

## Panel descriptions

### 01 Theoretical Impositions: The Myth of the Native and Creating Alternatives to Expired Concepts

Since its early stages, social sciences have postulated and worked with the idea of the native. The othering of non-Europeans has been forcibly imposed on different peoples. The myth of the native from a faraway land often comes with evolutionist preconceptions that operate in a linear historical line of progress. This conceptualization harmfully establishes the global south as a subaltern (Spivak 1988). The previously mentioned constructions evoke the everlasting scientifical binary of Nature and Culture. Positioning peoples outside of Europe as natives allocates them to the field of nature, where civilization has not yet flourished. A place where the age of illumination needs to be brought by outside forces, where the populations have no capabilities to develop if not by external intervention. Moreover, concepts developed in western societies are usually imported to realities that have little to no cultural recognition of them. Many research proposals, action models, and narratives about Africa and Africans, although fairly criticized, continue to use nativeness as a fixed category that is demarcated by a romantic ethnocentric view of spirituality, development, and nature. Authors like Dipesh Chakrabarty, Oyèrónké Oyéwùmí, Frantz Fanon, have been essential to disrupting narratives of colonial knowledge impositions. This panel calls for works that critically engage and disrupt concepts like civilization, human and gender among others.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (1988). *Can the Subaltern Speak?*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

### 02 (Im)Possible Affections: Construction of Non-normative Relations and Critique of Heteronormativity within African Studies

Heterocisnormativity is a set of prescriptions that underlie social processes of regulation and control. Thus it does not refer only to people or practices that are understood as legitimate and normalized. It is rather a contemporary device, one that has historically produced sexualities, bodies, and norms. One objective of heterocisnormativity is to train bodies to be heterosexual and cisgender or alternatively organize their lives based on the supposedly coherent, superior, and natural model of heterocissexuality (Miskolci 2009: 156). Such structure is deeply intertwined with knowledge production in many fields. As Foucault (1995) ponders sexuality and gender have worked as mediums through which both states and sciences have operationalized practices of exclusion and genocide. Therefore, to engage with dissonant realities is to offer a critical potency to disrupt sociological narratives and concepts of normality. This panel aims to not barely showcase difference, but instead debate studies that produce alternatives to the white hetero-cisgender gaze. Furthermore, it also intends to concentrate on an array of works that focus on LGBTQIA+ discussions in co-relation to African studies. The goal is not to reproduce totalizing logics of normality, but to engage with African studies that transgress conditioning theoretical frameworks.

Miskolci, Richard (2009). A Teoria Queer e a Sociologia o Desafio de uma Analítica da Normalização. *Dossiê Sociologias*, (21), 150-182.

Foucault, Michel (1995). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

### **03 Recollecting African Diasporic Memories of Resistance**

Diaspora simultaneously refers to a process, a condition, a space, and a discourse. These aspects all together persist in a continuous process of being constructed, reconstructed, and deconstructed. Okpewho and Nzegwu (2009: 32) describe diaspora as a lively phenomenon that expresses itself through changing conditions in relation to the places where it is molded and imagined. The authors furthermore explain the contentious ways in which this concept is studied in complex intersections, shifting materialities, mentalities as well as moralities of the social existence of those who migrate. Examples of African diaspora can be found as transnational institutions like Quilombos in the Brazilian territory or migration movements within and external to the continent. Diasporic African studies have been concerned with an array of topics regarding different migrant generations, expatriated bodies, refugees and people with African roots. In order to understand memory and belonging of these subjects, diasporic studies look at questions of negotiation and recognition of identities. Following Appadurai (1988: 21) an important locus of study is the mediation of local and global networks. These are understood through misclassifications, which entail the handling of unfamiliar objects and practices which are subsequently put into a closer categorical realm. The author works with food and taste to provide an example of how people would rename unknown dishes as something that they recognize. He does so in order to illustrate how the familiar is in a constant necessity to be bent and twisted. Such concepts entail profuse care for a critical analysis of both identities in contemporaneity and power relations between nation-states. This panel calls for papers that connect the aforementioned topics with contemporary practices of memory and resistance.

Okpewho, Isidore and Nkiru Nzegwu (2009). *The New African Diaspora*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Appadurai, Arjun (1988). How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30(1), 3-24.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500015024>

### **04 Questions of Positionality: From Where Do I Speak?**

The researcher's context and their own positionality voluntarily or involuntarily have a direct effect on their object of study. Where and when one was born as well as where one has studied reflects on how an academic thinks and speaks of certain social concepts and how they may acknowledge and interpret their surroundings. For a long time, Africa has been discussed mainly by European white men, who were social scientists in a powerful position to reproduce their vision on the world. Nevertheless, science has been forced to open space not only for other genders but also for academics from the periphery to produce knowledge on the continent. Having said so, we tend to generate knowledge not to better comprehend this world but to portray the world as we know it. For centuries the West has reproduced its theories on Africa and other less powerful areas of the world. Is it possible now through debates of post- and decolonization to escape our ways of looking at Africa from a western perspective? It is crucial

to ponder upon the ways we describe and explain facts about the African continent. How do we think of Africa otherwise? How can the Global South gain a stronger voice in order to rupture from colonizing frameworks?

## **05 Feminist Discourses: What Does It Mean to Be a Woman in Today's African Societies?**

In her book, *We Should All Be Feminists* the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie claims “gender is not an easy conversation to have. It makes people uncomfortable, sometimes even irritable. Both men and women are resistant to talk about gender, or are quick to dismiss the problems of gender. Because thinking of changing the status quo is always uncomfortable” (2015: 40). Notwithstanding altering the status quo is undoubtedly fundamental in present times. In many aspects today we consider ourselves to live and experience a modern world, however, our cultural concepts in regard to gender continue to follow antiquated notions which are long due modification. Subsequently, this panel would like to raise questions related to gender and topics of feminism or the lack thereof in the African continent. It should critically discuss and challenge gender role stereotypes, matters of equality and equity, gender and power, as well as gender-based violence and sexual harassment among others. Gender is a sensitive conversation, yet a necessary one that concerns everyone. It is important to note that we are all affected by gender roles and identities, therefore speaking of gender is not solely about discussing women's issues. Proper gender analysis cannot examine the reconstruction of female categories without considering and establishing relations to alternative ones.

Ngozi Adichie, Chimamanda (2015). *We Should All Be Feminists*. Anchor Books.

## **06 African Territories and Their Land Rights**

The land issues in the African continent are deeply connected to distribution during and after the colonial period. Some countries had their independence process mitigated through international pressure conveyed in the name of national reconciliation, which allowed white settlers to keep large plots of land. Furthermore, in the past land rights were and continue to be constantly challenged regarding land claims in mining, grazing stock and heritage. Disputes are based on land possession and their administration systems, which vary among communal tenure, state tenure and private tenure. In the first one, the rights, rules and responsibilities to possess the land are based on the state, however the occupation and use thereof is entitled to indigenous communities. The second one is usually reserved for nature conservation, game parks, research facilities, and military bases under state and local authorities' custody. In the third one, the land is privately owned, which allows the independent transfer of rights. This panel searches for present debates on national territories and their land rights such as the prevalence and importance of customary tenure as well as of common property arrangements. It also aims to speak of contemporary discussions on women's access to both customary and statutory tenures, the importance of broad-based participation to secure wide consensus among multiple actors in order to enhance the efficiency, equity and sustainability objectives of land tenure reforms among further associated topics.



## 07 Brain Drain: Consequences of the Colonial Project

Africa has always been a continent of migration. In the past, its transformation was based on the movement of African indigenous peoples, their goods and ideas. Furthermore, its colonial period is rooted in appropriation and slavery as well as forced labour, which led to a significant displacement of the local populations within the continent and across the seas throughout centuries. Today, labour migration has highly intensified and its dynamics are mostly influenced by economic and political factors. Africans choose to migrate generally with the target to take up new employment, to pursue better opportunities or to attain economic stability. “The total number of international migrants in the continent has increased from 13.3 million in 2008 to 25.4 million in 2017” (African Union Commission et. al 2020: 30). This augmentation in labour migration has rather quickly developed brain drain effects in Africa. The emigration of highly skilled citizens results in a depletion of brainpower in the countries of origin, whilst also constructing a reliance on imported specialized goods. Another rising contemporary trend related to migration due to work is brain circulation, the circular movement of skilled labour across nations. This panel calls for research that studies the causes and consequences of topics such as brain circulation, brainpower in the diaspora, and brain drain.

African Union Commission et al. (2020). *Report of Labour Migration Statistics in Africa (Second Edition)*. African Union Commission.

## 08 Labour Relations in the African Continent

“Marxist economics gives labour a fundamental position; it is from the surplus extracted from the worker that the ruling class ultimately lives while the form of extraction determines more than purely economic relation. In particular, Marxist thus emphasize as well the broader social significance of labour. They have been responsible for introducing labour related questions to a broad range of historical and societal discussions typical of much recent literature on Africa” (Freund 1984:1). Africa is often acknowledged as largely rich in regard to natural resources, however many African nations continue to face severe economic challenges. It must not be denied that the continent has undergone significant economic growth leading some of its countries to a meaningful position, yet there is further development to be accomplished. With this in mind, labour relations in the African context have been marked by international intervention during and after the colonial period. Those disputes were relevant in the fights against slavery and forced labour, and continue to be essential in more recent times regarding new forms of financial development in Africa and multinational natural resources’ explorers. This panel aims to gather studies that reflect upon topics like unionization, geopolitical work disputes, supplier chains as well as wage and salary in connection to livelihoods.

Freund, Bill (1984). Labor and Labor History in Africa: A Review of the Literature. *African Studies Review*, 27(2), 1-58.



## 09 Africa No Longer as the World's Laboratory: Rupturing Colonial Discourses in Public Health

Public health by definition is a process of mobilizing local, state, national, and international resources to solve major health problems affecting rural and urban communities. In the context of Africa, public health is often characterized by the study of infectious diseases, a shortage of medical resources and poverty. Many different actors based in the Global North have played a role in African public health such as private philanthropic institutions, international health organizations, bilateral health programs, governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as private-public partnerships. After colonialism, external resources have therefore mainly entered the continent through developed health initiatives shaping the landscape of public healthcare. This panel suggests rethinking Africa by distancing itself from the colonial gaze, which perceived the continent as a living laboratory. Although in present times health inequalities between the Global South and North are reflected in various areas of disease and health systems of various African countries, we hope to discuss research that treats the African continent with an equal and equitable position and respect. One of the main topics contemporaneously in public health is the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past two years, the coronavirus has reignited debates over structural issues of capitalist societies, even more so those connected to public health. This conference would be enhanced by discussions of current public health issues in the African continent like the COVID-19 pandemic, malaria, HIV/AIDS and mental health among others, highlighting a gaze that is dissonant from the classical colonial omniscient perspective.

## 10 Revealing and Concealing History: What Is (Not) Found in Archival Materials?

The conservation of culture is a reminder for its people of their history. Recovering cultural heritage is a way for people to claim their personal and national identities. In the past and still ongoing, Africa has been robbed of many valuable reserves, natural resources, traditions and material cultural artifacts. The colonization and scramble for the continent by European powers deprived Africans of sheltering the integrity of their history. In 1957 Africa accomplished its first nation's independence, the Republic of Ghana was emancipated from the French administration. Further nations fought for their liberation and throughout the 1960s to 1990s attained sovereignty. Notwithstanding, achieving independence did not imply restitution of what was stolen. In present times we continue to fail to restore balance with both the African recovery of custody and autonomy over knowledge production. Some European countries have signaled to work towards this goal like the French president Emmanuel Macron underlined in 2017: "African heritage [...] must be highlighted in Paris, but also in Dakar, in Lagos, in Cotonou. [...] In the next five years, I want the conditions to be met for the temporary or permanent restitution of African heritage to Africa" (Codrea-Rado 2017). That heritage and historical material which has yet to be restituted and finds itself in Western museums and archives are being researched mainly by Europeans and from a Western viewpoint leading to knowledge centralization of Africa, its people and history. This panel focuses on bodies of work that do not merely make use of archival objects but also actively engage with the restitution of the mentioned material.

Codrea-Rado, Anna (2017). *Emmanuel Macron Says Return of African Artifacts Is a Top*

*Priority.* The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/29/arts/emmanuel-macron-africa.html>

## **11 The Politics in African Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation: Relations between Humans and Ecology**

Conservation of ecology has been a public issue since time immemorial. “Current approaches to the management of wildlife, biodiversity, and valuable habitats in Africa are perhaps best contextualized through the lens of history. These approaches have been shaped historically by views of nature, or ways of 'seeing' the environment, by powerful groups in society. Political ecology provides a valuable approach for reviewing changes in wildlife conservation in Africa; it is attentive to the role of historical factors, social constructions of the environment and power relations in shaping environmental change. It represents a confluence between ecologically rooted social science and the principles of political economy” (Jones 2006: 483). In this manner, political ecology aims to govern relations between humans, their livelihoods and their surrounding maritime and land resources as well as wildlife and intellectual property. It covers issues from overexploitation, hunting, the effort to prevent illegal trafficking of wildlife, policymaking for the protection of endangered species to ecotourism and one health. More and more often we read in newspapers about endangered animals like the Black Rhino or the Mountain Gorilla, this panel targets to discuss the causes and consequences of such changes in the African continent. It focuses on studies about conflicting property claims opposed to landed property, intellectual property, and rights governing the use of wild flora and fauna among further associated topics.

Jones, Samantha (2006). A Political Ecology of Wildlife Conservation in Africa. *Review of African Political Economy*, 33(109), 483-495.

## **12 Migration within the Continent: Possibilities and Constraints**

As opposed to the sensationalist mainstream narrative depicted in Europe, African migration is concentrated mainly within the continent. Africa accounts for only 14 percent of the global migrant population alongside 24 percent from Europe and 41 percent from Asia (Achieng & El Fadil 2020: 1). Of this percentage, a greater segment of African migrants remains within the continent rather than inclining to extra-continental migration. “Recent findings indicate that 80 percent of Africans thinking about migration have no interest in leaving the continent, and they have no intention of moving permanently” (Achieng & El Fadil 2020: 1-2). These temporary migrants for the most part leave their country of origin to pursue work and education opportunities for better livelihoods. Nonetheless, conflict-driven migration still is a motive for intra-continental movement. A further current tendency and reason for migration are gender and sexuality issues regarding discrimination and violent life-threatening situations. This panel welcomes research that contrasts the horrific sensationalized impressions of irregular migration from Africa to Europe through the Mediterranean. Instead of the repeatedly narrated clichés portrayed of Africa as a perpetual humanitarian tragedy saturated with violent coups and tribal conflicts, famine, poverty, disease and environmental stress, this panel seeks to discuss bodies of work that explore constraints and possibilities of intra-continental migration.

Achieng, Maureen and Amira El Fadil (2020). What is wrong with the narrative on African migration?. In Aderanti Adepoju (Eds.), *African Migration Report: Challenging the narrative* (1-14). Addis Ababa: International Organization for Migration.  
<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/africa-migration-report-challenging-narrative>

### **13 Sociocultural and Political Research of Northern Africa**

Within African Studies there is a magnetic attraction to debates on Sub-Saharan Africa. This panel attempts to disrupt such a tendency and pulls research to the North of the continent. Amidst other topics, North Africa can be discussed in terms of its emergence as a significant world region and its representation in art, literature, film, music, cuisine, etc. Notwithstanding, this area of the African continent also entices conversations about social, environmental, economic and political issues. The Arab Spring for instance illustrates a very popular debate in Social Sciences. As a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across much of the Arab world in the early 2010s, it can be considered a crucial moment in history that marks a before and after in this region. Since the Arab Spring, researchers have concentrated to study the political history which led to as well as that which rose from this revolution. A great amount of these studies focus on understanding the importance of the popular culture during the uprisings, in which social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook played a crucial role. Protestors utilized these applications to actively participate in the process of democratization and to articulate resistance to hegemonic power. In this sense, this panel pursues to cluster innovative research about Northern African.

### **14 Capitalist Ecologies: How Can Decolonial African Studies Disrupt the Anthropocene**

The Anthropocene is an unofficial geological epoch proposed to cover the period in Earth's history when human activity began to cause a significant negative impact on the planet's geology, ecosystems and climate. Today, we as world citizens are standing in a crucial moment to amend our wrongdoings with our home planet and thus launch a new geological period, which is not dictated by negligence but rather respect, regard and care towards the Earth. Due to the power relations of the Global North on the Global South, for Africa this entails greatly conforming with the G8 plus China settled parameters to reduce environmental inequality by diminishing greenhouse gas emissions and preserving biodiversity. In research and applied science beyond the traditional focus of climate change mitigation and adaptation, further disputes arise regarding the most effective methods of developing a practical global response to the climate crisis. To a large extent these discussions reflect a general controversy of colonial responsibility and neocolonial requirements and practices. The new forms of financed development in Africa, which derive from multinational companies and explorers of natural resources such as private investors as well as nation-states like China, exploit assets whilst shifting the downsides from the Global North to the Global South. This panel accepts abstracts that acknowledge the aforementioned discussion and seek to propose equitable solutions.

## **15 Imagination and Artistic Practices: Novel Forms of Embodiment Current Debates**

Art and imagination are instruments that embody social, cultural, economic, political, environmental issues as well as illustrate emotion and hedonistic views. Artistic practices consist of painting, sculpturing, designing architecture, singing, performing, playing instruments, creating music and writing among others. They are key to discuss current topics in nontraditional approaches which reach a vast spectrum of people. Emeka Ogboh exemplifies the ability to engage with narratives on migration and the diaspora by taking advantage of the plethora of sensorial experiences affiliated with the human being. In his Sufferhead project, the Nigerian artist brews beer with ingredients from his country of origin and the *Reinheitsgebot* method to contemplate the fusion of cultures of African migrants in Germany. This panel welcomes research on similar debates that employ art and forms of imagination. Furthermore, it seeks to cluster decolonial discussions on African art and its contemporary understanding and applications, such as the usage of art in sociopolitical movements and critique. Additionally, oral traditions that have persisted and resisted imperialist advances in the African continent, serve as instruments to transmit knowledge and maintain sociocultural aspects of societies. Aligning oral traditions with art practices allows for new generations to reclaim elements of their ancestry as well as a wider youthful audience to engage with relevant topics.

## **16 Africa and Global Geopolitics: Humanitarianism, Neocolonialism and the African Union**

Africa plays a decisive role in international geopolitics, specifically due to its central position at the intersection of global strategic dynamics. The continent, situated as a geological continuation of the Eurasia landmass, has a key geographical location. Additionally, “Sub-Saharan African countries hold roughly 25 percent of the seats in the UN General Assembly, making the region’s voice important on global issues such as climate change and drug trafficking [amongst other socio-political concerns]. What’s more, a large and rapidly growing population, vast natural resource reserves, and economic potential all position sub-Saharan Africa to play a greater future role in geopolitics. [...] Whether sub-Saharan countries can cooperate to address these challenges through institutions such as the African Union will largely determine the region’s [present and] future” (World101: 2021). The African Union categorically confronts challenges of national security and autonomy as well as peacekeeping, development and corruption. Furthermore, Africa continues to grow in importance in connection to humanitarian aid. Nonetheless, this dominant framework of aid-infused development from the Global North towards the Global South is regarded by many as a tool of neocolonial enterprises which threaten the autonomy of African nation-states and therefore their influential independent participation in geopolitics. This panel attempts to discuss Africa within world politics by critically engaging the aforementioned topics in contemporary discussions.

World101 (2021). *Regions of the World: Sub-saharan Africa Geopolitics*. World 101, From the Council on Foreign Relations. <https://world101.cfr.org/rotw/africa/geopolitics>