

# IMAGENU annual workshop Keynote Lecture

IMAGENU

Imagining Gender Futures in Uganda



**Prof. Julia Pauli** (Hamburg University, Germany)

## Inside and outside of marriage in Namibia

Monday 25 January, 13.30 GMT+01

The event will be on Zoom, free and open to all. **Register** by sending an email to [korsbaek@cas.au.dk](mailto:korsbaek@cas.au.dk)

Over the last fifty years, marriage in many parts of Southern Africa has changed from a widespread and socially inclusive institution into an almost exclusive class project of the emerging middle classes. Long-term ethnographic data from Namibia shows that a bipartite division of intimacy and marriage has led to different, but connected social universes for married and unmarried Namibians. Married middle class urbanites, following neoliberal logics of growth and improvement, perceive their coupledness as an investment into their future. Fitness centers optimize their bodies and marriage counsellors their intimate relationships. Yet the downside of all this effort is a prevalent fear of not going ahead and even failing. Although divorce rates are low, most couples interviewed in 2015/16 in Windhoek were anxious about their investments into their bodies, minds and marriages, fearing that it is 'never enough'. In contrast, unmarried Namibians, especially single mothers with permanent employment, build their futures not on a heterosexual (marriage) bond but instead rely on their (female) kin networks. The lecture will trace these two dynamics and discuss their implications for gender relations in Namibia and beyond.