certain slowness and often a very complicated decision-making process. And I think family businesses are a bit more flexible in that respect. They can decide things relatively quickly via the board, via the owner (...). And these are things that of course help tremendously to simply represent a certain flexibility with which one can work here. And (...) flexibility here in the African markets, adapting to new situations or changes at lightning speed, that is, I think, required." (Interview No. 10)

## 4.2 Implementation, obstacles, and successes in the deployment of the African diaspora in German companies

Based on the previously mentioned perceived hurdles such as ignorance and rigidity of German companies, the members of the diaspora develop individual communication strategies and show a high level of personal commitment to sensitise colleagues and superiors to the African markets as well as to introduce concrete adaptations to business models, such as adapted technical solutions, new distribution channels, digital marketing or alternative financing solutions.

"An important aspect is still to explain the Africa strategy to the parent companies. I think there are often wrong ideas or approaches. And I have summarised this on three pillars. One is that you have to rely on modern technologies (...). These countries here, like Nigeria and so on, are of course incredibly far ahead. I would almost say further than Germany and Europe. (...) That is one component, that you have to understand that you have to rely on modern technologies here (...). The second component is that you simply follow the principle of 'test and learn' instead of 'plan and implement', that you work with feedback loops that you get from the suppliers, but also from the customers, and that you are simply courageous. So the approach, as it is always called 'success depends on courage', is given here and that works better than saying "OK, so our Africa strategy is 123. 456 not existing" and then planning something and then wanting to implement it. That usually doesn't work here. There is a nice saying in Africa or in Nigeria that goes "Culture eats strategy for breakfast". And that is a very clear thing. So it's always better to 'test and learn' and maybe get your fingers burnt sometimes. But then you also have a learning curve and know where you have to readjust. And the third thing is to make the financing of services part of the business model. A very important thing. Which of course means for many people "Oha,... Now we have to spend money. Now we have to take money in hand. Now we're giving money to someone we don't actually know. " And of course, the ratings are always not the best either. But that's just an incredible building block that has to be taken into account if you really want to succeed." (Interview No. 10)

"That means then adapted, it doesn't have to be automated. And that's what I also say here (in the company) when we discuss technical things: as simple as possible, to sell the core machine as you can operate it. Of course, there are also big companies that have automated lines. So, you have to see the whole picture - from A to Z. And 60 per cent is then an adapted solution, because electricity is also expensive and not constant. If you live in Europe or in Germany, you won't see a power blackout in ten years. But there, power cuts happen about twice a week or so. And that is already a challenge. So, it doesn't have to be a 15 tonne per hour plant if you sell a bigger plant. You can have only 50 to 100 kilos per hour and not so much energy consumption / electricity consumption. And you can sell that and it is cheaper. And it also works. That means lab scale, so what you use here in the lab is also used there in production." (Interview No. 4)

"We work with distributors that we build ourselves. So that means they are independent, but we invest in training, we invest in infrastructure in the country. We make sure that the customers have that assurance. 'Okay, the dealer is local, but behind that there is (the German company). That means I can call (the German company) there directly or the dealer. And if I'm not satisfied, I have someone to talk to who understands me and not the local partner. ' Because of trust and so on. That's how we managed that, (...) that they (the African customers) can talk to anyone and they know who we are. They are very satisfied because the dealer is great and (the German company) is behind it. And if necessary, I (as a customer) can send the complaint directly to (the German company). Which is not possible in Europe. In Europe, you have to contact the dealer. But in Africa that doesn't work. They want to talk directly to the manufacturer. These are small differences, but it is very relevant." (Interview No. 13)

"We have difficulties in (country X) until today because we cannot give loans, for example. They used to try through L/Cs, but that takes so long and doesn't work. So now we have come to an agreement with our dealer. That was one idea. The bosses were against it, but in the end they understood. The (partner in country X) has set up a company in France. We give the French company a loan. (...). To come up with this idea, you first have to understand the mentality. This way it is an enrichment for the company and also for the internal staff to experience such things. It's risky, of course. If it doesn't work, that's on me. But it works." (Interview no. 13)

**In addition to concrete changes in the business model, the form of access to information and its processing are also new for German companies, but can obviously significantly increase success in African countries.**

"When I built up new markets, I didn't start with the numbers. Sure, I looked for some information in the country, but I first (...) knocked directly on the door of a potential customer, for example maintenance companies that already have experience with such machines. And then I travelled around the countries. First, I visited the countries and then I formed an opinion. And only then did I decide whether to do market studies or not. And this approach makes the biggest difference. And it even shows where there is potential. For example, there are technologies that are almost obsolete in Germany, but still fit the need in many regions of the world. These are technologies for which the entire development costs have been amortised. You don't have to do anything, you just have to produce them and in large quantities. There is also purchasing power for such products, but you have to go there and identify the demand. I think that in this respect, German companies are either too rigid or they underestimate the continent. (...) In the first year, my first trip was to Nigeria and I did that as part of my personal holiday because I was convinced that there was potential there. Sure, before that I had read some figures and I had already made some contacts. And then I said to my supervisor at the time, it's worth looking at the country, even if the numbers are not very promising. I am sure that the figures, the data there are not archived properly either. (...) That means, all the data I have is based on incomplete information, but the reality on the ground is different. If I sit at the port and see how many trucks with (a certain product) go out per certain period, I can develop a feeling from that alone by doing projection calculations. When I visit the industrial areas and see how many halls are being built, who built them, was it imported, was it made locally, who makes something like that, then I get a completely different feeling. It's simply because there are markets in Africa, but there is no structure like in Europe. And when you establish yourself there, you have to build your own structure in order to feel and understand the market. (...) And that was the starting point. But my supervisor told me that the figures I got did not indicate any potential. And I said, "Well, then I'll do it during my holiday. But if it turns out then... If I come back with some requests, then I want my private expenses paid back as well. " And it paid off. Six months later we had our first order for a million. " (Interview No. 5)

"It is clear and it is very obvious that the perception of risks is vastly different between the diaspora, people who have been or have worked in those countries and the people who are coming from Europe and go there. The tools that are used to analyze those

companies, to understand those companies, the perception already from here, given the information that they receive or they have or on which they are building, their business cases to go to Africa. It is totally different. When you have somebody who is rational enough, who has a very sharp mind, who can see both sides and make a fair analysis considering the risks and the opportunities, it makes it much easier, much faster, and probably can increase the success tremendously." (Interview No. 11)

An important success factor for the measures proposed by the members of the diaspora is communication and the (hopefully) resulting intercultural understanding, i.e. awareness of the different cultural backgrounds, perceptions and approaches. The combination of both aspects is crucial.

"And I would say that a large part of my work over the years has been cross-cultural management. That means understanding how Germany thinks, how Nigeria works vice versa. And then, of course, always managing communication, because I think that is one of the biggest challenges in this whole construct for a German company that comes to Africa, to understand how the country works from the local perspective. What is the way of thinking? What are the dynamics like? Many things that are completely normal in Germany are completely abnormal here. And it's the same the other way round. And these are things that you have to illustrate, that you have to manage, and where you might have to call three or four times in Germany and say: "No, that was ABC and not DEF. "And that's exactly how I do it here. And that's one of the most important things, to make sure that communication doesn't slip and to sharpen and refine the awareness of the other culture on both sides, to create an awareness in general." (Interview No. 10)

"Until today, it (the persuasion work within the company) is a struggle every time, because it has nothing to do with the company not wanting to grow. But you first have to make this communication understandable and that we need this for the further development of the whole company. And that's actually this barrier. First of all, the people who have this thinking.... or this feasibility and the whole thing behind it, i.e. to show that it will be worthwhile for the company if we do it right - and not in a European way, but look at each market separately and develop local opportunities so that the customer can find himself in it and identify with it (...) And that works quite well. The boss had never seen that before. He didn't even consider these possibilities. For him, it was just that we are in Africa. But he never thought that we could really work so well on site." (Interview no. 13)

"I give you an example on the company I was working for. A lot of people would probably not go in some countries. When you hear Ethiopia, there is war and stuff like that and all these noises, people are like 'I am not going there'. But for me, I am like 'Ok, I mean, the war is like 400 kilometers away. I will go, I don't care.' So for me it's not a big issue, because my perception or my understanding of what is going on is totally different. And I have to learn to understand things differently, not only based on what is said in the news or what is the story people are saying. So, that was probably an advantage for that company as well." (Interview No. 11)

In addition to the perception in German companies, access to African networks and institutions is critical for successful market development. On the African side, acceptance towards diaspora members from Germany seems to be very high. Interestingly, some interview partners seem to be particularly well received as representatives in their non- origin countries.

"It opens a lot of doors. When you come and they can clearly see you come from a reputable company here from Germany, you have more doors open. That is clear. And I've seen that many times in many places. I'm originally from the Congo. Congo is not one of the first countries in Africa. Everybody knows the potential, but we know Congo doesn't have a very developed economy and all these things. We are not necessarily known for our high education and whatever. But when at least you go there and you have to have discussions with CEOs and top giants in the companies they open the doors much easier to talk to you and to have those meetings because you're coming from Germany and you're coming with your German business card. That perception is still there. That bias is still there. And it's actually quite strong. Because it gives an impression of seriousness. They will take you seriously if you are coming from a German company. So. I have seen that many times all over the place in many, many countries - East, West, South North. It is everywhere, I have seen that." (Interview No. 11)

"We enjoy a high level of trust and thus have an easier, faster access to the ministries, authorities and companies, from which we of course benefit greatly. Of course, we must not throw them away. If it is handled responsibly, both with the German and the African partners, the 'bridging role' can actually be applied here for a win-win." (Interview No. 3)

"Actually, for me from my experience and this is also experience shared with other people, the opposite is true. When I go to people from the DRC and Uganda that don't know me from anyway, they take me at face value at what I am giving to them. But the Zimbabweans that know me, maybe they know my faults other from being a business person, they might know my own personal faults and they put that against you. Or maybe just because you are like them, they are like: 'What can he teach us? What can he tell us?' So, actually I found within the African Diaspora, it is easier to transact or do business with other Africans than from people from your own home country." (Interview Nr. 16)

The key to the easier access obviously lies in the biculturalism of the diaspora, which is a great advantage for building relationships and trust while maintaining a professional business orientation.

"The advantage is that they see me as... - in Kenya they call me the black Musungu, that's the black white - so they see me as a brother. So I come from there, I look almost the same depending on where I am. And that makes things easier. I have this double personality. If you know me privately, you will think I am too German. And when I'm in Africa, I'm African. I adapt very quickly because it's not new to me. It's the culture I grew up in. And there aren't that many differences. (...) And I have no fear of contact because I'm in Africa and I know it. And that helps me a lot. I speak French and English and a few African languages. When I'm in West Africa, I can understand many languages. I feel home very quickly. And when I meet with the end customers, it quickly becomes a very normal conversation and no longer a sales talk, but I become a problem solver very normally. And they accept me very quickly. And when I come with a white man, the conversation immediately changes. Because then everyone has to pay attention and everyone has to speak professionally. (...) And then the English language suddenly becomes very complicated because you have to express yourself correctly. And when I'm there alone, they speak as if they were at home, they speak broken English like in Nigeria, they don't pay attention any more and I understand that and that makes things easier. They can speak English in their mother tongue. And that's really cool. Well, this should not be misleading, I'm there for a German company and I'm there to sell our products. So that's the goal. But it makes things easier if the person sees me as a 'genuine' partner with a certain local something." (Interview No. 13)

"I am very familiar with the traditions here, with the customs, which of course makes it easier for me, let's say, to approach a Nigerian business partner, to talk to him and to develop a personal level very quickly. And then to see if we have common synergies and interests that lead to a win-win situation." (Interview No. 10)

"And for that it is helpful to shift a lot to the relationship level. From my point of view, to see how we can understand each other. And that sounds so banal, but in my view that is the basis. The business between two people is always the business between two people. I have to respect my counterpart, I have to like him. Basically, I don't have to marry him, but that would be the issue in order to do business together in the long term on a level of trust. That is the currency that is actually used to pay. If I can manage that, then you can actually do trade relations and other business on that basis." (Interview No. 1)

"We (the diaspora) might have this own experience, own motivation and maybe still passion that others don't have. Because I think that sometimes you can't just go by reason. You have to do it with your mind and also with your heart. And what the diaspora has is clearly that mind, but also the heart. And sometimes the eyes of the heart see differently than the mind." (Interview No. 7)

**In the German economy, the added value that diaspora Africans bring with them in the form of intercultural capital seems to be arriving only slowly.**

"There are no proper linkages between German companies doing business in Africa and the Africans in the Diaspora. Because of this, many German companies approach the African market using the old approach of only engaging Germans in the whole value chain process and only engage the recipients being their clients in the partner countries. There is however some minimal trends where some companies are partnering with diaspora based companies or organisations in tapping the potential in the African market." (Interview No. 15)

"I think, in general, German companies should try to focus more on candidates who maybe have a mixed background. Definitely, because I think it makes things much, much easier in the approach and especially in the beginning when entering the market. Much, much easier." (Interview No. 10)

"That (the biculturalism) is the biggest challenge. But that is actually the opportunity, because through these people, the diaspora, I have the possibility to build a cultural bridge between the respective countries, because the people who are here usually know both cultures and have the bonus of trust that they still have the people on site who know them. So, the potential to create a large sphere of influence from the diaspora in the respective target countries is huge, if you use it properly. I think that European companies, and especially the Germans, do not see it that way at all." (Interview No. 1)

**Individual factors are often decisive for the successful deployment of diaspora Africans in companies. Apparently, there is no overall recognition and visibility of the potential yet, but a slowly increasing awareness and interest.**

"That (the study) is interesting, because up to now we have had the feeling that we don't exist at all. We are not perceived at all, even though we have been here for ages and have been making our contribution to advancing German companies internationally for ages. I'm talking about managers with a migration background, managers with a diaspora background. I know a lot of people at well-known companies who are really at management level. But we go unnoticed, but anyway." (Interview No. 13)

"And with the German partners, I hope that just through my CV and my knowledge of the German industry I also bring some credibility." (Interview No. 5)

"Fortunately, my bosses saw the path. The two are not typically German or bio-German themselves. They have already been abroad in the USA or Brazil and already recognise this potential. (...) I think that was the key. They saw me when I was there as a temporary worker assembling machines and I said "I can sell the machine." And then you have to give people a chance. And then you also have to use that chance." (Interview No. 4)

"There are few (diaspora Africans) who actually have the experience, have lived in the country, have worked in management. That takes time, and I think I'm a bit of the first. Back then, I was one of the first coloureds in the Bundeswehr (German army) and now I'm doing this here and of course I notice from the enquiries I get that there is interest." (Interview No. 10)

Reservations, but also false expectations, about the African diaspora on the part of German companies are often based on a lack of information and a lack of engagement with the detailed backgrounds of the people.

"That means, there were or there are also reservations among the companies that say "Ah, okay, we'll now take someone from the diaspora and invest in the person, training, etc. in order to build up a business sector". These are often export-oriented companies that do not want to make a direct investment in the respective country and say, "Oh, with these people, we see the danger that they will emigrate. Because if they have learned here, if they have built up contacts, then they might simply migrate to their country of origin, and that means we practically lose this resource. Then we'd rather take someone who is German here and who we know will stay here. "I don't think that's very close to reality; for me it's the typical German way of having reservations. But it is actually not close to reality." (Interview No. 6)

"And there are also hurdles. That means that if I go to an industrial company and one of my parents comes from some African country, then often the wrong expectation is "Yes, okay, he knows his way around there. "But that simply doesn't have to be the case. Because if the children have grown up here, they might not know their way around at all. That means you really have to check in each individual case, what background, what connections are there in the diaspora and can I use this potential? So it's not just a given because of the circumstances, but you also have to check in each individual case what is available? What skills and resources are there, and above all what contacts and relationships still exist? Are they only contacts and relationships with the respective families or also with entrepreneurs on the ground in the African countries?" (Interview No. 1)

"And that's where another problem arises. They (German company) hired a Moroccan to do business in Africa. So I asked the company if they would offer the Moroccan intercultural training. They said: "He is African". I say: it is not enough. What people forget is: Let's say there is someone who left Africa as a student, that means, he doesn't know the working culture, the business culture, in Africa. He comes here, studies here. Even if he has worked here. If you think he knows something of the culture, that is superficial. That means for him it would be good to do this course to sharpen his identity again." (Interview No. 8)

The interviewees critically observed a rather symbolic activism in companies, where 'diversity' is rather considered as marketing.

"More and more attention is being paid to diversity in companies. That's why many are on the lookout, but for the wrong reasons, in my opinion. So that's a very difficult topic, I think. So when it comes to diversity in the photo, I think everything gets a bit difficult. What I can say from my experience so far, also from my studies and the way I grew up, etc., is that I think that the more international a team is, the better, because the more cultures you bring together, the better it works. (...) Yes, I believe that these intercultural teams can be very successful if they are lived properly. And if someone is hired just because they look good in a photo, then I think that is absolutely the wrong approach. (...) Perhaps the idea that we now have to hire diaspora people is also wrong. We have to hire good people and if a 30% of the university graduates are from the diaspora, that's simply how it is. So there shouldn't be this question in the room any longer." (Interview No. 9)

An alternative approach is to engage diaspora Africans as external consultants.

"I can see that companies know exactly whom to approach and whom to deploy as external advisors. So far, this offer has been scarcely used. Companies could exploit this potential even more. On the part of the African diaspora, there is a desire to be more involved. I think that there is already some communication between companies and experts, either as external consultants or directly as marketing or sales people. At least that is my experience. Every week I receive emails from companies that have heard about us through several channels and would like to use our expertise. To enable German companies to enter African markets, more platforms could be created that increase the visibility of German-African experts and enable an exchange." (Interview No. 3)

### 4.3 Self-perception (individual and collective) and perception of others within the African diaspora in Germany

The complexity of the diaspora is underlined by the informative and detailed explanations of the interviewees, especially on the collective identity of the diaspora. The self-image of the diaspora described here is not only relevant for our study in understanding individual role perceptions in German companies, but it is precisely this self-image at a collective level and the perception in the German public sphere that can bring significant insights for political decision-makers, which is why the quotations have been left here in their partly very detailed context.

### 4.3.1 Individual understanding of roles

As already mentioned when describing the areas of deployment of the diaspora in German companies, intercultural competence plays a major role. We would therefore like to let the interviewees themselves describe how they perceive and use this biculturalism.

"I think that as diaspora, or when you have these different worlds inside, you definitely have potential for mediation and transfer. You don't have to do much, you just have to speak and be there, and I think you can achieve quite a lot with that. (...) Personally, I sometimes notice that it works quite well, because I - I really grew up in Germany, I was socialised, I was born completely here - still have it (Africa) in my blood somehow and later I was there for a longer period of time and it also works with the people from the culture. So I can definitely 'relate' to it. And I also grew up in the French context, because I went to a French school and that's why someone once said to me, you actually have the whole continent in you. You come from East Africa, so you have East African blood, but you can communicate with the West Africans and understand the Europeans, because of course you grew up in Europe. That's a good link. So you can make a good transfer. And I'm actually noticing that more and more. That was also the case in Cote d'Ivoire, for example. (...) I could talk to the people, they took me seriously. It worked well. And then I really brought this very conservative German company. And I think that was very helpful for them, to have someone who can build this bridge and also talk to them - maybe a bit more loosely, if it's appropriate. It was a cool feeling to realise that somehow you can actually establish this connection." (Interview no. 9)

"You have such a double-edged sword. On the one hand, in both cultures, I can say that from my own history, you are always the foreigner. In African countries I am always the white man. And in Germany or European countries, I am always the African. At the same time, however, this offers the possibility of cultural exchange in the respective countries, because they say "Yes, you are also one of us". Both. And they always say "Yes, you understand both cultures then." Whether that's true or not is entirely up to us, but it's assumed that you're closer, either through language or through history, that is, through your parents or your parents' origins. You're simply closer and can do much more than if you were only African or only European. That has a great advantage if you want to see it that way." (Interview No. 1)

"I think it's a chance to just experience this diversity. For example, with me, as I said: I was born in France, I'm from the Ivory Coast originally, and I developed this love for Germany to go with it. And I've been living here in Germany for 15 years now. And I see that as an opportunity, as a strength, because it is a mixture of three nationalities, three cultures. And I think that you can really use this synergy between the cultures to make your contribution. (...) And then I thought to myself, with what I have - that is, these three cultures, if I simply manage to create a bridge so that all these peoples first understand each other culturally. And through culture you also build trust. And trust can also be a stepping stone to economic relations and business. Then I would like to do that." (Interview No. 7)

**An important prerequisite for the successful use of intercultural competences is personal motivation. Especially self-employed diaspora entrepreneurs express this very clearly.**

"I believe that if you go there as a diaspora, you also bring a different motivation. One should not forget that the bridge should first serve economic purposes. So it's about economic purposes first. We should not lose sight of that. Because the diaspora also has an emotional meaning and has more to do with honour. But it is about the economic." (Interview No. 5)

"Those who have also understood this properly are mostly the students or the people who came here to study and then built something and want to give something back. (...) And I think the diaspora is also interested that both countries where they live are doing well. For example, I am here now in Germany. It is important for me that Germany is doing well because I also live here. But it's also important to me that Côte d'Ivoire is doing well because my family is there and I'm also there very often. I have an interest in that it works and I would do anything to achieve that goal." (Interview No. 7)

"But as I grew up in Cameroon, Africa has through Cameroon a lot of impacts in my life. And creating and having that (company) project was for me just like giving back to Africa, something I got from the continent. As I live here in Germany, I feel myself actually like a kind of ambassador of the continent. There are so many issues with the way the African continent is perceived that I thought also with (company name) bringing a positive narrative to the society is something I can do." (Interview No. 14)

"When I more or less started to build up the consulting business, I had a professional focus on the one hand, it had to have something to do with digital technologies and entrepreneurship; and on the other hand, this Africa-specific or culture-specific focus. It's not just about the African continent, it's more or less also about African culture, including the diaspora." (Interview No. 17)

### 4.3.2 Collective understanding of the African diaspora in Germany

In order to approach the multi-layered topic of the collective identity of the African diaspora in Germany, we start with the aspect of (non-)organisation.

"The diaspora is very heterogeneous and usually not organised. (...) And I think that both the diaspora and the people who are interested need to approach each other and exchange more. I don't have a solution yet how this can take place, but I think drum courses might not be helpful. (...) But there are certainly other forums where you can simply talk together and offer a real impression. And I think it would be nice if that took place more. And the diaspora would actually have the task of contributing to this and organising themselves. From my point of view, that would be the obligation that an association, a network of different associations or also the (Association for the Promotion of German- African Economic Relations) should do as lobbying or similar. They could do a lot more as far as media presence is concerned." (Interview No. 1)

"If Siemens wants to speak to someone from the diaspora, who do they have to contact? For the moment it is quite hard. (...) Maybe the diaspora should build also its own initiatives and just be like one and speak one. For the moment, there are many initiatives that are being created. And yeah, I think within the next year we will see maybe more initiatives merging together so that we will be able to have that weight to speak up just as one. But for the moment, it is not the case. (Interview Nr. 14)

"In such decisions, there are also people from the diaspora who are invited. But that is the question: Where do I meet these people? Where are they? How do I find them? There are some figures, if you go on LinkedIn or similar, there are some people who are (active) there. But that's always difficult, I think, to say that one person can be the voice of a whole population. (...) It's not all countries that have the same realities. And yes, I think the diaspora could be addressed much more. We need to do some proper sourcing for that. Who or where are they to be found? " (Interview No. 7)

The reasons for the lack of organisation, or perhaps rather the many small organisational units on different topics, are manifold and lie first of all in the heterogeneity of the African continent (different countries of origin), but also in the different interests (cultural, political, social, economic) and also the different generational perspectives. In the latter case, it is not so much the age of the people that counts, but above all the different moments in time and experiences, when and for what reasons one came to Germany (education, flight, private or economic reasons), in order to be able to determine the motives for a commitment. In addition, the young generation lives in a completely new, digital and globalised world. The heterogeneity can therefore not be defined one-dimensionally, but produces a multi-layered African diaspora, which nevertheless always finds a common identification in the African continent.

"I think when you talk about diaspora, especially here in Germany, you have to divide it into two. There is a clear division within the diaspora. Anyone who is from the African diaspora will tell you that. You have the old generation, maybe not too old, maybe also it is not necessarily a matter of age or whatever. But you have a group where people were not so interested in doing anything concrete for the African continent. It's more about, okay, we are living in Germany and we try to just make our life here in Germany. You have that group. And sometimes within that group there is not much ambition. But then you have this other group where people are a little bit more educated, even are pushing into penetrating the business community, trying to become German and also have their voice heard here in Germany, because it's our country anyway. After living here that is where I am living, this is my country and we want to bring what we can also in this country. So you have that group of people as well. Sometimes it is the generation of people who came before and then they are already German.

But, you know, they also have an identity with Africa and they want to kind of connect the two. So from that second group the drive is really strong. It is really strong. You have a lot of initiatives that are popping up all over the places. They are still small because in Germany the community is much smaller than France, for instance. And it is a little bit like even isolated places, it is a little bit unorganized because also the means are not there. These are young people who are trying to make it in their own life, but also try to make something meaningful for their own countries, creating associations and stuff. But the drive is there, because we understand that if we want to make it work for our countries at the same time make our new country Germany benefit from it, we need to be well integrated. We need to be from those German companies. We need to show things from a different perception, not only telling stories, but actually coming with facts, coming with a well thought through analysis. And we need to have that experience, that German experience, which we can also expose, so bring certain traits of mentality that we are learning here in Germany to bring that in our countries. We need to create a bridge between the two. And the drive is quite strong. Some go into those associations, some go into business and building their own businesses here. There can be opportunities. And some are considering entering the political sphere, but that is very limited, because it is not yet so open, I would say. But I think going into companies having a career and at the same time building a bridge already with associations with a side business is something many of us are trying to do." (Interview Nr. 11)

"We have some common events (with other country diasporas), we definitely interact with each other. And I think the concept (of one diaspora organisation) is different because it is focussing more on those Afro- Africans who grew up in Germany, which is totally different story because they have the same issues, because they grew up here. They grew up here is either Afro or African. Whereas we migrated here from diverse countries. (...) So that's a bit difficult to separate because like my kids they have Kenyan parents, but they are not really Kenyans. (...) If they meet other Cameroonian children with Cameroonian parents, they have no differences. They are all African children who are born in Germany. Whereas for us, when we know Kenyans who came here for studies are totally different from Cameroonians. We came here for studies. We still came here with our own cultures." (Interview Nr. 15)

"I always now say that I am not a Zimbabwean, I am an African, because if I am a Zimbabwean then it means that I only belong to 14 million people. But when I become an African, I belong to 1.5 billion people. So my network and my market become bigger. (...) We

become one nation because we are Africans. I have worked with people from Nigeria, from Ghana, from Rwanda... It is never about their country or my country. I think people have realised, especially those in the diaspora, that when we are in the diaspora we are all the same, we are equal, we are all Africans which is something that I actually like more. It makes the point strong as well. (...) I think what is the difference is education. People in the diaspora, they are more exposed, they are more educated, the majority of them, but mostly exposure." (Interview Nr. 16)

"I think this is an incredibly exciting phenomenon, because identity or cultural identity is also something that is always a bit fluid (...) It is also something that has developed just like many other things. And it is very exciting to see that behind this process or behind this movement there are certain processes that can be influenced. And I notice that the younger the African community is or the people of African origin are, the more they see themselves as primarily African in their identity. And it doesn't matter where they live. So whether it's in North or South America. It's even more pronounced in South America, or to some extent in the Caribbean, to identify themselves primarily as a young black person, as African. On the continent as such, this rethinking is also taking place, just as it is in the European diaspora. And that is an overall development, this "Okay, how do I primarily see myself?" That also means how do I communicate with someone, what are the relationships, what are the common world views, interests, emotions, feelings? What do we share? (...) This African identity as such (...) is just emerging without anyone even knowing it. And I think a very big contribution to it is simply the internet, culture. It doesn't matter if the people live in Houston or in (part of a German city), they listen to the same videos, they have some of the same idols, they dress the same way, they have the same dreams, desires. And so on and so forth. (...) I think the generation before me, which is now more or less retiring, they have actually still experienced this identity as Nigerian, Zambian, Kenyan. The grandparents' generation, when I think of my grandmother, she didn't even know the country of Zambia, it didn't exist yet, it was partly either Nyassaland or Northern Rhodesia, depending on where she lived. And her grandmother didn't know even this. For her it was 'You were Bemba. You were Tonga. You were this and this and this.' And her great-great-great grandmother was part of the Kingdom of Congo. So we're talking a couple of hundred years in between with changing identities each time. And it's very exciting to see how much that moves. And I think it's also playing an increasing role for economic activities, to the extent that this disparity between diaspora and continental African is no longer a factor. In this sense, because whether I do business with someone who lives in Senegal, transfer money there or accept an order from them, money is more or less transferred back and forth. It is as if this takes place within its own community." (Interview No. 17)

Returning to the engagement of the diaspora in the German economy, clear differences are also made here in terms of qualification and personal approach. In addition, the activities seem to resemble a balancing act for the people involved, where they try to equilibrate their own interests and emotions, the perception of their own community and of the German public.

"The mindset of the diaspora, the way they see and recognise their opportunities, must also be changed accordingly. Because if I am now the second generation and I hear from my parents what they have gone through and how difficult it is for them and that they were trained as engineers but then ended up driving a taxi, etc., then of course this also shapes one's own view of the opportunities one has in society. So this change of mindset has to happen in both directions. Yes, I believe that especially the second generation, if they make use of their opportunities and if they still have contact with the countries of origin, they can play a very good role. With the first generation, who have been here for a long time, that is the case in isolated cases." (Interview No. 6)

"But I still want to say that we always have to do a little distinction. It's not because someone comes from a country that he/she is an expert. Otherwise, I would say that every German is a historian, teacher or something. No, it is also a profession. You also have to study for it (...) That's important. That's why when we do it, it has to be serious (...). It really has to be a person who is also there with substance. Otherwise, it is not sustainable afterwards and it is also very difficult for the others because it has to be authentic." (Interview no. 7)

"But I also have to say it might not be very easy to find people who would have that perception because you have that subjectivity being African where you want to sell Africa. I mean, I want to sell Congo. I want to sell my country. But I try to always refrain from saying too much good things, because I know there are a lot of things that need to go right. So I try to be very careful. So finding people who can actually do that fair assessment can be a tremendous advantage for those companies in the efforts to go to Africa." (Interview Nr. 11)

"Even those Africans that are that are getting these jobs, they are not African. They do not feel African. They do not push the African agenda. So that is why people do not get to know some of this, too. I get to know some of these people because probably we meet somewhere or via LinkedIn, a colleague, and then tell them about me and something like that, you know. But if people knew that there are those Africans that are doing these jobs as well, then that would also be an incentive for people to go to aim higher." (Interview Nr. 16)

"I believe that every social community, and this is also quite characteristic of the business community, has its own control mechanisms. I don't want to say in order to stay on track, but it's just like with Hanseatic merchants, the word is the bond; and that alone is such a value that people agree on. That is very pronounced. It is, I don't want to say an explicit pressure, quite the opposite, but I also notice that, for example, I couldn't allow myself to misbehave in any way, because otherwise I would have... As I said, word gets around quickly... If I didn't pay my suppliers on time or if I cheated a freelancer here. That's very heavy." (Interview No. 17)

"The way we advertise and the way Germans advertise is different. In Africa, you have to be loud for you to be able to know you and hear you. In Germany, it's actually the opposite: the more loud you are, people then think your product is not like up to scratch" (Interview Nr. 16)

### 4.3.3 Perception of the African diaspora by the German public

As differentiated and multi-layered as the assessment of their own group is, there is a very clear and univocal opinion about the reception of the African diaspora in Germany. It reflects many stereotypes, racist tendencies and the already mentioned lack of knowledge about Africa.

"When Germans look at us, they don't know Zimbabwe, they don't know Ghana. They don't know most of them. They just see black. They see Africa. We are Africans. (...) I think obviously there are different types. Some people came here to work. Some were born here. But the equaliser is that you are still African. You are black. That is the reality. (...) So but you might have the network, the contacts, you might also have the mindset because you're born here. But in terms of opportunities, I don't see so many success stories of young Africans born in Germany. I'm someone who follows the diaspora so much. I'm someone who follows a lot of these things. I am still trying to look for a millionaire African businessperson in Germany. (...) I still think Germany has a long way to go in terms of creating equal opportunities. So the number of Africans working in the big jobs is negligible. (...) So I do not like to talk about racism, but sometimes a system can have certain roadblocks along the way." (Interview Nr. 16)

"First of all, for a long time it was politically questioned in Germany whether Germany is an immigration country - in terms of mindset. In the meantime, I think since 2005, this has also been more or less, more and more recognised in politics. Before a participatory society can be properly shaped and the diaspora can actually use its potential, the mindset of the majority society must first be changed." (Interview No. 6)

"I think that in Germany, unfortunately, it's not yet the case that people really believe that they can... Well, I've actually seen it happen more than once, along the lines of "Oh, he or she can speak German" and yes, of course, they studied in (German city). What is actually your problem? Well, these moments exist and I think that unfortunately it's still average in Germany, that's where we still are and that somehow has to... So the thought must not be there any more." (Interview no. 9)

"There is a racist image. (...) If we look at media as a medium, that is, how you communicate about Africa, it is very bad and Africa triggers something like poverty. And many NGOs use that very often. So you can get quite good money if you have such a black little girl from Africa.... And there are many NGOs that then use that as a representation. (Interview No. 12)"

"There is a lot of perception even within the society that maybe Africans do not deliver or you find a lot of negations within the society that Africans are not professionals. (...) When you tell them we have a platform of African professionals, then they are a bit shocked because maybe they are not used to seeing Africans as professionals. I think that is where the biggest problem is. They're seeing Africans mostly as refugees. They would refer to us as people who are living off the state. So, when you tell them that you're a doctor, they somehow don't believe you. So, I think that is one of the things that is very much in this society that they have to see Africans the way they see Chinese or the way they see any other nationalities as professionals." (Interview Nr. 15)

These prejudices in the general perception of Africa and Africans also have an impact on the professional level. From a diaspora perspective, negotiations with German business partners therefore often do not take place on eye level.

"The ones that want to invest in Africa it is either they have worked in Africa, they have married in or they have travelled to Africa. It is not purely a business sense. You get a feeling that they are sort of like giving back. For me, I don't like that from a business perspective, because business should be purely business. I mean, it's okay to make impact. But if it is business, it is business, then impact. If you start with impact, then this already means we are not at eye level. You are already seeing me as if you are helping me." (Interview Nr. 16)

"But that's just this catch. You can't get out of it. And when you, as a member of the African community, come up with ambitious plans on how to get to the root of the problem, which is very often economic, then people look at you as if you had a shoe on your head. So somehow that doesn't fit very often. So that's one extreme. And the other extreme is problems, epidemics, wars, whatever, corruption. Those are the two extremes and in between there are very few narratives that are, to put it bluntly, sexy. It's just that if I have an idea or a vision of something that I want to get involved in and also put a certain ambition and eagerness and also a certain amount of work into it, then I also want it to be sexy on the one hand, and it can definitely also be profitable. That the two are mutually exclusive is not the case at all. And I think that's very difficult. (...) So I also notice this disparity. There are people who are really tough in business. I find that exciting because I like numbers, and I understand. But with them it's more or less the case that they don't quite succeed in turning around to eye level. With others, this eye level is there, but at a very low level. So it's just not the real thing and that's a pity." (Interview no. 17)

In such cases, however, members of the diaspora shape their activities flexibly and creatively. Pragmatic approaches and rich international network connections make alternative solutions possible – in case of doubt, even without German participation.

"But we have to shape our cooperation. And I think we can gain a lot from ourselves, that is, from what is available to us. So we really don't have to hide. Germany is strong, Germany has potential in the sense that I don't see development cooperation as a one-way street. We give something and get something. And if we expand that, it will be even better than what we get from China. Because Africa has resources that we need; and we have resources that Africa needs. And that's a win-win thing." (Interview No. 13)

"And there is also another reason. It's because a lot of people are now exercising their option. This simply means that because the diaspora can move laterally, it can also be the case that project partners or partnerships or funding or the like are obtained from other sources and that people work together with other people from other countries. Japan, for example, is very active, as are South Korea, Turkey and the Scandinavian countries. And of course there is as a supranational instrument, the EU as such, which also provides access to funds and opportunities." (Interview No. 17)

#### 4.3.4 Brain drain versus brain gain

Furthermore, in the course of the self-assessment of the diaspora, the aspect of 'brain drain' was also addressed. Education is of great importance to our interviewees. In addition to the commitment to their own education, more far-reaching thoughts about cooperation with the business community are also shared here.

"We call it smart migration because we also want people from Africa to come in a regular manner, not in the way where people are being abused, women trafficked and the like. Also, we call it brain gain not brain drain whereby we feel that coming to Europe it is not brain drain because you're coming to get education skills that can also be used even back home if someone decides to go back." (Interview Nr. 16)

"Because some of us are not able to really go back as returnees, we decided instead of focussing more so much on brain gain, we said why don't, we come up with a concept called the brain train<sup>10</sup>. So it's actually our own trademark. The brain train is basically just educating our own. So, we identify a few professionals who have been working, for example, with German companies or organisations or who are very good with these tools that are needed, not necessarily within Germany, but globally, to help these professionals be competitive on the global market. We first want to start with the ones who are already here, who are already studying here, and they want to venture into these companies and yet they don't have all these skills that these companies are looking for. (...) So, like this (showing me an example on the screen), she's a computer scientist who's been working here for ten years, and now she's coaching people to know what the front end of the backend technologies that are needed in German companies. (...) And those are Kenyans who are actually here. The goal is once we train them we connect them with German companies where they can even do internships or be hired." (Interview Nr. 15)

#### 4.4 Assessment of the inclusion of the diaspora in economic policy activities of economic promotion in/ for Africa

The public measures taken by German ministries, institutions and business associations to promote foreign trade with and in Africa include, as mentioned at the beginning, many individual programmes and initiatives in addition to the organisation of events in Germany as well as delegation trips and trade fair sponsorship on site. Many activities (and actors) are evaluated very critically by the diaspora, but we do not want to go into detail here and do not share these passages publicly. In the following, we will therefore mainly focus on the diaspora's assessment of their involvement at the economic policy level. Mention of individual actors and institutions has been made unidentifiable.

We start with a look at the events and online discussions, where informants criticise that there is still too little visibility of Africans.

"You have people that come to you and say 'That is powerful. That is good'. But the decision makers, the policymakers, they don't. You find a lot of events in Germany where people are talking about Africa but there are no Africans. I go to events (offered by a public German institution), but when you go to that meeting, probably you are the only African who is there. (...) Then they are speaking in

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<sup>10</sup> Brain Train© is a registered trademark by AG-Career Hub Academy. More information can be found here <https://www.ag-careerhub.com/our-services/ag-career-hub-academy>

Deutsch. I mean, okay, it is Germany, it is your country, but you are talking about a topic that's another country, you know. So finding solutions for those without consulting the people that are from there." (Interview Nr. 16)

"For example, it can be observed that in many economic forums, bio-Germans are the Africa experts and give lectures about Africa as well as lead the discussions. That is not wrong in principle. Whereas, in fact, people with much deeper-seated cultural, linguistic, regional knowledge and competences of German-African origin have less to say. Often, it is preferred to have someone from Africa flown in to 'clarify the view from Africa'" (Interview No. 3).

"I have seen last time on LinkedIn: Someone wrote an article that was about people walking from (a German ministry) and that was the African team. The whole African team there was only just like white people, only white German people. I was just like "Oh my God, is nobody from the diaspora who could have been involved in this project?" That are details, actually details, but with a huge impact. And we are still struggling with that kind of issues." (Interview Nr. 14)

However, there is also an acknowledgement of some progress in terms of diversity which is positively received in public forums. Often, however, panellists from the African continent would be invited to present the African perspective. On the other hand, bio-Germans are used to represent the German economy. The differentiated and possibly integrating perspective of the diaspora is mostly ignored.

"Whereby I notice more and more that things are moving here in Germany. (...) But there is still a lot more room for improvement. (...) And what I have also seen, not only in the economy, but overall, I find that the German ecosystem has become a bit more colourful. And I think that's nice, because it was also a bit difficult for me. When I started in 2017 and was on a panel discussion, there was no one from the continent at all. People talk about and not with. And also in the institutions. Now I think it's super great that at the (German economic development institution) there are also experts who come from the countries. But that wasn't necessarily the case every time. And so I think that's good." (Interview No. 7)

"In Germany, many people still find it difficult to approach African experts in Germany rather than to invite experts from Africa (...). The German-African or diaspora experts offer a lot both in terms of competence and experience. But for reasons that are inexplicable to me, it is still the case that a person from Kinshasa, Addis Ababa or Kigali would rather be invited to the meeting than someone from Detmold, Tübingen or Passau - perhaps the "exotic factor" plays a role here." (Interview No. 3)

"Yes, I think the diaspora can definitely play a role. I think there is that element of credibility that they bring in their discourse about Africa because they live here. And what they are saying obviously they say it with arguments, I would assume. So obviously, they can bring a very different discourse and bringing up a fair assessment of those risks and change also the perception. I have done that or I have tried to do that many times also with my colleagues in the discussions we are having, trying to explain things from my own perspective on things that can be done or cannot be done." (Interview Nr. 11)

"I would say that the (Africans) who are on site and live there are sometimes a bit more direct and straightforward. And those who already know the German structures also know how to approach it a bit more... how to respond to it more. Through this 'being between the worlds', you can better put yourself in the other person's shoes and know better what makes Germany tick, what is perhaps happening there at the moment, and then either have a more critical opinion on things like (various support programmes of the German economy for Africa), because they really do see what is happening here and what it looks like. And the one who lives there and is here for a few days says, "Yes, I've heard that, but honestly...". So I think it's clear that you can put yourself in the other side's shoes better if you've been here for a while. And you simply have a better understanding and a two-track understanding somehow, I think that's noticeable. But nevertheless, they are still a bit more 'straighter' and 'pushy', I would say, than the average German." (Interview no. 9)

"Companies want to have information from the bio-German point of view', - that is often claimed and that is okay, but that does not get us anywhere. This means, so to speak, that the German-African is basically trusted less because it is assumed that he would maybe report in a biased way. This is clearly demonstrated by the basically non-existent visibility of the African diaspora in many business events in Germany." (Interview No. 3)

The interviewees also emphasised that there are different forms of involvement. On the one hand, there is the presence and thus visibility at events. However, it is much more important for the African diaspora to have a real say in the conception of events and in the content of programmes and initiatives.

"I think it's very focused on visibility. (...) And that is something that for me doesn't make sense, it is not really content-based. We should be over the fact that German-African experts don't have access to forums. It is high time to recognise this expertise and reach out to it. French- or Portuguese-speaking German-Africans are highly sought-after experts in France or Portugal. There, this potential has long been recognised and is commonplace. German-Africans are an added value for the local economy and, in my opinion, should be used more intensively and politics should advertise this potential more strongly and make it accessible to companies. What would have to happen: With (German public organiser) I sit on the committee for planning events. We sit together, plan the content, coordinate and design it. That means that my contribution is important - so it's not so much that I'm

there in these forums in my beautiful African robe. It's about being involved in the planning beforehand. How many German-African business forums exist in which German-African experts or diaspora Africans are involved over several months? This is an important question that organisers should ask themselves. As (...) I am already actively involved in shaping the third Africa Business Summit. Here, the (...) is certainly one of very few organisers who have active German-Africans in the team who help shape the content on an equal footing. Often there is an "African buffet" or an "African band" or, as described earlier, "special guests" as compensation, and that is not enough - these are practices that I criticise and that I unfortunately observe again and again" (Interview No. 3).

"I think first we need to work on the mindset of these German SMEs that this is real, this is really happening and there is need to involve Africans in the diaspora. I think that is the biggest problem. And if the German government can also show that kind of support and say, look, we are working with Africans in the diaspora because I think that is lacking. And you find even on the policy makers level, we are not represented. (...) There are a lot of things happening in Africa, but there's hardly no engagement of the diaspora not involved." (Interview Nr. 15)

"But having a kind of road map even for (name of ministry) here in Germany with the diaspora and get the diaspora also involved in the projects Germany has in the different African countries, that could be also a huge step" (Interview Nr. 14)

"In order to give a good guideline for Africa, there should also be people from the diaspora at the (German ministry), i.e. where the decisions are made. So there are not so many people from the diaspora and that makes it a problem. As a result, the projects are sometimes very far from reality." (Interview No. 12)

The ideas and approaches for improving individual measures on the part of the diaspora are numerous, focusing primarily on the local demand in the African countries and the economic sustainability of the projects.

"(...) being conceived at eye level, and that's how things have to be written. So again the question is: Which people write these concepts? Against what background, with what know-how? And what is the intention? Of course, if it's state money, it should first of all somehow promote the German state. That is the basic intention. And that's not objectionable. But the question is always: what brings the greatest benefit and the greatest success and, in the end, the greatest return? And from my point of view, that is always when I have interests that are aligned, where the pressure of suffering is the same on both sides, about the same. Then I definitely have a sustainable chance of success in actually implementing a project successfully in the long term. If that is not the case, it will simply fail at some predetermined breaking point, because it is already clear that the project will only work because I take an African partner with me, simply so that he is there and I get the money. Or funds are simply misappropriated. Or the control of the use of funds is not as strict as one would like it to be or too strict that simply no money flows at all and bureaucracy is simply not geared to the needs on the ground." (Interview No. 1)

"There would be no significant development if we tried to develop a region without the people who come from there. (...) But I am sure that if we integrate the people who are here, who have lived here for a long time and who understand both mentalities, if we integrate them into development cooperation from the beginning, then we would not have to spend so much money on translations, for example (...) And the cultural interaction, we would have experts here who could realise that. (...) On a voluntary basis. (...) But well, the priorities are different at the moment and I hope that with your commitment it will be seen that we really use the resources we have. (Interview no. 13)

"That is why we decided to come up with the concept of 'Why not go to Africa together?' Because we play an important role as Africans or as Kenyans in the diaspora in this sense - having lived here, having studied here, having even worked in the German environment. And yet we still understand the cultures back home. So we would play quite an important role in trying to translate a lot of things, not just the cultural aspect, but even executing some of the projects. There are so many projects that are defined here for the African market, but sometimes this is not what really the African market needs. There are so many projects that are defined here, but you end up realising there's no sustainability in the projects involved. But if we are involved, then we're able to tell 'We don't need this.'" (Interview Nr. 15)

The inclusion of the diaspora is already partly practised, especially in development cooperation, and this is also recognised. In terms of economic activities, however, only individual examples are mentioned. The hope and desire for greater participation and effectiveness in the coming years therefore remains.

"Yes, the African diaspora has certainly been a link and helped shape the work of development cooperation. For economic issues, it was more of an obstacle. There are individual people who have certainly managed to do that (...)" (Interview No. 3).

"Personally, I am also interested in somehow changing this narrative in Germany. And there are a few candidates in Germany, including one (name of the diaspora member) or so, who lives it 'to the fullest' in any case. (...) Their motivation also comes from the fact that they want to use here what they know or where they grew up. And they always have much more appropriate business models or ideas. Or they have a completely different approach because they know what they are talking about and also really believe in it." (Interview No. 9)

"There is not a big link with the politics. If we had as a diaspora a voice that would be maybe easier to push up the issues or the ideas we have and be more taken in concern. But for the moment, it's just growing. It's starting, growing. And I think we will see an impact maybe in the coming five years, because a lot of things are going quite fast. But I think in the next five to ten years we will see a huge impact in the society and that will be more visible for a lot of people. For the moment, in my personal opinion, it is starting." (Interview Nr. 14)

"First of all, I think it is very important that such organisations and institutions really involve people who have perhaps lived in the countries or who somehow understand the culture." (Interview No. 9)

"I think opportunities are being missed. I would go so far as to say that this oversleeping is not unconscious. Something urgently needs to change. And certainly a lot more can be achieved and the companies should demand it and the politicians should follow. Politics and the economy in Africa are very dynamic and grow and change very quickly. If you were travelling in Mali or Burkina Faso a few weeks ago, you will find a completely different country today. If you were travelling in Sudan, within a few months you have to deal with a completely different reality and economic challenges. To keep up to date; to know which ethnic as well as political component plays a central role within the economic system; which authority is now run by whom and what dynamics it triggers, etc., the bi-cultural identity of German Africans, coupled with the necessary expertise, can be of great advantage." (Interview No. 3)

#### 4.5 Comparison with other countries, especially France. What is the role of the diaspora in our neighbourhood and beyond?

On the African continent, German companies are also in international competition for local market shares. It therefore makes sense to look also beyond the German horizon to see to what extent other nations are already deploying the African diaspora and what the perceived narrative is in these countries.

"Interestingly, companies from America have realised this a bit earlier. They have relatively many mixed teams in their decision-making positions. (...) And I think German companies need to rethink this a bit, maybe look a bit to America, because I have seen this more often there. Austrians have also understood this a bit. There are definitely companies from Austria that say, "We are specifically looking for someone here who also has a cultural background. We are looking a bit more specifically." (Interview No. 10)

"My business card says 'The Future is African'. And I love that because it provokes a reaction. There's just nothing in between. Either you see it this way or that way. And that's a very good feedback, just so I know how this messaging is received, the resistance is just greater. And as I said, with Italians and French people I notice that the response is very, very favourable and they say 'OK, I think it's cool. That's brave. I'm on board with that.' And on the other side, let's say, Central Europeans, they need more explanation there." (Interview No. 17)

Due to the historical connections to Africa, the diaspora in our neighbouring country France is numerically very strong, but apparently also more active than in Germany. Thus, both public discourse and political and economic involvement are on a completely different level.

"Because so many leaders have studied in Africa, also in France, there is this cultural proximity. And that is much easier for them. But nevertheless, the French government and politics have realised that it should also involve the diaspora and as I said, President Macron has created a cell with members of the diaspora who advise him." (Interview No. 8)

"It is an active diaspora. You can also see that in all the events that exist in France. For example, last year was a record year for Africa in France. For the first time, they had also opened a francophone event with the employers' association Medef. The REF (Rencontre des entrepreneurs francophones) for an economic francophone alliance, so to speak. That was organised by Medef in August last year. Then there was another big event in the south of France, but this time for civil society and the diaspora. Macron has also created a special unit for the diaspora, so that the diaspora also has a voice. Whether it is good or not, but that means the diaspora is really active." (Interview No. 7)

"I think the diaspora in France is stronger because colonisation with France lasted longer. And that's why I think the diaspora plays a very good role and a big role. And there is this CPA, Conseil présidentiel pour l'Afrique. And there are many innovations that support the diaspora, so to move more in society and to do something in Africa. And France has a deeper connection with countries from Francophone Africa than Germany, for example. And there is more willingness. But it also always depends, because President Macron plays a big role because he came with an openness for Africa and for entrepreneurs. He has also invited entrepreneurs from the diaspora. That was in Montpellier last year. That means there are so many more events for the diaspora in France than in Germany, for example. I think there are a lot of projects here right now and there are also people doing a lot of things, but it's not like in France." (Interview No. 12)

"I think France is much more open and colourful. It's much more established there. Even at our school. I recently met an old school friend again in Paris (...), who kept saying, "It was the greatest luck that we were at this school. It was such a melting pot. So really, there was everything and everyone. "That was really great luck and a very, very nice time, because you had a connection to different cultures and also experienced this openness. And later she studied in France and that continued. Also at the university in Paris. I don't think that's so normal in Germany either. And also in her circle of friends, everything is much more diverse than in the circles of friends of my friends who studied business somewhere. So it's very different. And you see it more, I think - in French companies, in the cityscape. It's simply much more integrated. And somehow I have the impression that they are a bit more open. Of course, it depends on where you are in France, just like in Germany. But in general I have the feeling that the connection is more intense, which is of course also historically conditioned. And also more open. And that there's less of a "We have to become diverse now and that's why we're hiring XY now. It's just the way it is. "(Interview No. 9)

## **5 Modelling from theory and empiricism: How diaspora involvement can lead to international competitive advantages in market entry in African countries**

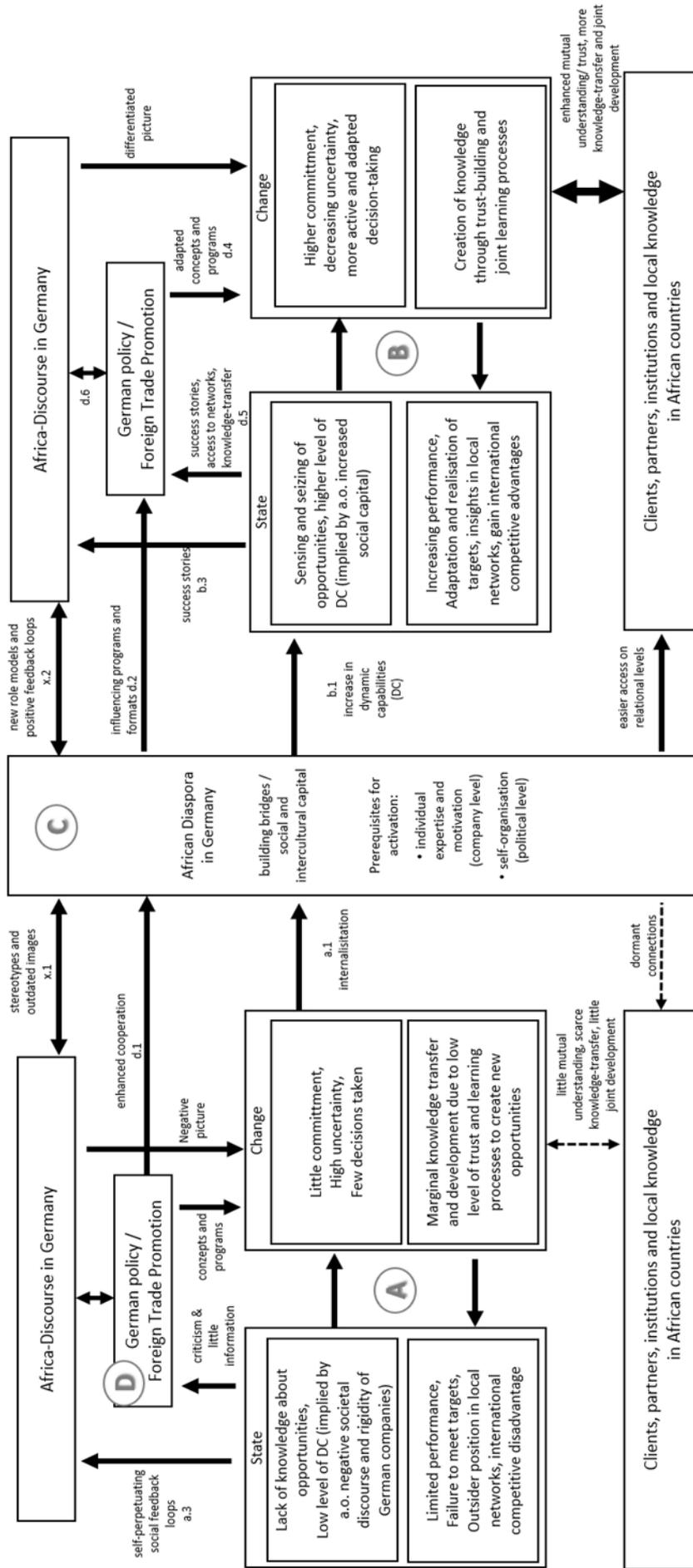
After the detailed presentation of the interview quotes has given a substantial and informative insight into the reality of life and perception of the African diaspora, we would like to put these findings once again into the theoretical context.

For this purpose, we have adopted the basic structure from the Uppsala Internationalisation Model presented in Chapter 2 and inserted the information from the interviews in order to assess the current activities of German companies on the left-hand side (A).

On the left, one can see the statements about the lack of knowledge, risk aversion and rigidity of German companies, which in turn leads to uncertainty and less dynamic decisions, resulting in little knowledge transfer and thus little chance to create and seize new opportunities. This results then in limited performance and often an international competitive disadvantage compared to companies of other countries.

The right side of the figure shows the process under the premise that the diaspora has been included in the internationalisation process (B). This process is shown as an active decision by the company to internalise the diaspora (arrow a.1), with the result that the diaspora has the opportunity to use its skills and competences (b.1). The new process (B) is characterised by an increase in dynamic capabilities, higher commitment, adapted strategic decisions, increased knowledge transfer and, ultimately, better performance and an international competitive advantage.

The role of the diaspora is shown in the central rectangle in this model (C). Here one can see the importance of awareness of individual biculturalism and intrinsic motivation, which are basic prerequisites for successfully using intercultural competence in the internationalisation process of companies. The collective self-image or self-organisation of the diaspora has more of an influence on cooperation with the political level than on corporate cooperation. How a potential path to successful enhanced cooperation (d. 1) can be paved here will be part of the recommendations for action, so that the diaspora can also successfully use its social and intercultural capital there (d.2).



The model shows the status quo of the internationalisation process of German companies in Africa without including the diaspora (left-hand side) and the potential impact (right-hand side) after successful internalisation of the diaspora in private and public organisations.

The general representation of the actor "German policy / Foreign trade promotion" (D) on the left side is based on the feedback from the previously cited interviews but also from results of previous studies (Halaszovich, 2019; Halaszovich & Mattfeld, 2020) on the assessment of public measures of economic promotion with regard to Africa. The adapted concepts (d. 4) and hopefully more positive feedback from businesses (d.5) in our model on the right are the desired effects.

In all the areas analysed, it became apparent that the Africa narrative prevalent in Germany has great significance for individual decisions and collective patterns of perception. We have therefore placed the Africa discourse centrally at the top of the model. Stereotypes become entrenched in society over generations and are difficult to break. Thus, self-reinforcing feedbacks often also arise from negative corporate experiences (a.3) or individual members and subgroups of the diaspora (x. 1). It would be utopian to believe that the inclusion of the African diaspora in private and public economic activities has the power to change this persistent narrative. However, small impulses through economic success stories (b. 3.), new role models (x. 2) and possibly greater visibility in the political public sphere (d. 6) would be the desired effects here.

The African countries in the form of the rectangles positioned below (unfortunately) play a rather passive role in this model due to the applied research questions and theory which is centred on German companies. However, some of the interview findings, for example the aspects on brain drain/brain gain/brain circulation or on Germany's image in Africa, suggest that a separate study should take a closer look at this part of the model and give the local actors there a more active voice. This would also provide further insights into how exactly the central process of joint knowledge development at relationship level can be started in a trustful manner.

## **6 Recommendations for action**

After reflecting on the complex model with the actors from business, politics, society and the diaspora, it becomes clear that there can be no one-dimensional advice. There is a need for action at all levels. We would like to start with the central actors from a business perspective: the companies. This approach is also the most effective from the point of view of our interlocutors.

"Yes, they are communicating tubes and must run in parallel. The fact is that the business community has a great power of persuasion in the direction of politics. And in this respect, for example, the Skilled Workers Immigration Act or the Blue Card regulation would not have been conceivable without the business community. If you look at German migration policy in general, whether in the 19th century in North Rhine-Westphalia, where it was intra-European migration, or after the war, it was of course always based on the economy and the need for skilled workers and labour. At that time, of course, the mistake was made of not thinking about the integration aspect. In the meantime, we have moved on a bit and we are actually trying to introduce our issues via the economy, but of course also via the trade unions. But the business community plays the decisive role in terms of the lobbying situation." (Interview No. 6)

"Utopia would be from the public institutions because they set the agenda. But for me, I am realistic, I think it is more on the private side. Because I think business will always be business. So business does not have a lot of emotions. So I think it is easier to start from the business end, from the private sector, because the public sector will take a long time. (...) I think if private sector leads... Imagine me doing business with (a German person), we do a big partnership. And our Start-Up becomes like a big Start-Up. Then everyone is talking about the German partnered with the African or the African partnered with the German. Then we go and people

know we are doing successful, it then triggers other people to say this is possible. More than if an African is now the boss of the (public institution). Sometimes these positions can be token positions". (Interview Nr. 16)

## 6.1 Private sector: Using the intercultural capital of the diaspora to enhance international competitiveness in Africa

The attentive reader will not have failed to notice how the theoretic Uppsala internationalisation model has evolved over the years in parallel with the new realities of the global economy. The integration of dynamic capabilities and the simultaneous use of exploitative and exploratory pathways is the key to generating new knowledge and succeeding on the African continent.

Flexibility, adaptation and local knowledge development to identify new opportunities always mean very individual decisions in the business context. The diaspora offers many solutions for adapting existing business models and offers access to local networks and information, which is crucial for identifying and exploiting new opportunities. Companies need to rethink their own perceptions in these uncertain times, challenge the Africa narrative and make decisions with open-mindedness and courage to exploit the potential of African markets. In short, organisational dynamic capabilities need to be enhanced, to which the bicultural members of the diaspora can contribute greatly in the form of their social/intercultural capital.

Internalising the diaspora can therefore be a key to success. This can be done by purchasing external advisory services from independent consultants or through a targeted selection of personnel. In doing so, it is necessary to review one's own motives and selection criteria in order to design a sustainable and successful cooperation at eye level.

Business associations and interest groups such as DIHK, Afrikaverein, BDI, SAFRI, VDMA, BVMW and others are also called upon here to open up to the diaspora and, analogous to political institutions, not to use their members in a symbolically representative way, but to include them in decision-making structures.

## 6.2 Policy and foreign trade promotion: Using pragmatic approaches and involving diasporas at decision-making levels

"It is not new that German businesses complain that German politics does not support them as many other countries do. " (Interview No. 8)

The critical discussion about their own programmes and approaches is not a new phenomenon for ministries and public institutions. However, with the African diaspora, an innovative actor with high professional expertise is now raising its voice, making proactive, pragmatic and cross-thematic proposals and at the same time being very strong in implementation through its international networks, as the implementation of the WIDU project has proven.

The members of the African diaspora do not want symbolic visibility, they demand serious dialogue at eye level and honest participation in decisions that affect the interests of their countries of origin. They want to make their contribution in creating the structures from an early stage. In doing so, they are aware of the hurdles in the political system and also within the diaspora, but see these as surmountable challenges.

"Who writes the programmes and with what attitude are they written? And it's not at eye level, it's always said, "Ok, we'll bring the money. We bring the know-how and then, as a cover-up, (...) somehow look for an African partner who will do it so that the money will flow. "But actually, it should be oriented towards needs and conceived on an equal footing. (...) But one also has to consider: What particular interests do the respective staff members (in the German institutions in the African countries) have in order to promote their personal careers in the construct of the enterprise? And do they then take these risks? Do they have an intrinsic motivation to really advance this? Or is it partly just about lighthouse projects to promote their own careers? And that's a topic where I think, "Ok, if I'm somehow sitting in a (German institution abroad) in a target country, what personal interests, what incentive systems are there for this person to develop such a concept? Or is it simply like in the civil service and they say, I'm just doing my time here - without wanting to offend the people in the civil service - and just take care about getting my bread and butter in? "That's a question that would have to be clarified from a structural point of view, or incentive systems would have to be designed in such a way that they can implement precisely this kind of idea in the long term. "(Interview No. 1)

In this context, we should also not forget that it is not only German companies that are in international competition for market shares in Africa. Germany as a nation is also fighting for geostrategic advantages on the African continent. Germany could already take some steps in the right direction by using the diaspora, which is well connected in their countries of origin.

"It is now more or less really about geostrategy in a way. And that is very interesting to see. (...) The shift away from "Okay, now we intervene or now we see this continent as, let's say, a trouble spot and try to counter it with security policy measures" to "Okay, now we more or less see the need to develop it. "Which also shows parallels to the development trends. Not only in Asia, especially through Japan, but of course also South Korea, to become active there, or also in Europe. In other words, it is now a matter of gaining this bond with a possible system partner through economic development. And to do that in this context. I also find that very interesting, because some Americans I have spoken to see this a bit more pragmatically, but so do the British. So that's their thinking. The French anyway. " (Interview No. 17)

We would therefore like to promote a multidisciplinary cooperation between the ministries and the diaspora. The BMZ has already good experience in cooperating with diaspora representatives. The Africa Strategy anchored in the BMBF also has good approaches to promoting the diaspora. This raises the question on how effective could a joint planning be if, in addition to the topics of education and development, we also put economics on the agenda and, secondly, invite diaspora representatives and business representatives in addition to the relevant ministries? If we then reverse the logic of knowledge transfer, we can certainly learn remarkable new things.

"As a rule, the know-how goes from Europe to Africa, although in my opinion it should also work the other way round, because especially in the field of agriculture and farming there is know-how that could certainly be used here. "(Interview No. 1)

## Education and foreign policy approaches (BMBF and AA)

Education is a key element in influencing the image of Africa in Germany in the long term. Through the concept of brain circulation, it can also be assumed that the exchange between the diaspora and the African continent can be expected to have not only positive developments for the countries of origin, but also positive effects on economic relations with the new home country. As mentioned, knowledge exchange within the diaspora is already taking place on various levels. Furthermore, initiatives to change the Africa narrative in Germany are also already being initiated on a small voluntary basis. With the involvement of the diaspora, projects could be launched nationwide with relatively little effort and great long-term benefit.

"If you go to most schools in Germany, you rarely see anything positive about Africa. Most of the literature, they just have pictures of Africans using a boat. But they never portray the Silicon Savannah. Now, these children grow up with the same mentality that Africa is poor. So, we are also trying to be very engaged in schools and to just show them something different. When we do workshops, we come there as professionals so that these children will grow up now seeing a different Africa. (...) There are so many other nice things that we can initiate. I was talking to a school whether we can have like a partner school with a school in Kenya. I wouldn't mind hosting a Kenyan child coming to a German school here for an exchange programme. And my brothers and sisters in Kenya who are doing very well, they wouldn't mind hosting a German child to go for an exchange programme in Kenya." (Interview Nr. 15)

The added value generated by a change in the discourse on Africa was presented in the model as well as in the comparison with France.

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) acts at the interface between the BMBF and the AA and receives most of its budget from these two ministries. Some of the diaspora Africans were funded by the DAAD and came to Germany that way. Moreover, there are also many funding programmes between German and African universities. However, the efficiency of these cooperations, the recruitment of qualified students, the granting of visas and also the further support during the transition into the economy are not very smooth processes. Here, too, the diaspora could play a significant role at various interfaces and contribute its own experience and intercultural competence.

"I was paid with the DAAD fund. So that was money from the government. I think that Germany should be proud to have paid money for someone like me. And there are many more. There are many more. They should be recruited. I mean, I can recruit them easily. But if you go through certain structures, you will not be able to recruit them properly because of all the things we know. So that is where the diaspora can actually be of help as well." (Interview Nr. 11)

"I think that is where (at the embassies) most of our problems begin that they see us as Africans who do not want to go back home. So they look at you as "I don't think you'll go back to your home country." Yet this is someone who is very motivated to come and finish their studies here. But when the embassy just looks at you and decides that yet you meet other requirements. So, that's where it starts. If the embassies would also start evaluating things in a different matter and say 'Okay, fine, we still need to regulate and control our markets' but just be a bit more flexible in the way they do things and even hire African professionals to work in those embassies." (Interview Nr. 15)

With regard to German foreign and trade policy and the local activities, there are also further concrete examples of unfavourable customs agreements, cost-intensive and inefficient structures of German business development institutions and failed contacts with local staff. The members of the diaspora see a lot of potential for savings and optimisation here.

#### Foreign trade promotion measures (BMWK) and economic cooperation (BMZ)

The aforementioned ideas in the field of education are primarily aimed at the future design of economic relations and the long-term integration of the diaspora at various levels of public institutions. But what can foreign trade promotion already do concretely today to promote the Africa activities of companies with the inclusion of the diaspora? And aren't there already many existing initiatives by the various ministries to promote economic activities in Africa?

"These big programmes that are started in Germany are honestly, I have the feeling, also smiled at a bit (...) because it is simply too slow and far too bureaucratic. We wouldn't even know what to do, nobody knows what to do. And it's just not fast enough. These are such huge things. They don't want to have much to do with it. That's my impression. But what there is or what is a topic right now, I have the feeling, are these platforms and networks where information is shared in order to make the whole thing more transparent and also to exchange with people who have already invested (...) or that experiences are simply exchanged. Because I believe that the people who deal with this are interested in the African market. (...) The hurdle at the beginning is just very big. And in order to somehow fill this gap, there are approaches like (private companies and initiatives). I think there is also this (public institution), which goes a bit in that direction, but I think you have to be very German to end up there." (Interview no. 9)

Breaking up the big bureaucratic mechanisms and changing long-term programmes does not seem to be a pragmatic solution. We therefore propose to start with proactive and inclusive networking approaches in the short term.

First of all, the executing agencies of the various programmes and initiatives, e.g. the Business Network Africa, GIZ, AWE, the Business Scouts, the AHK network, INA, GTAI and others, could increasingly point out the great potential and added value of the African diaspora as external consultants and internal staff in their consultations with German companies.

A second pillar should again be the social discourse about Africa and Africans. Public relations work through regular contributions with authentic success stories about the path of professional diaspora Africans would be a simple but promising way to paint a differentiated picture.

Thirdly, we have seen that although visibility at German-African business forums is not the primary goal of diaspora Africans, they can bring a very unique value to the debate through their biculturalism. This perspective cannot be replaced in a panel discussion by either continental Africans or bio-Germans. This point of view should therefore be included in the early stages of designing events. The German-African Business Summit (GABS), for example, is now held regularly on the African continent after the inaugural event in Berlin in 2015, but is still conceived by predominantly German decision-makers. What would the GABS 2024 look like if it was organised by the African diaspora in Germany?

Fourthly, we recommend that the knowledge of the African diaspora should also be integrated in the long term into the development of guidelines for the promotion of an economic exchange with Africa and that this dialogue should be conducted across ministries as mentioned above. The objective of these consultations should then be concrete, non-bureaucratic, knowledge-generating measures such as platform-based concepts, from which business, the diaspora and foreign trade promotion benefit equally.

### 6.3 Diaspora: Bringing together heterogeneous backgrounds for the economic well-being of Africa and Germany

For successful integration into public decision-making structures, the organisation of the diaspora itself plays a decisive role. The heterogeneity of the diaspora should be seen as an opportunity here, as long as all actors can agree upon the common goal of sustainable economic development between German companies and the African countries of origin. The emerging common African identity and the common interest in the well-being of the countries of origin and the new homeland Germany should lead the way in these discussions. The key actors of the African diaspora in Germany must be identified and empowered as competent stakeholders. These contact persons can then enter into dialogue with German business and politics in order to develop practical solutions, subsequently communicate them to the community and implement them in a decentralised way in the existing networks.

“We from the diaspora, we have to get together and maybe try to raise up that one initiative to be sure that when we have the visibility, there’s one contact. And from that one contact, you can spread the word to different associations or different initiatives. And for the moment, it is not the case. That could be a first step and from that one having more impact on the politics and also on the economy to let the businesspeople and even the politicians know that there is a diaspora living here in Germany from the African continent. And they can count on them. Because they already know Germany, they know how the people work, how the people live, and they also know on their sides from the different home countries how the people live and how the people work and do business. So having, I just call it a translation module, using that translation module is actually a win-win situation for both. (Interview Nr. 14)

In order to be heard as a strong voice vis-à-vis companies, associations and ministries, it will be crucial to combine the expertise of organisations and individuals who have already gained experience in cooperation with economic and political actors. Participants of the BKMO or representatives of ADAN could be seen as examples.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The association ADAN (Afro German Academic Network) was founded in 2014 through the initiative of young ambitious students with African roots. Through the voluntary commitment of the members and the cooperation with the business community, projects

"I could imagine that this would be observed with a great deal of scepticism at first. (...) What would be important would be to approach the right people and also to seek dialogue with the community or with certain people in the community itself who, I would say, are a little bit valid and also develop a very good feeling for how such organisations have to be set up, for example." (Interview No. 17)

#### 6.4 Establishment of a permanent working group to build dialogue between the diaspora, business and politics

There are reservations, doubts and traditional ways of thinking on all sides. Moreover, the importance of Africa and the diaspora is negligible considering the pure numbers. We are therefore aware that our recommendations for action, despite the pragmatic approach and little need of resources, run the risk of getting lost along the way due to the niche nature of the topic. However, we believe not only in Africa's future relevance, but also in the leverage effect of the African diaspora, which can help German business and politics to gain a strategic advantage on the continent.

Therefore, we recommend that - in addition to the implementation of the above-mentioned measures and the dialogue between business, politics and the diaspora - a permanent working group should be formed to accompany and moderate the forementioned measures and dialogue. Within such a framework, fundamental issues can be discussed, for example, how an adequate representation of the diaspora in the economy can look like or whether some actions are only symbolic politics. In addition, feasibility studies on proposals from the ministries and the business community can be prepared in this committee.

"I think the younger ones are even light years ahead in terms of politicisation. And when it comes to neo-colonialism, they smell it immediately. They recognise when you install a black person as a dummy to give the impression that somehow change is happening here, but the whole apparatus behind it is still very much in the colonial mindset. So I don't want to say you can try, but good luck with that. I don't think it will be sustainable." (Interview No. 17)

Furthermore, the working group is supposed to elaborate concrete proposals for measures and address them to the respective actors. Some projects might also be implemented directly here. One concrete idea would be the multilateral platform solution between business, politics and the diaspora mentioned above, which has been mentioned several times.

"I would say one of the interesting things that can be done is to create a platform for those people who are interested to participate in this type of discussions or this type of exchange to already sign up and have already diverse voices heard. There are not many. If such a platform is not created, probably they will never be discovered. (...) It would be advisable to whenever you have discussions regarding African to associate as many of these as possible, because not all of us can speak about these countries. But I think it makes sense, at least if there is such a platform to get them to participate somehow. Maybe also by bringing such an interest, you will find people who are actually really deep thinkers in those topics and who will emerge then and be able to participate on the highest stage in those conversations." (Interview Nr. 11)

An important role of this working group would also be the public relations to create a differentiated image of Africa in German society. The focus should be on Africa's economic potential and innovative strength and promote the transfer of knowledge from Africa to Germany. The portrayal of diaspora Africans as successful business people and economic and/or political experts is also intended to bring new role models into the public consciousness.

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for the promotion of diversity in companies (ADAN Zalando) or for the promotion of start-up companies (ADAN ELEVATE) have emerged and gained nationwide visibility within and outside the diaspora.

While forming this working group, the same standards that we emphasised in the recommendations for public institutions naturally apply: A diverse and interdisciplinary composition from science, business and politics based on the competences of the individual members. Special attention should be paid to involving all stakeholders already during the negotiations on an underlying statute in order to have a credible foundation and to be able to present a convincing case to all stakeholders.

"On the other hand, I also think that the design of such an organisation should not be superficially based on parity but should also be equal in its structured. That means, if there is the possibility... No, I think it is not so important which positions are filled, but how the constitution, if it were a company, for example, the articles of association, would be designed. (...) So to really start in the design of an organisation. And I would say to emphasize the organic in it. It is also pragmatic. So it's not that it's impossible and that it's a long consultation process. I think you just need the right people to talk to and also a well-drafted and sensibly negotiated social contract or maybe kind of articles of association, which simply establishes this parity into its constitution. It doesn't even have to be African people who promote this development. But I believe the place where the impact is, that is the treaty. That is where it counts, even more than superficially." (Interview No. 17)

## **7 Closing statement for a new Africa narrative in society**

In addition to the theoretic and professional assessment and analysis, it is important to us to once again emphasise the importance of social discourse and to make an appeal to the reader. We have all grown up with a cultural imprint that leads to conscious stereotypes but also unconscious bias. As our model shows both have a greater influence than it seems in everyday life. Our recommendations for business and politics are therefore not only to be understood on organisational level but directed at the individuals who act. And as such, we as a whole society should be careful with the daily images and messages we receive and produce, not only in our professional but also in our private lives.

The direct impact on the relevant people is considerable and shameful. That alone should be motivation and reason enough to be highly sensitised here. If, as shown by this study, we also consider the negative effects on Germany's economy - not only in the context of the much-cited skilled labour debate - and that we are thereby missing out the potential for joint knowledge development with the future continent of Africa, the public discourse becomes even more incomprehensible.

"I am someone who just shoots straight. I think Germany is still behind in terms of giving equal opportunities. I look at it from a refugee set up where we came as refugees, but even people were educated with degrees or masters. It's difficult to find, even with the German language, even if you're in Germany. Is difficult for you to find a job if you are not a German. That is the honest truth. So this forces a lot of people to not want to try because people always say the door is already been shut. So, there are only a few people who will say, I will open the door or force the door to be open. Because in life, you also need to be someone who keeps pushing. So a lot of people will then opt for the jobs that are there. So that is why you find Africans at the lowest type of jobs, in the 'Lager', in the warehouses or the nursing jobs that people don't want to do. Those are the jobs that are for Africans. So I am always preaching to say, look, this is what we got when we got here. But for our children, the next generation, let's build the mentality in them already that these are not jobs for them. They can be a business development manager, a tech developer..." (Interview Nr. 16)

"It annoys me when people always say where do your parents come from. (...) These are examples where someone with dark skin colour is already saying, 'I'm signalling that I come from this country. And you are signalling to me 'No, you don't belong. ' And that's what it's always about. It's always about separating and bringing together." (Interview No. 1)

"They saw me when I was there as a temporary worker assembling machines and I said "I can sell the machine". And then you have to give people a chance. And then you also have to use that chance." (Interview No. 4)

Let us all contribute to bringing society together, to lay the foundation for a differentiated picture of the African continent. Of course, no one should ignore the problems and difficult conditions under which a large part of the population in Africa lives. But it is also the complexity of the local reality from which the innovative strength and performance come from. If we do not see this source of creative, intellectual and social competence, this would not only be a sign of economic negligence, but would above all a disgrace for us as humans.

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