

# Building International Research Networks: experience and challenges from Globelics and AfricaLics

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**GLOBELICS**



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
DENMARK



**AFRICALICS**

# **Globelics – [www.globelics.org](http://www.globelics.org)**

- **Global network on the**
- **economics of**
- **learning,**
- **innovation and**
- **competence building**
- **systems**

# What is Globelics?([www.globelics.org](http://www.globelics.org))

- A global network of researchers focussing on innovation and (economic) development with main focus on learning, innovation and competence building systems
- Initiated in 2000 in Aalborg by scholars from Innovation Studies and gradually also incorporating scholars from Development Studies. Today the network includes scholars from Europe, USA, BRICS countries and less developed countries (LDCs using WB definition)
- Regional LICs: AsiaLics, Lalics, AfricaLics and EuroLics + national networks in India and China. Globelics Secretariat located at the department of Business and Management, Aalborg University, but moving to Rio in 2017.
- Meeting place/breeding ground for major projects on:
  - Catching-up (Nelson),
  - Brics-project (Cassiolato),
  - Unidev-project (Brundenius)
  - Innovating out of Poverty (Djeflat)
  - Global Value Chains in a National Innovation Systems perspective (Lema, Lundvall)

# The purpose of Globelics

- To contribute to scientific capacity building in the field of innovation and development through networking
- To contribute to the knowledge base for strategies and policies linking innovation to economic development
- To establish a platform for North-South/South-North and for South-South collaboration
- To help Ph.D.-students – especially from least developed countries - to pursue high quality research in the field innovation and development.

# Globelics activities

- Annual research conference on science, technology, innovation and development issues - 13<sup>th</sup> conference in Cuba in September 2015 with 165 papers being presented
- Annual Academy with research training (30 student for 2 weeks), academies in Lissabon, Tampere, Rio etc.
- Regional/national meetings and academies in Africa, Asia (including China and India) and Latin America.
- Special attention to capacity development in Africa through the AfricaLics project funded by Sida
- Outreach to policy makers through e.g. preparation of Globelics Thematic Reviews on Low Carbon Innovation and Development (available at [www.globelics.org](http://www.globelics.org))

# Globelics mode of operation

- Low cost and informal structure – a scientific board and a small secretariat in Denmark
- Regional chapters with Lalics secretariat in Mexico and the Africalics secretariat in Nairobi
- Big names come as speakers with their own funding for travel to conferences and academies. Medecins Sans Frontières culture!
- Local and regional funding gives commitment!! Support for travel from the South and for activities in Africa from Sida, Sweden and from IDRC, Canada.
- Additional funding from Aalborg University and Sida (main sponsor) + substantial voluntary contributions in kind from members of the networks!

# Globelics/AfricaLics

## Approach to capacity development

- A thematic research network-based approach where activities at global, regional and national levels complement each other
- Partnerships North-South; South-North and South-South are essential
- Strong focus on creating synergies between various types of activities: PhD academies, Conferences and the PhD sandwich programme/Visiting Fellowship programme – but also working with selected partner universities and research groups to develop research and research training capacity.

# Lessons from Globelics

- Building up the Globelics network has taken long time and was done in incremental steps
- It was helped by reaching out to strong environments across the globe
- Interactive learning from bringing together different disciplines and communities has been important
- Continuous efforts made to define the research agenda, develop administrative procedures and procedures for planning research conferences (conference planning system introduced in 2014)
- Using the network as a platform to launch new projects has been a good way of developing capacity and research
- Many members of the Globelics Scientific Board are advising and influencing policy agenda in home countries, regionally and at global level, but joint efforts to influence e.g. the new Sustainable Development Goals could be pursued more.

# Challenges

- Strengthening regional LICs is difficult – funding, resources, capacity and cultures vary
- Supporting research capacity development in low income countries requires long term perspective, engagement and funding
- Developing the research agenda for the global network and for regional networks is a challenge

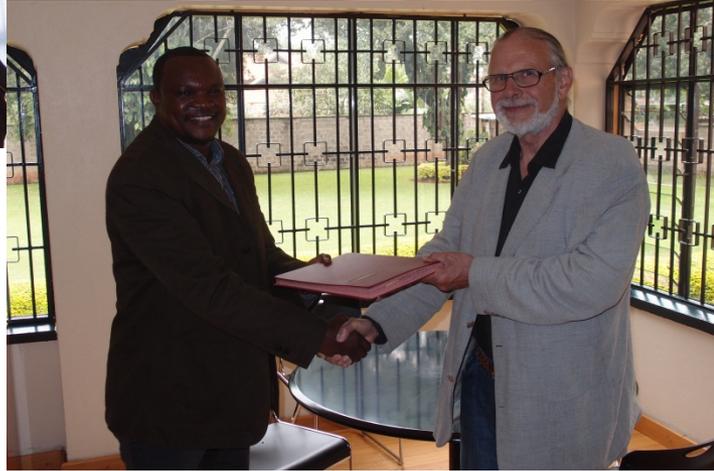
# The AfricaLics network

- AfricaLics was established in 2011 in connection with the All Africa Seminar held in Dar es Salaam, but Globelics conferences also held in Africa: Pretoria (2005), Dakar (2008) and in Addis Ababa (2014)
- AfricaLics Board meets regularly in connection with conferences and academies. Chair: Bitrina Diyamett (STIPRO, Tanzania); Secretary General: Anna Kingiri (ACTS, Kenya)
- Vision is to **build research capacity in Africa in the field of innovation and development** with strong links to users – including policy makers, the private sector and increasingly also to civil society.

# AfricaLics vision

To see African countries developing and utilizing high quality research, conducted by African researchers, to enable more informed policy decisions to be made relating to the use of science, technology and innovation for economic and social development by business practitioners, civil society and policymakers in the public sector.

# Honeymoon!



# AfricaLics activities

- AfricaLics Conference held in Mozambique 2013 and next one takes place from 17-19<sup>th</sup> November 2015 in Rwanda.
- PhD Academies in Kenya (2012 and 2015) and in Algeria (2014) – about 90 PhD students from Africa have been trained. Next academy: Tunis, March 2016
- New training programs/modules on innovation and development being developed at MSc and PhD level (MSc module is available at [www.africalics.org](http://www.africalics.org) – open access)
- AfricaLics Ph.D Visiting Fellowship programme established in collaboration with Aalborg University (pilot model). Further info at: <http://www.ike.aau.dk/Ph.D+Activities/africalics-isting-scholarships>
- Curriculum for Master in Innovation and Development developed at Aalborg University (MIKE-D) – see folder
- Webinars, knowledge bank and more info at [www.africalics.org](http://www.africalics.org)
- Research incubation activities/seed money for thematic research

# AfricaLics

## PhD Visiting Fellowship Programme

- Pilot programme developed in 2014, first batch of six students in 2015 and five new students arriving 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016
- Serves to increase the mobility of African PhD students enrolled at African universities and studying issues of Innovation and Development.
- Exposes the students to an international research environment and enhances their prospects for taking part in innovation and innovation research in their home countries with the long term goal of helping to foster social and economic development.
- Provides the PhD students with time away from home to focus on their PhD dissertation, easy access to literature and new research methods in the field of innovation and development, and in seminars/meetings with researchers at Aalborg University as well as in a few selected training courses that may not be available to them in their home countries.
- Also include participation in the AfricaLics academy and – subject to approval of submitted papers – other Globelics and AfricaLics events
- Few joint PhDs may materialise as result of the AfricaLics PhD Visiting Fellowship programme, but programme mainly aimed at increasing mobility of African PhD students

# AfricaLics Research Incubation activities

- AfricaLics grant for research incubation supported by Sida initiated in 2014; point of departure in research agenda developed at All African Seminar in Dar es Salaam in 2012
- First AfricaLics conference (Maputo 2013) used to discuss project ideas and form collaborative research groups
- Possible to apply for a standard amount of support to be used for:
  - Realising a **book project** or journal special issue based on **existing or almost finalised research** (35.000 UsD).
  - Developing a **project proposal** (where the outcome is a proposal to be submitted to an external funding body within 18 months of initiation) (35.000 UsD).
  - Both of the above in combination (50.000 UsD).
- Total of 18 proposals received, 6 under implementation

# AfricaLics Research Agenda as defined in 2011 during the All Africa meeting in Dar es Salaam

1. The role of **gender** in Africa's innovation systems.
2. The role of the **state** in promoting innovation and development
3. **Work organization** and innovation in formal and **informal sector**.
4. Overcoming **natural resource** curse through expanding manufacturing and **service** activities.
5. National strategies to stimulate spill overs from **BRIC-presence** in Africa.
6. **Engineering and design** capacity building and economic development in Africa.
7. Building **Low-carbon** Innovation Systems.
8. **Agroindustrial innovation** systems and food security.
9. The role of **financial institutions** in relation to innovation.

# Requirements to project proposals

1. A minimum of **two African countries** should be represented in the research team.
2. There should be one assigned **project leader** employed by an organization (normally a university in Africa) that can serve as host for the administration of the grant.
3. Project leader should apply for the funds and will be **fully responsible for the realization** of the project.
4. If the outcome is a publication there should be a preliminary plan including reflections on **publisher**.
5. If the outcome is an application for a major collaborative project there should be indications of **timing of the application** and of what **funding alternatives** that will be considered.

# AfricaLics supported research projects

Research topic	Countries involved
Natural Resource Endowment and Innovation Behaviour of Firms	Ethiopia (Abdi) and Burkina Faso
Engineering Design Capacity Building and Economic Development in Africa	South Africa (Mammo); Tanzania, France
Building low carbon innovation energy systems in Africa	Nigeria, South Africa (Mapungubwe), Kenya, Tanzania, Sweden, DK,
The Role of Women in Science and Technology Innovation in Grassroots Agriculture in Africa	South Africa (Nwagwu), Kenya, Uganda
Work organization, competence building and innovation in formal and informal microenterprises in Africa	South Africa (Erika), Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, France
The Southern African regional value chain for mining inputs: An opportunity to build regional technological capabilities in the mineral and non-mineral sectors?	South Africa (Simon Roberts), Zimbabwe

# The IREK Project – off-spring from Globelics/AfricaLics collaboration

- Innovation and Renewable Electrification in Kenya (IREK)
- Project seeking to examine how international and national cooperation on low carbon technologies can be shaped to support the current electrification efforts in Kenya in a way that meets broader development goals
- Funded by Danida at 5x2 million DKK 2015-2019
- Participating institutions
  - Aalborg University (Department of Business and Management)
  - Moi University (Department of Business and Department of Engineering)
  - African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS)
- Total of 10 researchers, including 3 PhDs + 1 additional PhD funded by Sino-Danish Centre (funding secured in 2015)

# Lessons and challenges from development of AfricaLics (I)

- Globelics network helps facilitate learning by African scholars through global interaction – Europeans, US-scholars and scholars from Asia and Latin America
- Building network relationships within Africa through conferences, academies and other forms of interaction is important, but requires time and dedicated efforts to reach out to relevant organisations, institutions and research communities
- Friendly culture and frugal ethics of ‘LICS’-community is crucial for combining low costs with quality – but can be difficult to maintain and explain to collaborating partners!!
- Globelics Secretariat/AAU has been an external intermediary in the early stage of network building
- Recruitment of innovation and development specialist to strengthen capacity at ACTS has been key
- Development of administrative capacity at ACTS (hosting the AfricaLics secretariat) and utilisation of experience from the Globelics network has been helpful in ensuring kick-off of AfricaLics activities. Consolidation of network activities takes time!

# Lessons and challenges from development of AfricaLics (II)

- Continuous dialogue with contact person at Sida – also between the annual meetings – has been/is key to development of both Globelics and AfricaLics activities
- Combination of capacity development at individual, institutional and networking levels seems promising – efforts to document results will be strengthened
- Seed-funding for research projects is an important and promising element in AfricaLics efforts to build research capacity
- Increased emphasis on linking innovation to development among national/regional stakeholders in Africa and among donors and development agencies means there is – hopefully - fertile ground for further development of the AfricaLics initiative.

# Up-coming activities

- Phase II application to Sida on support to AfricaLics currently being prepared – will include application for continuation of main activities such as academies and conferences, the AfricaLics PhD Visiting Fellowship programme, seed-funding for new research projects and some support to further up-take of the Master and PhD modules on Innovation and Development at African universities. But funding for development projects in Sweden is under heavy pressure right now due to the influx of refugees.
- Application will include suggestion to also support medium sized research projects and a major research capacity development project focussing on clusters in Africa in a GVC/NIS perspective (involving AAU researchers at senior researchers and post-docs from African partner universities).

**For further information please check:**

**[www.globelics.org](http://www.globelics.org) and  
[www.africalics.org](http://www.africalics.org)**

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