



Call for Proposals: Thought pieces on “Cultural exchange”

Exploring the “exchange” metaphor in the Goethe-Institut’s work in Africa

For decades, the Goethe-Institut, alongside other national cultural institutes, has characterized its activities as “cultural exchange.” However, the adequacy of this metaphor warrants critical scrutiny, as it may not fully capture the actual mandate of such agencies. Cultures are not commodities to be exchanged or replaced; rather, the primary objective of these initiatives is to foster the acquisition of new knowledge, perspectives, and attitudes.

As Friedrich Nietzsche astutely observed, metaphors are not merely linguistic devices; they have profound implications. They shape our perceptions and influence the frameworks through which we interpret and assign meaning to our experiences. Consequently, the metaphors we employ affect both our worldview and our actions within it.

This project seeks to interrogate the concept of “cultural exchange” from a variety of disciplinary and regional perspectives, engaging internationally recognized experts from Africa, Europe, and beyond. Therefore, this project is centrally concerned with how metaphors such as ‘cultural exchange’ shape institutional imaginaries, power relations, and modes of engagement in Africa-Europe cultural cooperation. Key milestones will include a symposium in March 2026 and an event commemorating in connection with the 75th anniversary of the Goethe-Institut.

At this stage, **we invite internationally recognized scholars, intellectuals, and activists to contribute thought pieces** of eventually 5–8 pages **reflecting on the term “cultural exchange” from their respective disciplinary vantage points**—such as Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, Linguistics, Ethnology, International Relations, Media or Cultural Studies, Journalism and other. A curated selection of 5–6 contributions will be published in a reader, which will serve as the foundation for a symposium in March 2026.

For the selection process, please **submit your proposal (max. 1 page) along with a short CV and relevant links (max. 1 page)** to Benjamin Bergner and Philina Wittke (e-mail addresses below).

Goethe-Institut in
Subsahara Africa

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The commissioned authors for the 5-6 thought pieces will receive an honorarium of 500€ and need to submit their final pieces by the end of February 2026.

Deadline: 31 January 2026

Selection Criteria:

- Quality and relevance of the proposal
- Experience and qualifications of author (min. 3-year experience in relevant professional or academic field)
- Demonstrated understanding of Africa-Europe cultural cooperation
- Ability to meet proposed timeline

Contact: Benjamin.Bergner@goethe.de; Philina.Wittke@goethe.de

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