

## Book Launch, ECAS 2025

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**Thursday 26. 6.**

**Faculty of Arts**

**Hall 016**

**13:15 – 14:00 BL1 - Textures of Power. Central Africa in the Long 20th Century**

This edited volume offers a groundbreaking, multidisciplinary study of power in Central Africa, from the Atlantic slave trade up to the present. By bringing together emerging and leading scholars, *Textures of Power* builds on rich epistemic legacies in African studies, and opens new research avenues across history and anthropology, cultural and political studies.

By employing the concept of “texture” as a red thread, the book illustrates the diverse range of methods that have revitalised power as an analytical tool in human and social sciences. It fosters dialogues between studies of emotions and technology, colonialism and its aftermaths, non-humans and the invisible world. Departing from conventional perspectives, this volume emphasises bottom-up, long-term approaches, local theories, and the impact of digital connectivity. It thus expands our understanding of power across epistemic and thematic boundaries.

**14:00 – 14:30 BL7 - Decolonising Education in Islamic West Africa: Secular Erasure, School Preference and Social Inequality, Routledge 2025**

Why do negative colonial stereotypes about Qur’anic schools in West Africa persist within academic education and development scholarship, not to mention policy discourse – despite a wealth of contrary empirical evidence produced by Africanist scholars? Why do secular biases continue to underpin the theoretical frameworks that we use to understand educational decision-making in African contexts – despite evidence from the Pew Research Center that religion is “very important” to 90% of people living on the continent? How do Euro-North American academic cultures – including within African studies – silence the perspectives of people of faith, thereby foreclosing the possibility that they analyse these dynamics on the basis of their own experiences?

*Decolonising Education in Islamic West Africa* is grounded in an ethnography of educational decision-making in northern Senegal, showing how young people struggled to obtain an Islamic education in a policy landscape shaped by Eurocentric and secular biases. This case study serves as a springboard to expose not only the inequalities that shape access to education in Senegal but also the hierarchies within academic and development spaces concerned with educational engagement. The book proposes that decolonial theory can support a synergy that combines the strengths of African studies with the more applied disciplines of comparative education/development studies - but also provides a

critical frame for challenging epistemic biases in both of these fields. Ultimately, the book makes a convincing argument for greater inclusion of people versed in West African and Islamic knowledge traditions within academic and development spaces.

## Hall 018

### 13:15 – 14:00 BL4+5 - Constructing belonging on Africa's urban peripheries

BL4:

Claire Mercer, ([C.C.Mercer@lse.ac.uk](mailto:C.C.Mercer@lse.ac.uk)) Professor of Human Geography, Director of Doctoral Studies, London School of Economics and Political Science

The book is an exploration of new middle-class neighbourhoods in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It intersects with the conference theme by considering how Tanzania's growing middle classes are constructing new senses of community and belonging in new neighbourhoods on the city's former peri-urban edge.

The book details: <https://www.ucpress.edu/books/the-suburban-frontier/paper>

African cities are under construction. Beyond the urban redevelopment schemes and large-scale infrastructure projects reconfiguring central city skylines, urban residents are putting their resources into finding land and building homes on city edges. The Suburban Frontier examines how self-built housing on the urban periphery has become central to middle-class formation and urban transformation in contemporary Tanzania. Drawing on original research in the city of Dar es Salaam, Claire Mercer details how the "suburban frontier" has become the place where Africa's middle classes are shaped. As the first book-length analysis of Africa's suburban middle class, The Suburban Frontier offers significant contributions to the study of urban social change in Africa and urbanization in the Global South.

BL5:

Paula Meth, Sarah Charlton, Tom Goodfellow and Alison Todes, Manchester University Press 2024  
<https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526171214/>

The edges of cities are increasingly understood as places of dynamism and change, but there is little research on African urban peripheries, the nature of building, growth, investment and decline that is shaping them and how these are lived. This co-authored monograph draws on findings from an extensive comparative study on Ethiopia and South Africa, in conversation with a related study on Ghana. It examines African urban peripheries through a dual focus on the experiences of living in these changing contexts, alongside the logics driving their transformation. Through its conceptualisation and application of five 'logics of periphery', it offers unique, contextually informed insights into the generic processes shaping urban peripheries, and the variable ways in which these are playing out in contemporary Africa for those living the peripheries

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housing on the urban periphery has become central to middle-class formation and urban transformation in contemporary Tanzania. Drawing on original research in the city of Dar es Salaam, Claire Mercer details how the “suburban frontier” has become *the* place where Africa’s middle classes are shaped. As the first book-length analysis of Africa’s suburban middle class, *The Suburban Frontier* offers significant contributions to the study of urban social change in Africa and urbanization in the Global South.

## **14:00 – 14:30 BL12 - Space for stories – Passion and vulnerability in research**

In this poignant personal memoir, a social scientist researching resource conflicts in Africa's Great Lakes Region recounts her experiences. The author explores the ethical and emotional challenges encountered in her fieldwork, detailing how exposure to stories of crises and conflict spurred her own struggles with post-traumatic stress. She also contemplates her identity as a white, middle-class, educated woman striving to connect two continents. The book prompts readers to consider their own positionality and the complex ethical and emotional landscapes navigated in academic research, oscillating between passion and vulnerability.

## **14:30 – 15:00 BL10 - Compromised Bodies. Cultural Imperialism, Agency, and the Ban on “Female Genital Mutilation” in Senegal. University of Pennsylvania Press, March 2025**

The Senegalese parliament decreed a national ban on Female Genital Mutilation in 1999. As only around a third of the Senegalese population practised female genital cutting (FGC) at the time, policy makers did not expect that the new law would cause commotion. Yet, in Fouta Toro - homeland to the Fulani and so-called “cradle of Islam” in West Africa - the response to the new law was full of anger and violence. More than a decade after the ban Fouta Toro was known as “the most difficult region” for governmental and non-governmental awareness raising activities. Tyres were burnt, international NGO delegates were threatened and kept inside a hotel, activists publicly speaking out against the practice were religiously condemned, people were afraid - not just of physical violence but also of the marabouts’ spiritual power. Today, animosity towards the law is still palpable in the region. The ban, many locals say, is nothing other than an act of cultural imperialism imposed by the West, and resisting the ban is paramount to maintaining the autonomy and integrity of lifeways within the region.

From the outside, opposition to the law and NGOs seemed unified and strong. On the ground, however, things were far more complicated. This ethnography unravels the continued political tensions surrounding national and international interventions that place protection of the female body at the centre of their concerns. I show how some claim the female body to be a reproducer of cultural identities, with reference to duties through kin obligations; others refer to human rights and the state. By way of the many stories of women and men caught up in these debates, the book reveals the personal struggles and difficult decisions Fulani face, be they traditional cutters, religious leaders, mothers and husbands, divorced women, male or female activists.

## Hall 209

### 13:15 – 13:45 BL14 - Trust and Trust-Making in Africa's Global Connections

*Trust and Trust-Making in Africa's Global Connections* is a thought-provoking book contributing to both African Studies and the study of trust in society. The volume provides rich ethnographic insights into the ways trust and trust-making shape Africans' global encounters. It traces empirical foundations of trust and distrust, illustrates the wide variation in manifestations of trust-building, and critically positions these observations in the contemporary moment of global polycrisis. Trust and trust-making, we show, as these critically engage with global power relations, are acting both as a catalyst of harm and a potential source of positive change.

## Friday 27.6.

## Faculty of Arts

## Hall 018

### 13:00 – 13:30 BL2 - Smugglers, Speculators, and the City in the Ethiopia-Somalia Borderlands.

For a century, the Ethiopian city of Jigjiga was known as a dusty hub of cross-border smuggling and a hotbed of rebellion on Ethiopia's eastern frontier. After 2010, it transformed into a post-conflict boomtown, becoming one of Africa's fastest-growing cities and attracting Somali return-migrants from across the globe. This study examines Jigjiga's astonishing transformation through the eyes of its cross-border traders, urban businesspeople, and officials. Daniel K. Thompson follows traders and return-migrants across borders to where their lives collide in the city. Analyzing their strategies of mobility and exchange, this study reveals how Ethiopia's federal politics, Euro-American concerns about terrorism, and local business aspirations have intertwined to reshape links between border-making and city-making in the Horn of Africa. To understand this distinctive brand of urbanism, Thompson follows globalized connections and reveals how urbanites in Africa and beyond participate in the "urban borderwork" of constructing, as well as contesting, today's border management regimes.

### 13:30 – 14:15 BL6 - Author meets critics session for "Making a life: Young Men on Johannesburg's Urban Margins" (Wits Press, 2025).

This panel will celebrate the launch of *"Making a Life: Young Men on Johannesburg's Urban Margins,"* a new book by Dr. Hannah Dawson, published by Wits Press in May 2025. The book offers a nuanced understanding of how young men in Zandspruit, a sprawling informal settlement on the outskirts of Johannesburg, navigate unemployment, economic instability, and the politics of belonging.

Drawing on a decade of research, *Making a Life* explores how men's life-making strategies, including their livelihoods, identities, and political practices, contribute to the making and remaking of the settlement. The book provides a rich ethnographic account that challenges conventional narratives around urban work, un(der)employment, citizenship, and inequality.

The panel will begin with a brief introduction to the book by the author, followed by presentations from Max Bolt and Deborah James, each offering their perspectives on the book's significance and impact. The presentations will be followed by an open discussion, allowing for engagement with the audience.

## **14:15 – 14:45 BL3 - Fractured Pasts in Lake Kivu's Borderlands. Conflicts, Connections and Mobility in Central Africa.**

A blurb for the book, in lieu of an abstract:

The Lake Kivu region, which borders Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, has often been defined by scholars in terms of conflict, violence, and separation. In contrast, this innovative study explores histories of continuities and connections across the borderland. Gillian Mathys utilises an integrated historical perspective to trace long-term processes in the region, starting from the second half of the nineteenth century and reaching to the present day. *Fractured Pasts in Lake Kivu's Borderlands* powerfully reshapes historical understandings of mobility, conflict, identity formation and historical narration in and across state and ecological borders. In doing so, Mathys deconstructs reductive historical myths that have continued to underpin justifications for violence in the region. Drawing on cross-border oral history research and a wealth of archival material, *Fractured Pasts* embraces a new and powerful perspective of the region's history.

The book speaks directly to the theme of the conference in the way it reshapes our thinking about the historical trajectories of exclusion and belonging and provides new views on identity-formation and the way these have been reshaped by colonial borders.

I have also added a one-pager from the press with some more information (my bio, shorter blurbs etc.) in attachment.

## **Hall 201**

### **13:00 – 13:30 BL8 - Book title L'œuvre en kanouri d'al-Hajj Musa ibn Hissein, un savant du Borno (Niger-Nigeria)**

At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in Cairo the encounter of a Kanuri scholar, al-Hajj Musa ibn Hissein, and a German amateur linguist, Rudolf Pries, resulted in the production by al-Hajj Musa of an exceptional collection of Kanuri texts. This oral and written corpus gathers original texts and tales, songs and proverbs from the popular culture of 19<sup>th</sup> century Borno. The European act of collecting and grammatization could not to erase, in this case, the strength of the original episteme. These texts shed light on translinguistic practices, in between Kanuri and Hausa, and on the role of memorization and mental composure at the intersection of the religious and the secular and of erudition and popular culture.

### 13:30 – 14:00 BL15 - Presentation of photo-ethnography TRACES, on the effects of war.

Words and images tell stories in different and sometimes complementary ways. This photo-ethnography on young people of Burundian heritage in Belgium and the Netherlands, explores the traces of war in Burundi. The book *Traces* reveals how war reverberates across time and space: in people, places and through ‘war repertoires’. Yet the young people at the heart of this photo-ethnography show how their traces also make for new ways of belonging and connectedness. The book consists of photos, interview and diary excerpts, and analyses. With this artistic publication, Lidewyde Berckmoes and Marieke Maagdenberg hope to seduce readers interested in art and academia to listen to the experiences of next generations, which often remain unnoticed.

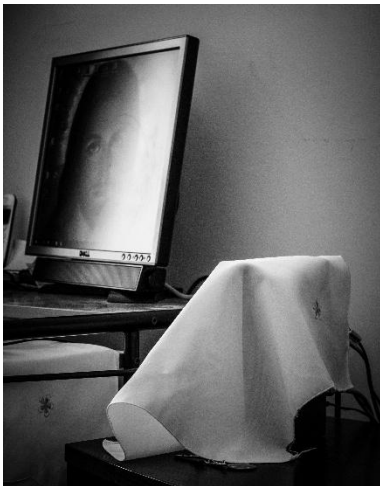
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L.H. Berckmoes, and M.R. Maagenberg

This photo-ethnography explores traces of war in Burundi. Bringing into view young people of Burundian heritage in Belgium and the Netherlands, the book reveals how war and (lost) homes reverberate in people, places and through ‘war repertoires’. Yet the young people in this photo-ethnography also show how their traces make for new ways of belonging and connectedness. The book consists of photos, interview excerpts, and analyses. With the publication, the authors hope to seduce readers interested in art and academia to listen to the experiences of those born after war, showing how there/here and then/now and are interconnected.



## Hall 209

**13:00 – 13:30 BL9 - African Women’s Histories in European Narratives. The Afropolitan Krio Fernandino Diaspora (1850-1996), Leuven University Press 2025.**

### Abstract

Nothing is known of the African women who came to Europe from the 1870s, nor does anyone dare to imagine they were wealthy, elegantly dressed, with the finest of tastes who spoke several languages. The Krio Fernandino was a multi-sited, multilocal, transnational, transcontinental and Afropolitan community that lived between Africa and Europe from the end of the 19th century onwards. This book explains how these people transcended the barriers of race and gender in colonial Africa and the Spanish metropoli.

Aixelà-Cabré offers an exciting journey between cultures and continents, as it unearths a passionate story of African women empowerment in their home continent and in Catalonia. The research constitutes a *herstory* that will ring true on a regional, national and transcontinental scale; a genuine Euro-African and Afro-European legacy to be preserved for future generations.

### Key points

Aixelà-Cabré builds a *herstory* of Afro-European imprints, and rescues some most notably Fernandino figures like Amelia Barleycorn of Vivour (1860? Santa Isabel, 1920 Barcelona).

The book documented the first African diaspora that came to Europe as free citizens since 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Krio Fernandino.

The approach decolonizes the past collaborating in the circulation of other knowledge, cultures, experiences and rhetoric of African otherness in Europe.

The study provides an historical ethnography on women from the Krio Fernandino community between continents, from the oral, documentary and graphic testimonies unearthed.

## 13:30 – 14:00 BL11 - Dams, Power and the Politics of Ethiopia's Renaissance

After more than a decade, Ethiopia is filling the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), a controversial dam with the potential to transform the hydrology and politics of the Nile Basin. The GERD is the culmination of a dam building boom carried out over three decades and a key pillar of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front's (EPRDF) efforts to bring about an Ethiopian 'Renaissance'. This book provides the first detailed examination of the domestic and international political dynamics that shaped Ethiopia's dam building, drawing on extensive primary research including more than a hundred interviews with politicians, technocrats, consultants, and donors. In doing so, the book reflects on Ethiopia's implications for broader debates about the role of the state in late development, the dynamics of 21st century dam building, and the political economy of renewable energy transitions. A central argument of the book is that Ethiopia's dam building is symbolic of the successes and failures of the EPRDF's 'developmental state'.

On the one hand, this dams' boom enhanced electricity generation capacity, while constituting a key element of the state infrastructure investment that turned Ethiopia into one of the world's fastest growing economies. On the other hand, a politically driven decision-making process undermined electricity planning, contributed to an unsustainable debt burden, and, ultimately, failed to provide reliable electricity access to key users. Following the EPRDF's collapse, the subsequent Prosperity Party government has taken steps away from the state-led development model of its predecessor, while labouring towards the final completion of the GERD.

[https://global.oup.com/academic/product/dams-power-and-the-politics-of-ethiopias-renaissance-9780192871213?view=Grid&facet\\_narrowbyproducttype\\_facet=Print&lang=en&cc=sc#](https://global.oup.com/academic/product/dams-power-and-the-politics-of-ethiopias-renaissance-9780192871213?view=Grid&facet_narrowbyproducttype_facet=Print&lang=en&cc=sc#)

## 14:00 – 14:30 BL13 - The Politics of the Past in Zimbabwe

In this book launch on *The Politics of the Past in Zimbabwe*, editors and contributors will present a new and exciting anthology which brings together a wide range of perspectives on Zimbabwe's memory culture and its political implications. Zimbabwe is a country whose longer past and shifting post-independence politics have both included violent histories, as well as often violent contestations over



history itself. *The Politics of the Past in Zimbabwe* addresses the many ways in which pasts are variously experienced, remembered, claimed, denied or contested by differently positioned actors, and how this in turn shapes the politics of the present. It explores how such contestation is expressed: in literature, art, and the media; through exhumations and reburials; in state apology and political myth making; and in both traditional cultural heritage sites and the making of new national symbols.

Contributors are Jocelyn Alexander, Elleke Boehmer, Shadreck Chirikure, Simbarashe Shadreck Chitima, Lena Englund, Shari Eppel, Petina Gappah, Amanda Hammar, Pedzisai Maedza, Owen Maseko, Mphathisi Ndlovu, Minna Johanna Niemi, Astrid Rasch, Timothy Scarnecchia, Thomas Thondhlana, Katja Uusihakala.