

Expanding Narratives

Exhibition booklet

— WHAT SUSTAINABILITY MEANS TO THE YOUTH. AN INTERCULTURAL
EXPRESSION FROM YOUNG CREATIVE MINDS IN GERMANY AND TANZANIA



Locked in my mind 8, by Novatus Panda

1 / EXPANDING NARRATIVES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE EXHIBITION >>>>>>	2
THE PROJECT >>>>>>>>	9
IMAGES & NARRATIVES >	13
MEET THE ARTISTS >>>>	69
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS >	77



 Akademie der
Kulturellen Bildung

 UNIVERSITY
OF COLOGNE

 GOETHE
INSTITUT

Technology
Arts Sciences
TH Köln

 **KJF**
Deutsches Kinder- und Jugendfilmzentrum

RheinEnergie
Stiftung | Jugend | Beruf
Wissenschaft

 deutscher
jugend
fotopreis

THE EXHIBITION

What images and narratives do young people from Germany and Tanzania associate with sustainability?

Sixteen young creatives from Germany & Tanzania spent several months intensively exploring this question.

The result is around eighty photographs, which are presented in the exhibition “Expanding Narratives. Youth and their Images of Sustainability” which took place in January & February 2026 simultaneously in Cologne (17th-21st January) and Dar es Salaam (17th January-4th February).

The exhibition provided insight into the photographic perspectives of these young people; what (un)sustainability can mean to them and which images shape their ideas.

The young creatives developed their own photographic translations based on reflections, discussions and shared observations within the research project EXPANDING NARRATIVES.

The produced photographic translations reveal personal, critical and creative perspectives on narratives of sustainability.

In addition to individually shaped perspectives, experiences and ideas were shared in a transcultural exchange.

The exhibition invited visitors to discover these visual narratives about responsibility, the future and cohesion, and to broaden their view of possible shared sustainable futures.

Announcement poster for the exhibition designed by the Youth

EXPANDING NARRATIVES ▶
A PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION



Sustainability

[noun]

A fusion of art, science and intercultural experiences by creative young minds expressing their perspectives through the lens.



January 17, 2026 5 PM CET/ 7 PM EAT

Cologne, Alte Feuerwache, Germany

Dar es Salaam, Goethe-Institut, Tanzania

MORE INFO



ORGANISATION



Technology
Arts Sciences
TH Köln

FUNDING & COOPERATION



Rhein-George
Stiftung
Jugend | Beruf
Wissenschaft



deutscher
jugend
fotopreis



EXPANDING NARRATIVES / 4

THE VENUES

ALTE FEUERWACHE

The Alte Feuerwache Cologne is a place for exchange, political debate, and cultural activity. The socio-cultural center is located in the heart of Cologne, in a listed building complex with a beautiful inner courtyard.



COLOGNE

© Alte Feuerwache / Monika Wendt

GOETHE-INSTITUT

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institute, active worldwide.

The institute promotes the study of German abroad and encourage international cultural exchange.



DAR ES SALAAM

© Goethe-Institut

OPENING EVENT

On January 17th 2026, 5 p.m. (CET) / 7 p.m. (EAT) the grand opening of the exhibition was taking place simultaneously in Cologne & Dar es Salaam.

The young creatives, friends and families, as well as collaborative partners of the EXPANDING NARRATIVES project were invited to celebrate, exchange and explore the art works of the young participants of the project.

Part of the opening event was held hybrid via video conference to connect and exchange with the young creatives, collaborators and invites in both locations and to give interested people who cannot attend in person the possibility to participate at the event.

To promote the opening event and the exhibition the young creatives were actively involved in designing the promotional material as well as in the promoting process via the project own Instagram channel @expanding.narratives.



Selected announcement posters: exhibition

CURATION

WHO

Curating the exhibition and its' artworks, the EXPANDING NARRATIVES project team was supported by

KATHARINA KLAUDOR BEN SALEM (German Institute for Youth and Children's Films),

SANDRA CAESAR and

FIRDAUS MBOGHO (Goethe-Institut Tanzania).



CONCEPT

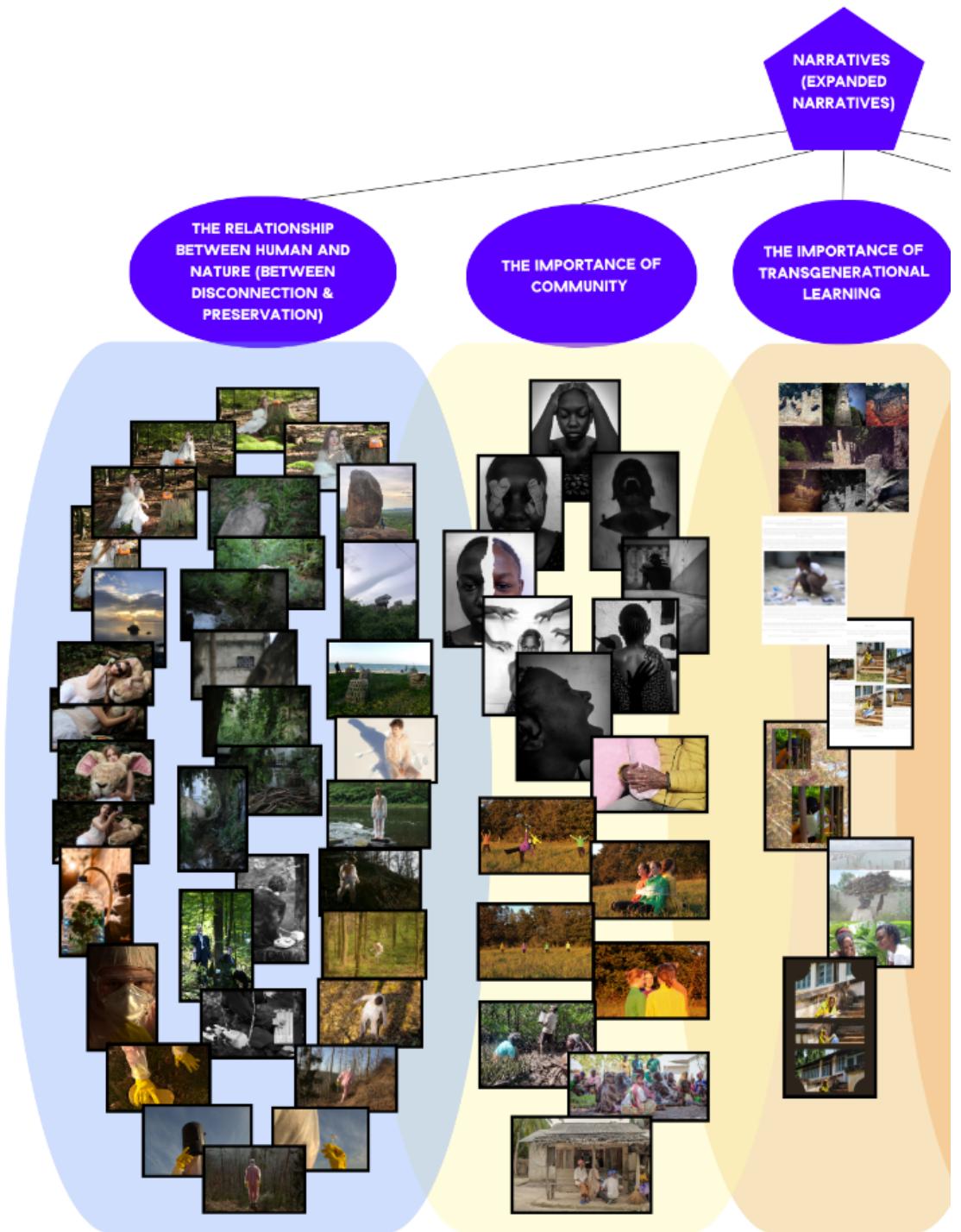
The presented artworks were developed within the research project EXPANDING NARRATIVES, in which the participants engaged in transcultural exchange processes and the analysis of historical and current images and narratives on sustainability in Germany and Tanzania.



That is how the idea came into being to structure the exhibition along categories of narratives of sustainability which are developed and addressed by the young creatives in their photographic works.

CONTEXT

Further information on the research context of EXPANDING NARRATIVES project are following on the next pages



THE EXHIBITION

EXPANDING NARRATIVES / 8

Graphic showing the final mapping of the photographic works & narratives



THE PROJECT

IN A NUTSHELL

“Expanding Narratives. Youth and their Images of Sustainability” is an international research project on images and narratives of sustainability in Tanzania and Germany.

EXPANDING NARRATIVES explores narratives and images of sustainability in a critical, creative and analytical way.

Designed as a participatory research project, young people from Germany and Tanzania are invited to explore how they perceive and negotiate historical and contemporary images and narratives in the media.



In an intercultural exchange, the participants develop their own ideas and translate them into photographs of a sustainable future.

Aiming at the participation in public discourses on sustainability, the photographs are presented online and at various events in Tanzania and Germany.

The project is conducted from 2024 to 2026 by the University of Cologne and the University of Applied Sciences Cologne in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut Tanzania, the Academy of Arts and Cultural Education and the German Institute for Youth and Children's Films.



MORE INFORMATION

In view of a global state of climate emergency, the necessity to engage with questions of sustainability, planetary boundaries and active transformational change becomes inevitable.

In this context narratives are of great importance: they offer orientation and explanation within complex situations; they can function as stabilizers of dominant unsustainable (f.e. power) structures or can destabilize them by re-telling and transforming existent narratives,

The role of images & photography in this process should be emphasized.

They can function as mediators of narratives and have a long tradition in sustainability communication as the impact on the addressees of images can be more powerful than a mere word based discourse.

In the course of transformational processes of globalization as well as digitalization images and photos within the sustainability discourse become even more relevant, as digital social media platforms are highly image-centered.

Furthermore visual means have the potential to foster transcultural understanding as they can express ideas without using distinct languages.

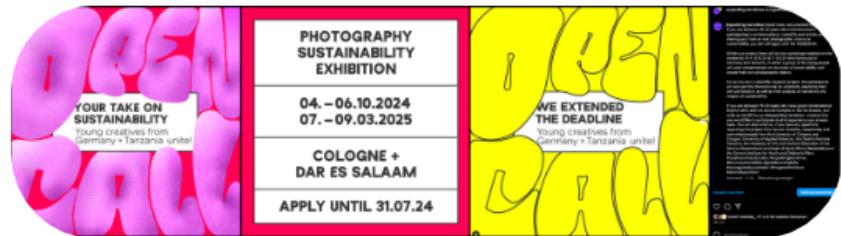
Working, discussing and co-creating in an international team with artists and educators from Tanzania and Germany offers the opportunity to learn from each others' perspectives and expertises as well as to get into a conversation about existing (neo-)colonial interdependencies and hegemonic dependencies between the so-called Global North and Global South.

As global activist movements like Fridays For Future illustrate, Youth all over the world are already taking action and articulating their sustainability demands noticeably.

EXPANDING NARRATIVES aims at empowering young people to participate in the public discourse on sustainability .

THE PROCESS

During the initial project phase the relevant cooperations were developed, participants were searched and the workshops and research were organized.



Screenshots of open call for participation via Instagram



Screenshot of the first online kick-off event September 2024

The core of the project were two workshop weekends parallelly conducted in October 2024 and March 2025 in Germany and Tanzania.

The first workshop focussed on current media images and narratives on sustainability and the development of initial ideas on own productions.



Insights into the workshops Oktober 2024 & March 2025



THE PROJECT

EXPANDING NARRATIVES / 12

On the second weekend the participants engaged in the historical comparision of images and narratives on sustainability from Tanzania and Germany from the 1960s until today and continued working on their own productions.

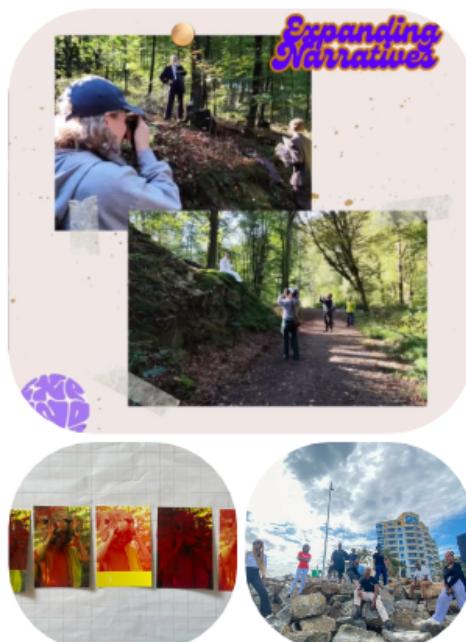


Insights into the workshops Oktober 2024 & March 2025

Alongside these workshop weekends the participants engaged in a buddy system to get to know each other better and exchange on their projects and take over the project own Instagram channel, sharing their perspectives and experiences during the project. The research team Cologne engaged in the processing of the research data gained during the workshop, worked on publications and presented the project and initial results in lectures.



Insights into the self-published Instagram posts of the participants between the two workshop units (October 2024–February 2025)



LET'S STEP INTO THE IDEAKITCHEN AND COOK UP SOMETHING GREAT.



IMAGES &

The exhibited photographs are presented along five major cluster of narratives which are introduced on the following pages. Some works have complementary remarks written by their owners - some others don't. The decision on that matter was an independent artistic one made by the photographers.



NARRATIVES



THE
IMPORTANCE
OF
COMMUNITY

CAPITALISM,
POSTCOLONIAL
AND GENDER
INEQUALITIES AS
UNSUSTAINABLE
POWER
STRUCTURES

THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN
HUMAN & NATURE
- BETWEEN
DISCONNECTION
AND
PRESERVATION

CLUSTER (1)

IMAGES & NARRATIVES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

15 / EXPANDING NARRATIVES

IMAGES & NARRATIVES

“Stay soft” by Rosa Jakobi



“Crossroads of Conversation” by Vedasto Emmanuel**“Foundations of the Hearth” by Vedasto Emmanuel**

The image expands the story of a building to security and dignity, architecture without architects.

“Echoes of the Earth” by Vedasto Emmanuel



The image speaks about our responsibility to the restoration and dealing with the climate crisis and labour rights.

It transforms simple actions into rhythmic dialogue between the human body and the planet.

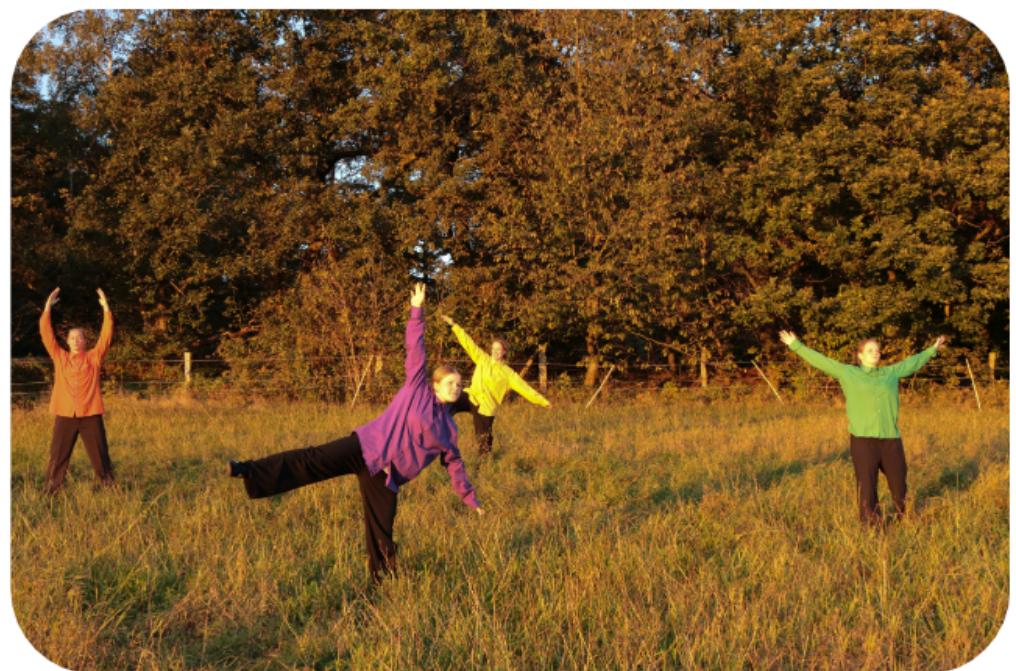
Series "Modes of society" by Mirjam Liebl

Every day, we make choices — small, seemingly insignificant decisions that, when combined, shape the society we live in.

How we interact, engage with others, collaborate, and contribute to shared spaces defines the very modes of society we create.

This series is an exploration of how we do and could live together.





Series "Locked in my Mind" by Novatus Panda

This series is inspired by a modern day crisis in teens that threatens the sustainability of social systems and interactions in the near future.

As a result of a multitude of things, most importantly parental absence and the rise of social media to name a few we are witnessing an rise in mental health issues amongst teens in terms of depression and isolation.

The absence of parents in a child's life either due to busy schedules, neglect, familial conflicts and so on and in this digital era has exposed them to a life of having to seek answers, emotional and mental support from sources that aren't credible online and elsewhere.

Teens are dealing with a lack of support systems in their closest people, so with no one to confide in, nowhere to ask for help they stay locked away in their minds, isolated in crowds as the wounds from what they deal with alone fester and the pain grows ever-more.

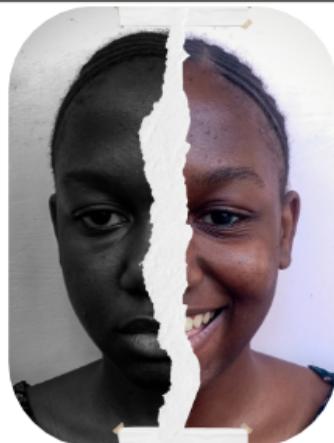
This is my visual interpretation of what our kids are dealing with on their own; fear, anxiety, loneliness, depression. All these negative emotions locked away with no one to process them with or seek help from. This is their voiceless cry for help. Will we hear it?

This is my call to everyone of you constantly in the lives of our teens most especially parents to let down your walls, build emotional connections with your kids and set time aside to regularly be in their lives apart from only providing for them. In an era where digital media can negatively influence teens, they've never needed outlets, father and mother figures they can rely on more than they do now.

If we're not mindful of this, then we're building a not so distant future where our social constructs that have withstood generations and generations will fail us as a whole. And then we'll have houses instead of homes and boundaries instead of communities.

IMAGES & NARRATIVES

EXPANDING NARRATIVES / 22



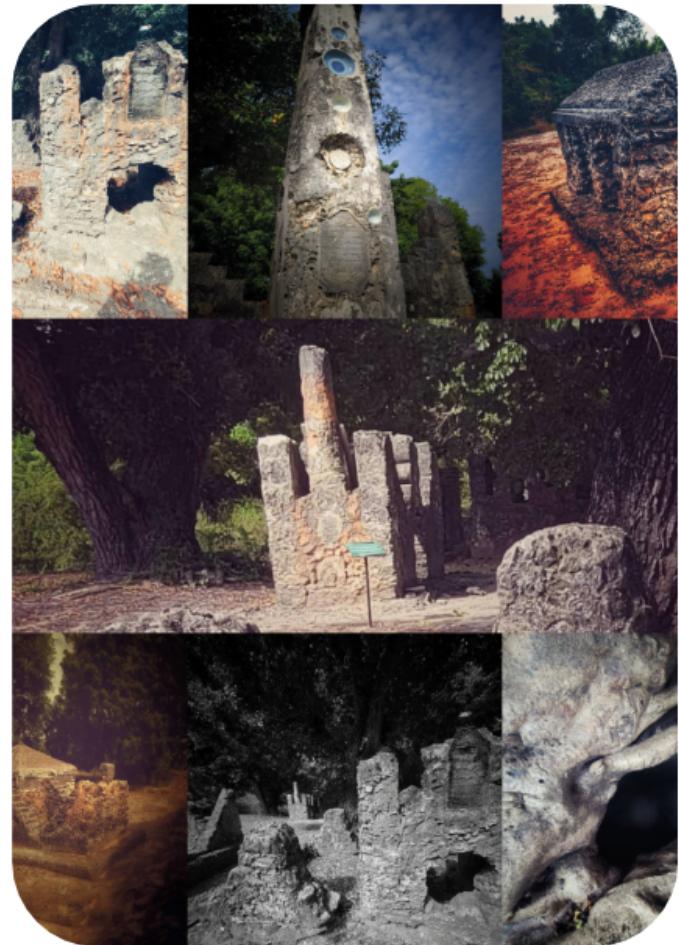
CLUSTER (2)

IMAGES & NARRATIVES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE- SHARING

23 / EXPANDING NARRATIVES

IMAGES & NARRATIVES

“From the ashes we rise” by Malaika Jiliwa



Behind every newborn is an old soul
We have all come from the soil and to the soil we will return.
Explore the history of the graves, the story behind the legends.
The myth that strengthens our faith.
Each one has a story to tell. The positive or the negative,
relationships, economy, religion all are carried part with a grave
From the details such as the grave molded to a male organ signifying
the leaders of male circumcision to the porcelain plates signifying our
modern time home decor.
The people of the past have shaped the lives of today and it all started
with sustainability.
So many voices spoke but few were heard and stored.
Transferred to the next generation up until today.
This is what I call sustainability

"Echoes of knowledge: generational education in Africa" by Sabina Ntobi

The images showcase Sustainability through Generational Knowledge, a series exploring how wisdom is carried, guarded, and passed down.

The project moves between visible and invisible labor, between freedom and limitation, always circling back to the power of storytelling.

The pieces, in particular, highlights quiet resistance: the decision to hold onto stories in an age of forgetting.

"Steps of Wisdom" by Sabina Ntobi

Dear world,

I am writing to emphasize the importance of generational educational sustainability in Africa and the need to preserve, adapt, and strengthen our learning systems for future generations.



A young woman sits reflectively on worn steps, wrapped in traditional African fabric, symbolizing the connection between heritage and learning.

Captures a broader view of the subject's environment, showing the structure behind her a metaphor for foundations of knowledge.

The vibrant fabric contrasts with the aged building, representing resilience and continuity across generations.

“Cradle of Stories” by Sabina Ntobi

Set against the worn façade of an aging building, this triptych presents a young woman draped in a bright yellow khanga, immersed in an oversized book.

Her posture shifts across the frames from joy, to contemplation, to playful shielding mirroring the cyclical, sometimes overwhelming journey of absorbing generational wisdom. The old staircase, cracked walls, and vibrant wrap echo themes of decay and preservation, resilience and inheritance.

It is a quiet homage to how knowledge is passed through lived spaces, oral memory, and the enduring physicality of books.



“Cycles of Life and Learning” by Sabina Ntobi

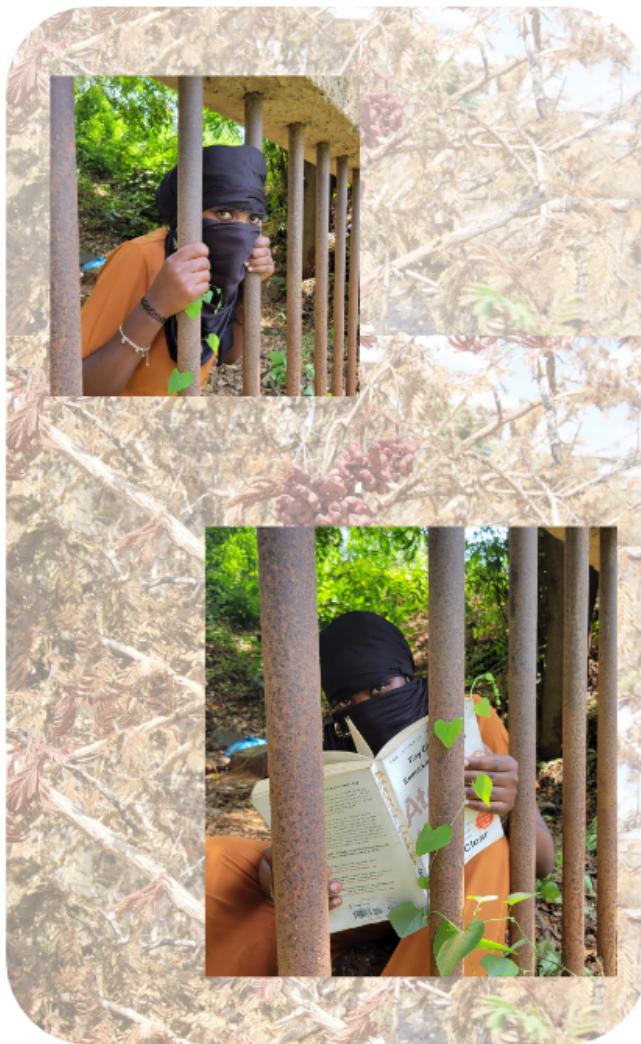
This single image is composed of three parts, creating a visual triptych. The top section shows a dock reaching toward the horizon symbolizing movement, journey, and the continuity of life across time and water. The middle section portrays an elderly man carrying firewood a tribute to physical endurance, lived wisdom, and generational labor. The bottom section features two young women reading joyfully representing knowledge renewal, community, and the hope of future generations. Together, these layers reflect how African knowledge and experience are passed down: not only through formal education, but through work, culture, and daily interaction. Each generation contributes one through survival and sacrifice, the next through learning and transformation.



Generational Knowledge is a photographic narrative that explores the flow of wisdom, resilience, and growth between African generations.

The series combines portraits and symbolic imagery to trace how learning is preserved and reinterpreted from elders who embody life experience to youth shaping a new intellectual identity.

Each image stands alone, but together, they form a cycle honoring heritage, revealing transition, and embracing the future of African knowledge systems.



This piece explores the metaphorical and literal barriers to knowledge:

- The bars suggest confinement social, structural, or systemic but they are rusted, aged, and beginning to be overtaken by sprouting vines, hinting at transformation.
- The figure is veiled, anonymous, possibly marginalized yet still engaged in reading, reaching for understanding.
- The vibrant greens growing through the decay suggest that learning, like nature, finds a way.

The work invites reflection on how education can persist in hostile or restricted environments, and how generational wisdom is not always passed through clean institutions it also travels in struggle, solitude, and silence.

This piece deepens the series' central message:

Generational Knowledge isn't just inherited it is reclaimed, reshaped, and sometimes resisted.

By combining open learning, ancestral labor, and quiet defiance, the series portrays education not as a singular path, but a multi-generational terrain.

“The Silent Archivist” by Sabina Ntobi

This image captures a blurred yet powerful moment: a young woman hunched over printed photographs, sorting, selecting, and placing them with care.

The soft focus draws attention to the act itself rather than the individual, symbolizing the quiet, often invisible work of memory keeping.

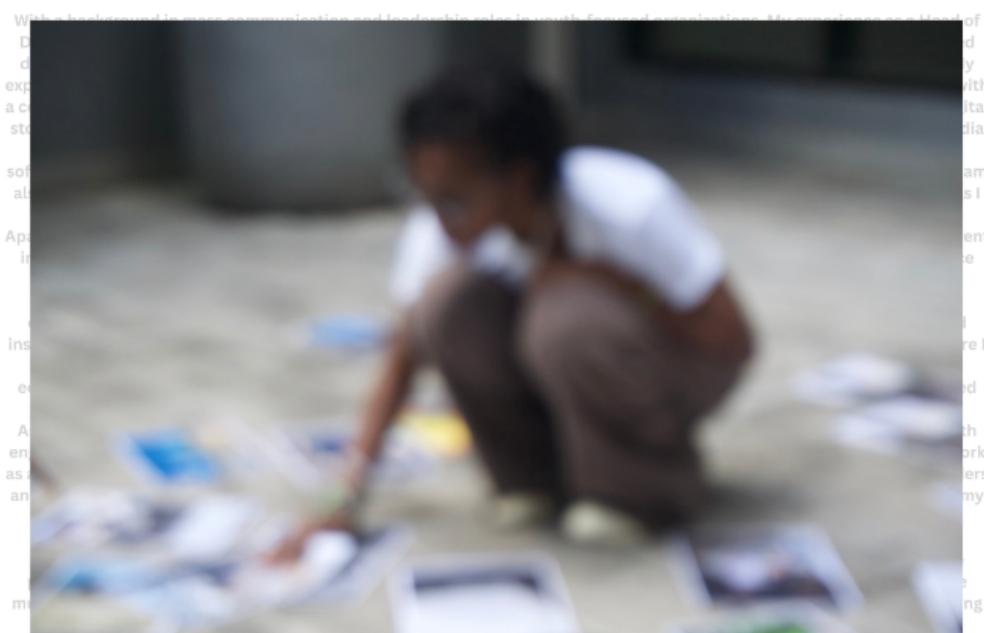
It speaks to the intimate process of preserving family, community, and cultural narratives how we archive stories not only to remember but to teach, share, and reimagine.

Dear Hiring committee,

I am writing to express my interest in working with the „„ as a Communication Officer . With my robust experience as a communication officer, educational background in Mass Communication, and as a progressive professional with event planning experience, I believe that I can bring valuable contributions to your team.

I possess strong communication and organizational skills that align with the requirements of this position. My experience in digital communications and social media management has equipped me with the ability to effectively implement internal and external strategies, ensuring alignment with organizational guidelines and donor expectations. I am skilled in drafting and coordinating content, including stories, blogs, videos, and social media posts, while adhering to deadlines and maintaining a high standard of quality.

My background in corporate writing and media relations enables me to craft key messages, statements, and responses to press inquiries, while also organizing media coverage and briefings. My interpersonal and networking skills facilitate collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including media, government agencies, influencers, donors, and UN partners. Furthermore, my ability to manage multiple tasks in high-pressure environments, combined with proficiency in Microsoft Office and multimedia content creation tools, makes me well-suited to contribute to the Embassy of France communications efforts.



I am particularly interested in working at the „„ in Tanzania because of its pivotal role in fostering strong bilateral relations across various domains, including trade, culture, and development. The „„ work in promoting „„ culture, facilitating economic partnerships, and supporting sustainable development aligns with my passion for international cooperation and cultural diplomacy. Additionally, the „„ involvement in key sectors such as education, environmental initiatives, and security cooperation resonates deeply with my desire to contribute to projects that have a meaningful impact. I am eager to support the embassy's mission in strengthening the ties between „„ and Tanzania, while actively contributing to its continued success in promoting mutual understanding and collaboration.

With the above skills and experiences, if given this position to work as a communication officer, I will produce accurate narratives of the Embassy of France activities, supervise communication for both external and internal audiences including the media, the public, donors, the UN agencies, and other key partners, contributing to the organization's visibility.

Thank you for considering my application. I am enthusiastic about the possibility of joining and supporting its communications efforts in making a meaningful impact.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how my skills and experiences align with the needs of your team.

Kind regards

CLUSTER (3)

IMAGES & NARRATIVES ON ATTRIBUTING AND TAKING RESPONSIBILITY ON INDIVIDUAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIETAL LEVELS

31 / EXPANDING NARRATIVES

IMAGES & NARRATIVES

“no name” by Mirjam Liebl



The future nor the past are
more than now(s).

Do you ever look at videos of
your past self and wonder who
you could be now, only if

But Mom says the world is no
picnic.

--

“Luminance in Motion” by Vedasto Emmanuel



“Fabric of Unity” by Vedasto Emmanuel



“Stinging Realities” by Vedasto Emmanuel



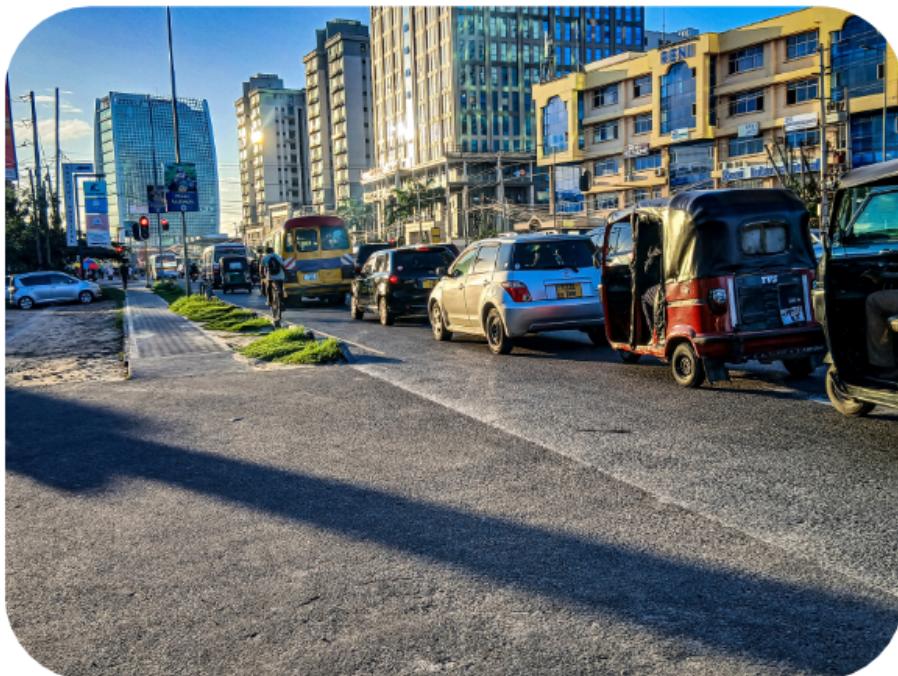
Series “GREEN MOBILITY” by Nakai Gutu

Pictures 1-3: THE UNDERLYING CHALLENGES

“At the Red Light: A Pause in Progress” by Nakai Gutu

The daily build-up of buses, “bajajis”, and cars at traffic lights across Dar es Salaam and other cities highlights a growing urban challenge.

Traffic jams slow down productivity, waste fuel, and increase greenhouse gas emissions. Integrated traffic management systems and investments in modern infrastructure like synchronized lights and allocated specific lanes can help Tanzanian cities move toward smoother, greener mobility.



"Heavy Loads, Idle Roads" by Nakai Gutu

Queue of parked lorries paints a familiar picture across Tanzania's highways and cities.

These heavy-duty vehicles are essential for transporting goods across the country but when they sit idle, they block space, burn fuel in waiting, and add to urban air pollution.

Encouraging fuel efficiency, improving loading systems, and regulating long-haul operations could make the freight sector more climate-friendly.

**"Choked Lanes, Choking Skies" by Nakai Gutu**

A long queue of vehicles stuck on the road with no traffic signal in sight reveals one of Tanzania's biggest urban challenges.

With ring car ownership and limited road space, such congestion not only causes frustration but also contributes to poor air quality and climate stress.

Expanding public transit options and promoting carpooling can ease the load on our roads and air.

Pictures 5-8: THE SOLUTIONS

“Green Motion” by Nakai Gutu

Hybrid vehicles are a relatively new but growing presence in Tanzania.

This white hybrid car proudly displays its eco-label: "Low Emissions" and "Self Charging."

It represents a step toward individual responsibility in reducing one's carbon footprint.

If supported by tax incentives and awareness campaigns, hybrid and electric vehicles could gradually transform urban transport.



“Bajajis” in Colorful Unity” by Nakai Gutu



Clustered at a local station, these colorful “bajajis” are more than just a convenient ride.

They're a symbol of accessible urban mobility.

While currently reliant on fossil fuels, efforts are underway in some regions to pilot electric “tuk-tuks”.

If widely adopted and regulated, bajajis could become a key player in eco-conscious transport systems, offering mobility for all while minimizing environmental impact.

"The Blue Line of Hope: "Mwendokasi"" by Nakai Gutu

Dar es Salaam's BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) system symbolizes a major step toward sustainable urban transport. By moving more people with fewer vehicles, it reduces emissions and traffic jams making public transport cleaner, faster, and more efficient.



"Two Wheels Ahead" by Nakai Gutu

Bodabodas (motorcycle taxis) are a vital part of Tanzania's informal transport system. They offer fast and affordable travel while reducing congestion. With proper regulation and electrification, they could become key players in the sustainable mobility shift.



"Green Means Go Greener" by Nakai Gutu

A simple green light often taken for granted can represent progress beyond just movement. In a sustainability lens, it's a metaphor for forward-thinking transport policies, investments in pedestrian safety, and clean transport infrastructure. It's time to follow the signal: go green, literally and symbolically.



Series “to give away” by Rosa Jakobi

A glimpse of what people want to let go of, what they have left over.

Excess, the unnecessary - and the small possibilities to pass things on.





CLUSTER (4)

IMAGES & NARRATIVES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN AND NATURE – BETWEEN DISCONNECTION AND PRESERVATION –

41 / EXPANDING NARRATIVES

IMAGES & NARRATIVES

Series "Out of my bubble" by Benny Page



5 self-portraits of a city-dweller in nature

“Out of my Bubble” explores modern humans' relationship with nature.

The series takes a critical look at how humans try to separate themselves from their natural environment and protect themselves from it.

Their contradictory relationship with nature is characterized by separation and alienation, whereby they often avoid nature but above all exploit and thus destroy it.

They need its resources and use them to protect themselves from it. Clothing, concrete walls, and metal car bodies are their new barriers that protect them from danger, cold, and weather — a fatal relationship!



Series “Breath of life” by Debora Loy

These metaphorical images are a stark reminder of our profound connection to nature.

It shows a young boy whose breath depends entirely on a jar containing a small tree, his entire existence seems to flow from it.

This tree is a source of air to him, and a very essence of his life.

If the tree is taken away, so is his future.

It's a powerful reflection of the harsh reality we face today, as trees disappear, so does life.

Trees are more than just part of our environment, they are the silent providers of oxygen, guardians of water sources, and the balance keepers of our world.

Without them, life fades, and the Earth loses its breath, beauty, and shade.

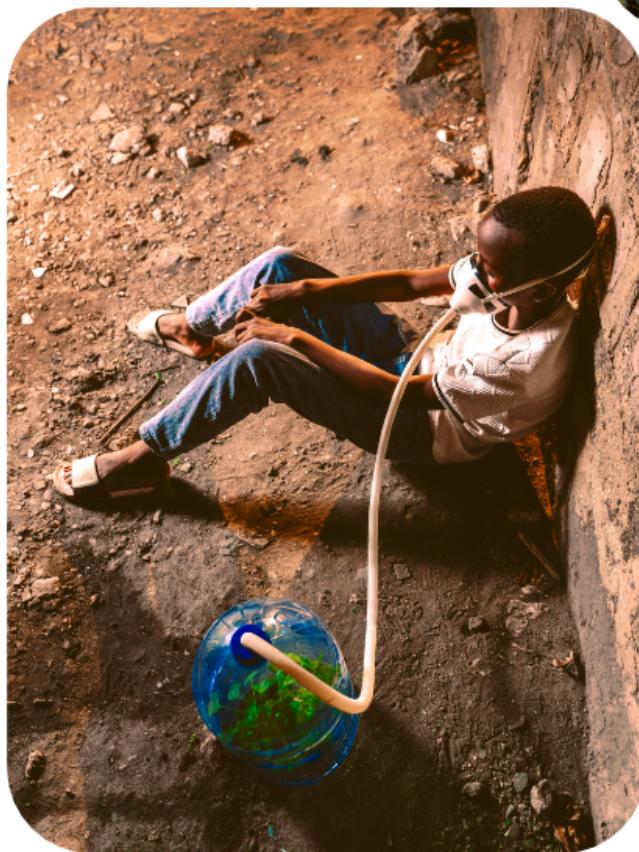
Recent statistics reveal that Tanzania alone loses 459,000 hectares of forest every year due to human activities that lead to the cutting down of trees which is a heartbreakingly true.

But this is not just a Tanzania issue.

If we continue to take nature for granted, we may one day find ourselves gasping for what once surrounded us in abundance, no matter where we live.

It is the responsibility of each and every one of us, across the globe, to protect our environment.

If we act now and nurture the Earth for ourselves and for future generations, the Earth will nurture us in return.

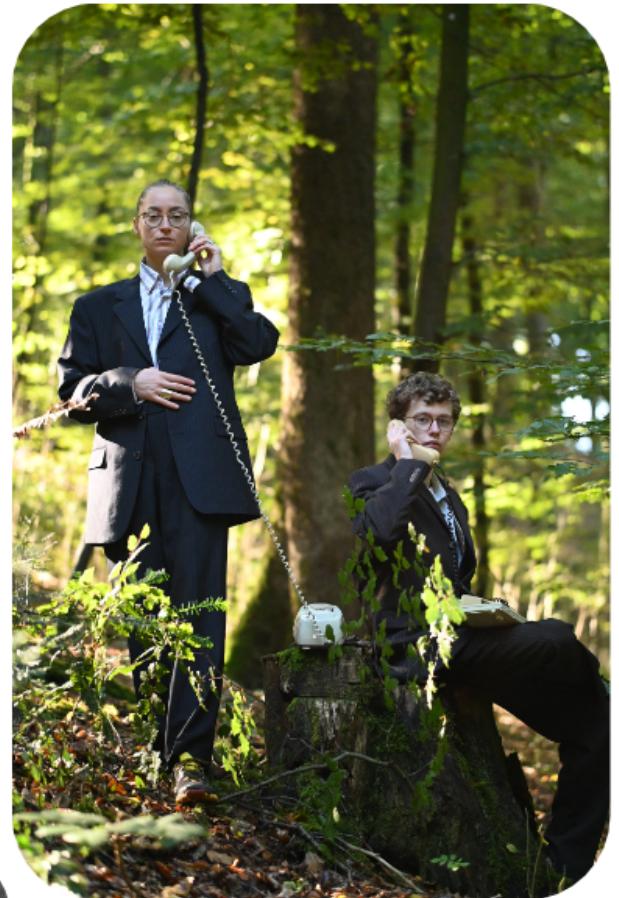


Series "untitled" by Rosa Jakobi

Between suit and tree trunk, cables and moss, work and stillness.
Two people sit in the forest but seem to be somewhere else.
The images play with closeness and distance, with nature and systems,
with the question of what it means to be truly connected.

Maybe it's about sustainability. Maybe it's just about a good mobile signal.



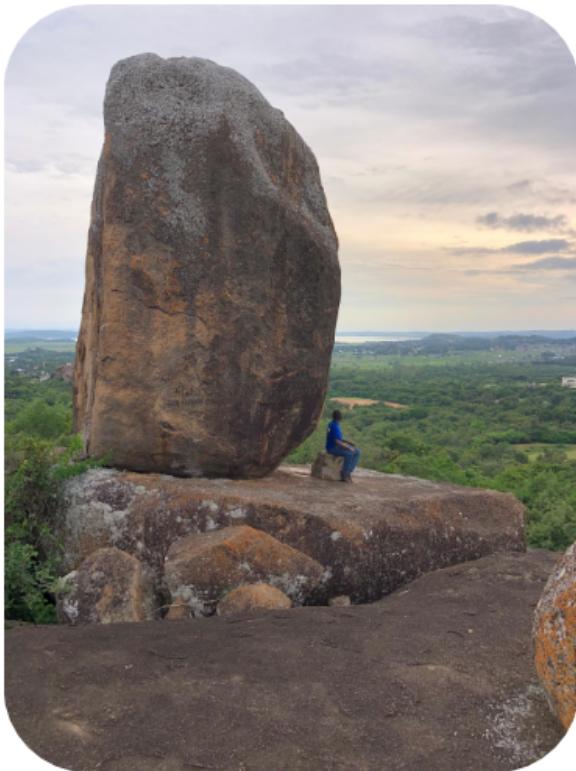


Series “THE MAGIC OF THE ENVIRONMENT” by Jabel Richard

My idea behind these photos was to show the magic of the environment. Each picture was taken in a special moment where I felt like nature was speaking. Nature has its own way of showing beauty and peace, and I wanted to capture that. These moments reminded me why it's important to care for the environment so others can enjoy this magic too.

The following are titles and explanations of each picture.

“The Magic Balance of Nature” by Jabel Richard



I took these pictures to show the incredible balance of nature. The huge stone looks like it could fall at any moment, but it has stayed in place for centuries, almost like magic. I'm standing and sitting underneath it enjoying the moment peacefully, trusting the strength and harmony of nature. This image reminds us of the beauty and mysteries that nature holds.

Sustainable practices ensure that future generations can also experience and appreciate the magic of nature

"Seasons of Magic" by Jabel Richard

I took this picture on a sunny day when everything felt calm and bright.

The sun was shining and the world around me felt full of life.

It made me think about how each season has its own magic.

Nature changes in beautiful ways, and we should protect it so others can also enjoy these special moments in the future.

**"Human Connection with Nature" by Jabel Richard**

This picture was taken near a beach where I noticed small plants being protected by simple barriers.

People come here to relax and play football, but someone took the time to protect the plants so they wouldn't be destroyed.

That moment touched me, it showed how small actions can make a big difference. It reminded me that we are part of nature, not separate from it.

Sustainability is about caring for nature in our everyday lives, even in places where we go to have fun.



Series "UTOPIA" by Mirjam Liebl



What will the future look like when we do not protect nature?

What if it is all polluted?

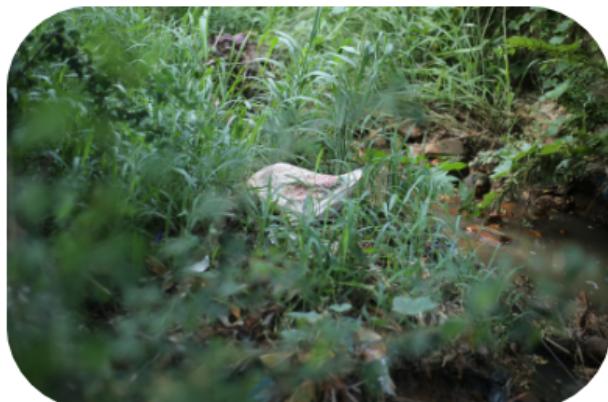
What will be the price for waiting, hoping, not acting?

What if it will be too late one day?





Series “BACKYARD ECOSYSTEM” by Precious Cuthbert

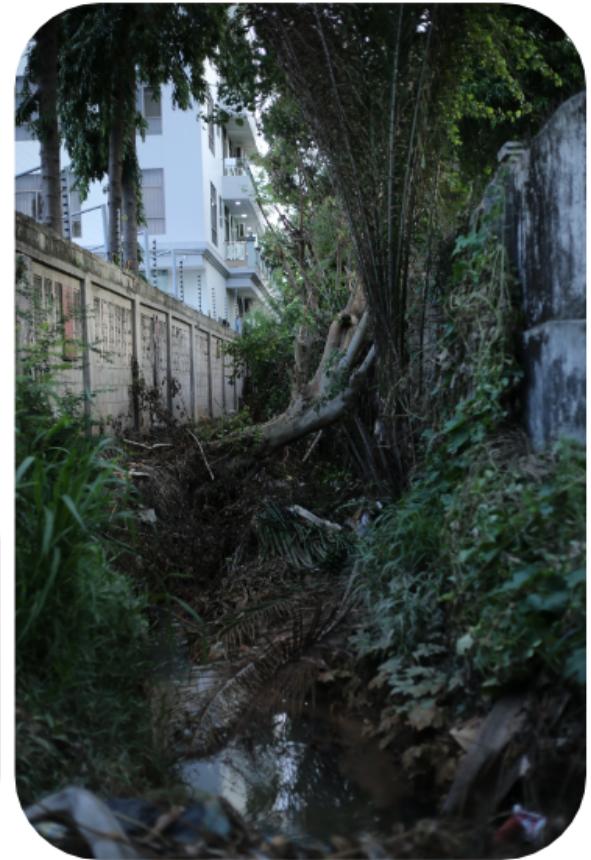


The pictures (7 in total) were taken in Tanzania, in an ordinary neighborhood backyard.

However, this setting contrasts with the images themselves, which depict sewage, a swampy area, and scattered pieces of trash within the ecosystem.

IMAGES & NARRATIVES

EXPANDING NARRATIVES / 54



These weren't taken in the outskirts or countryside, but right in the city — surrounded by a cluster of apartment buildings. The tension between man-made and natural elements reflects a core idea of sustainability: that even the smallest, often unnoticed components play a role in supporting the world around us — and by extension, the Earth we live on.

The insect in picture number 7 is the main subject. It symbolizes how the smallest actors can have significant roles in the ecological cycle — just like this grasshopper, a micro agent of balance within the ecosystem.

The rest of the series consists of four additional pictures. Pictures one through six depict a cluster of trees surrounding a murky water body, with trash scattered among tall weeds.

One image in particular — picture three — features a sign that reads: "ONYO. MARUFUKU KUTUPA AU KUCHOMA TAKA KATIKA ENEO HILI. FAINI YAKE NI SHILINGI Tsh 200,000. BY UTAWALA"

When translated into English:
"WARNING. IT IS FORBIDDEN TO THROW OR BURN TRASH IN THIS AREA.
THE FINE IS 200,000 TANZANIAN SHILLINGS"

This picture stands out because it directly contrasts the message suggested by the rest of the series — that "Indeed, the small things around us contribute to the larger concept of life on Earth as it aids sustainability of our surroundings and our lives."

Despite the presence of a sign imposing a significant fine, the surrounding images reveal that pollution continues regardless. This contradiction highlights the gap between environmental intentions and everyday actions, challenging the viewer to reflect on whether rules alone can preserve sustainability — or whether it ultimately depends on the choices made by individuals in their immediate surroundings.

Series “Blinded” by Ellen Grösel & Nela Stojanovic



These images are a trap:
they lure us in with their beauty and confront us with criticism.
The phone represents our throwaway society, the rabbit represents
nature suffering under our burden.
The mirror is the centerpiece: it shows how we — blinded by ourselves —
lose touch with the environment, even though we are part of it.



Series “”No Signal by Ellen Grösel & Nela Stojanovic





CLUSTER (5)

IMAGES & NARRATIVES ON CAPITALISM, POSTCOLONIAL AND GENDER INEQUALITIES AS UNSUSTAINABLE POWER STRUCTURES

61 / EXPANDING NARRATIVES

IMAGES & NARRATIVES

“Drowned” by Frieda Ziesche



In a world driven by work, we often forget to take a break.

This photograph captures the unhealthy relationship many of us have with our labour.

“Memorial Pause” by Flora Steinbach



A small closed loop, because the situation depicted shows a housewife taking a break and looking out of the window, lost in thought.

Like the “housewife,” one should pause for a moment to think and reflect.

It is also an allusion to the concept of a minute's silence, because it is about “blood on one's hands”/genocide.

This idea and my personal connection to the subject came from a family album.

Take a moment of silence. As in the picture, take a break from the stress of everyday life to reflect for a moment.

About Lola Bergmanns works

Lola believes that equality is one of the most important building blocks of a sustainable world and society. And that a great many changes are still needed to achieve equality for all genders and all oppressed groups.

These changes can be initiated through (intersectional) feminism¹ and the constant questioning of social norms². And that is exactly what her two photo series express: Lolas' photographs play with and break with the social gender roles of women and men.

¹ Intersectional feminism is the idea and the struggle for women's rights and equality for all people, including those who are additionally disadvantaged because of their skin color, origin, religion, or disability.

² Norms are rules or ideas that determine how people should or may behave in a society.

Series "WHAT SHOULD BEING MASCULINE BE?" by Lola Bergmann

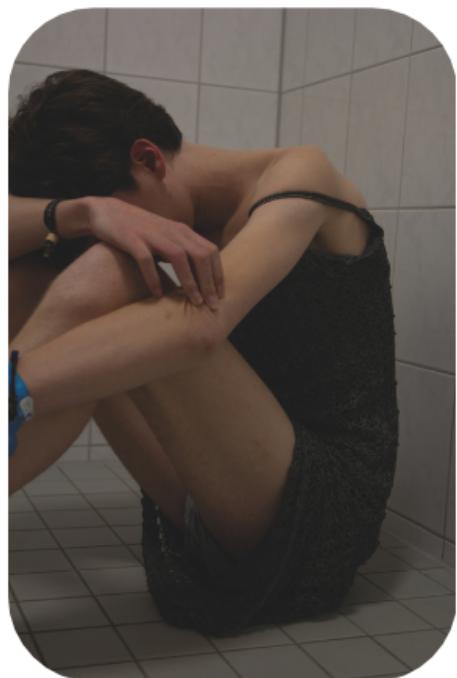
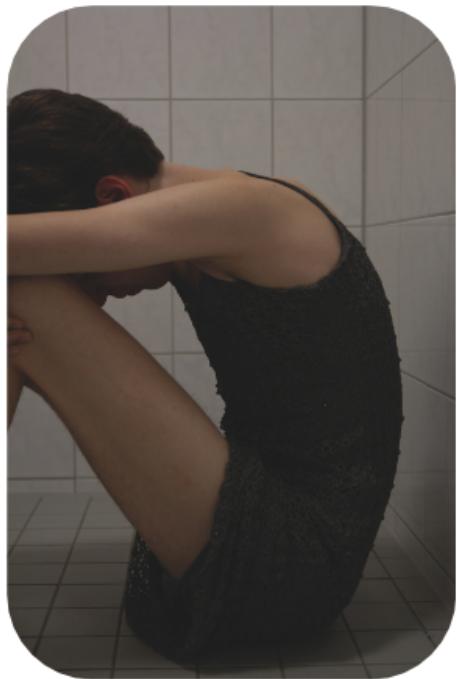
This series shows three dreary, gray portraits, an intimate moment on the bathroom floor that conveys vulnerability. And a fourth, contrasting, somewhat livelier photo of the same person surrounded by colorful clothes.

The photos criticize how masculinity is defined in patriarchy³ and show other sides of being a man.

³ Patriarchy is a system in which men structurally have more power and influence in society, politics, and family than women. (The system we live in!!)

IMAGES & NARRATIVES

EXPANDING NARRATIVES / 66



Series “WHAT SHOULD BEING FEMININE BE?” by Lola Bergmann

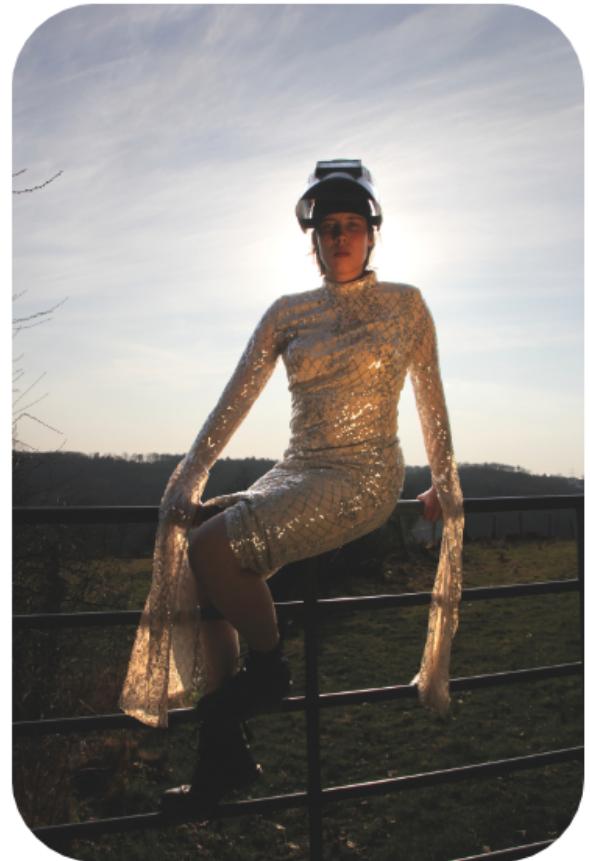
The series “What should feminine be?” irritates with the contrast between the delicate glittery evening gown and the rough, earthy forest, and provokes with seemingly violent poses that the person portrayed takes on with a strong gaze.

The photos raise questions about what women are like, how they are supposed to be and what pressures and dangers they may be exposed to.



IMAGES & NARRATIVES

EXPANDING NARRATIVES / 68



MEET THE ARTISTS

Lola Bergmann



Lola is 21 years old and lives and studies Design in Dresden.

In Lola's artistic work she often explores gender roles and other societal and political topics.

Lola is passionate about feminism and fighting for a better society for everyone.

Her artistic photography work began in high school, where she was part of a photo club.

Lolas main medium is photography, but she also loves to experiment with sculpture, film, music, graphics and performance.

Precious Cuthbert



Precious is an author, entrepreneur and philanthropist from Tanzania studying Design in Germany.

She most enjoys hobby hoarding—testing her abilities in multiple areas including photography, financial literacy mentoring, sewing, content creation, public speaking and sparking constructive debate.

Her work in photography focuses on narrative nature photography, visual storytelling and action photography to capture things in motion representing her range of abilities as a designer.

Precious is passionate about proving that fun and ambition can coexist in perfect harmony.

Does anything here catch your eye? Find her @preciouscuthbert on Instagram or Linkedin to see more.

MEET THE ARTISTS

EXPANDING NARRATIVES / 70

Vedasto Emmanuel is a dedicated student at the Institute of Finance Management (IFM) and a passionate environmental advocate.

His work explores the intersection of art and sustainability, using creative expression to promote ecological resilience.

As a committed volunteer with Mazingira Plus, Vedasto leverages his artistic talents to simplify and communicate complex environmental themes.

By embracing the diversity of art, he aims to inspire collective action and foster a deeper connection between society and the natural world. Through this exhibition, he invites viewers to envision a more sustainable and harmonious future.

Ellen discovered her passion for photography at age 10 and has since developed an intuitive eye for fleeting moments.

As a self-taught photographer, she specializes in capturing spontaneous moments in her friends' lives – those special seconds that would otherwise be lost to memory.

Her work is characterized by authenticity and emotional intimacy.

In 2024, she was awarded the German Youth Photography Prize, which led her to Expanding Narratives.

Besides photography, Ellen is an avid film enthusiast. Her driving force: preserving transient moments for eternity.

Vedasto Emmanuel



Ellen Grösel



Nakai Gutu

Nakai is a multitalented creative and social worker in the making. Her work sits at the Centre of storytelling, community development and sustainable change. With her deep passion to sustainability she uses photography and public speaking as tools to raise awareness and advocate. She uses visual storytelling to spotlight social issues, create images and narratives that show struggles and inspire action. Her style combines observation, creativity and faith that storytelling opens a way to understanding.

Outside of her creativity and community engagement she finds joy in reading and listening to music, things that add to her imagination and dare to dream. She continues to find ways to merge sustainability, advocacy and storytelling into a medium of change.

Rosa Jakobi

Rosa Jakobi is a 20-year-old graphic design student based in Leipzig.

She enjoys being around people and exploring the city on her bike, usually with her camera close by.

Rosa loves listening to music, discovering new places, and trying things she hasn't done before.

Curious and open-minded, she is always interested in meeting new people and collecting visual impressions from everyday life that later find their way into her creative work.

MEET THE ARTISTS

EXPANDING NARRATIVES / 72

Malaika Jiliwa is a working student in her early 20s situated in Dar es salaam, Tanzania.

She is currently a social media freelancer, content creator and a marketing intern respectively along with other community work that she associates herself with.

If not doing content, spending time with her loved ones or studying, Malaika spends her time learning new skills and activities that improve her knowledge and efficiency in different fields, one of them being photography.

Malaika is very enthusiastic at what she does and she finds her happiness in every content.

Though there's much to say about her, she is well known for her outgoing personality, charisma and social skills and this has been able to help her build great relationships in all the areas.

Malaika Jiliwa



Mirjam is 21 years old and studies Earth, Energy, Sustainability and Photography in The Hague in the Netherlands.

She is interested in the connections of the world: between people, the individual and society, between humans and nature.

Their work aims to ask questions – about what is and what can be.

The everyday plays an important role in Mirjam's work, trying to capture hidden moods and feelings in which we can find a deeper meaning.

Mirjam Liebl



Deborah Loy

Debora Loy is a 21-year-old photographer based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. She is pursuing a Bachelor's in Economics at university while working, parallel to this, as the Head of Business Development at APRO Visuals Multimedia Company.

Debora captures, through her photography, the beauty and realities of normal life in Africa. Her images weave culture, traditions, social challenges, and the deep bond between people and their environment into a tapestry of sorts.

She blends symbolic and documentary approaches to create work that she hopes will get people thinking and talking about greater social awareness, protection of the environment, and just how young people like her can help shape a more mindful and responsible future.

Sabina Ntobi

Sabina Ntobi is a multimedia journalist who has worked with some of Tanzania's leading daily news media.

When not crafting stories, leading digital content at Women Writers Forum, or collaborating with brands, she's exploring Tanzania's streets & nature with a camera. Sabina's passionate about storytelling, editing, empowering voices, and capturing authentic moments.

MEET THE ARTISTS

EXPANDING NARRATIVES / 74

Novatus Panda is a Tanzanian photographer and emerging filmmaker. His passion lies in visual storytelling and capturing the essence of the world around him. Novatus focusses on finding unique and creative ways to portray the experiences and environments he encounters, aiming to resonate deeply with his audience and evoke genuine emotions.

Currently, Novatus' photography is mostly phone-based. This medium allows him to blend smoothly into his surroundings, enabling him to capture subjects in their natural states without drawing attention. For Novatus, this approach seems particularly effective in public settings, where authenticity and spontaneity are key.

Novatus Panda

Benny is 18 and currently lives in Berlin. Over the last few years he has been exploring themes like the climate crisis and colonial continuities, approaching them through different art forms.

He enjoys consuming art and taking what he sees as inspiration for own ideas. These various influences have lead to a passion for everything around film, photography and theater.

His main drive for these forms comes from the collaborative approach they require.

Benny wants to combine thoughts, interests and skills of various people. In his little experience, working as a group is not only so much more enjoyable but also crucial while addressing controversial and political topics.

Benny Page

Jabel Richard

Jabel Richard is a 22-year-old ICT (Information and Communication Technology) graduate and climate activist currently living in Mwanza, Tanzania.

He works in IT support and web development, using technology to solve practical, everyday problems.

When he is not fixing technical issues, he enjoys spending time in nature, going for runs, capturing moments with his camera, and learning new skills.

His interests sit at the intersection of technology, environment, and community.

Jabel is actively involved in community work and believes creativity can help people reflect, connect, and care more about climate and social issues.

Flora Steinbach

Flora Fee Steinbach is a 21-year-old paramedic currently living in Cologne.

Art, especially in the form of photography, has always been her favorite way to capture the world.

Combining her passion and her interest, history of the past century, she reflects on her own narrative.

Her passion is to explore different kinds of art to encourage discussions of everyone's own narrative.

MEET THE ARTISTS

EXPANDING NARRATIVES / 76

Nela is 18 years old and currently about to graduate from high school. She is originally from Czechia, but has been living in Germany for eleven years – two worlds that have shaped her.

When Nela is not studying for school, she devotes her time to creativity and exercise: whether painting, photography, dancing, or modeling in front of the camera – Nela loves to express herself.

Nelas pictures show her view of the world, inspired by her travels and the many stories she discovers in life.

Nela Stojanovic



Frieda Ziesche

Frida Ziesche (18) currently living in Worms and attending the Waldorf School in Frankenthal.

In Frida's artistic work, she aims to raise awareness of lesser-known or less discussed topics and change perspectives on these topics by trying to interpret them in a different or new way.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The EXPANDING NARRATIVES team Cologne acknowledges the engaged participation of the young creatives in the project

LOLA BERGMANN - PRECIOUS CUTHBERT - VEDASTO EMMANUEL - ELLEN GRÖSEL - NAKAI GUTU - ROSA JAKOBI - MALAIKA JILIWA - MIRJAM LIEBL - DEBORA LOY - SABINA NTOBI - NOVATUS PANDA - BENNY PAGE - JABEL RICHARD - FLORA STEINBACH - NELA STOJANOVIC - FRIDA ZIESCHE



With special thanks to our committed teams in both countries leading the workshops, doing the archival and curational work and supporting us in the research process

REMI BUSCH - SANDRA CEASER - MICHEL ESSELBRÜGGE - JOHN KITIME - SIMON LUYENGA - LARA MÜLLER - IBRAHIM MKUDE - KIJA MALANGUKA - LINA RUSKE - DANIEL SEMPEHO

From the team of EXPANDING NARRATIVES

ALYSSA FEICK - JOHANNA FINK - JANA FRINGS - MICHAELA KRAMER - MICHELLE POSMYK - JEANNE LEE SCHMIED - ANGELA TILLMANN

We are very grateful for the great collaborative work with our cooperative partners in Tanzania as well as in Germany

FIRDAUS MBOGHO - MPANGI OTTE
GOETHE-INSTITUT TANZANIA



HORST POHLMANN - JARI ORTWIG
ACADEMY OF ARTS AND CULTURAL EDUCATION OF THE GERMAN
GOVERNMENT AND STATE OF NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA



THOMAS HARTMANN - KATHARINA KLAUDOR BEN SALEM
GERMAN INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S FILMS



We acknowledge the support and funding by

THE FOUNDATION „RHEINENERGIE STIFTUNG JUGEND/BERUF, WISSENSCHAFT“



Last but not least we want to thank ALTE FEUERWACHE KÖLN and GOETHE-INSTITUT TANZANIA for giving us the opportunity to host the EXPANDING NARRATIVES exhibition in January 2026.

Expanding Narratives

Exhibition booklet

— WHAT SUSTAINABILITY MEANS TO THE YOUTH. AN INTERCULTURAL
EXPRESSION FROM YOUNG CREATIVE MINDS IN GERMANY AND TANZANIA

