

## RoundTables Programme, ECAS 2025

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**Thursday 26. 6.**

**Faculty of Arts**

**Hall 001**

**13:15 – 14:45 RTB1 - New Urban Becomings in Africa**

*Nairobi Becoming: Security, Uncertainty, Contingency*, engages with creative writers, scholars, and artists to present a multi-faceted portrait of a rapidly changing African city. From human rights protesters to male sex workers, from city watchmen to *matatu* minibus touts, the book explores multiple experiences of living in Nairobi today, its uneven distribution of life potential, and the complex struggles for security that shape how residents seek to make live-able lives amidst its manifold uncertainties. More than ‘just’ an experimental, multi-authored ethnography of Nairobi, this book seeks to pave the way for new kinds of collaborative thinking and writing about, *and with*, African cities and urban lives. Nairobi has often been called a ‘fragmented city’ and yet, as *Nairobi Becoming* reveals, it does cohere in diverse forms, for contingent moments of duration and transformation, for different people in different ways. In curating this multi-disciplinary and multi-modal approach toward understanding urban lives in all their diverse possibilities and realities, *Nairobi Becoming* critically explores innovative forms of collaborative knowledge production and sharing.

In this roundtable, we seek to use the book as a starting point to critically consider diverse, experimental, collaborative, and multi-modal ways with which to make sense of contemporary urban becomings across the continent. We want to focus on:

1. The complexity of capturing cities, such as Nairobi, as sites of dense multiplicities – of colonial histories inscribed in the city’s racialized geography; of ongoing struggles over land and space; of life projects oriented towards new forms of middle-class prosperity; and of remarkable spaces where alternative economies, subjectivities and ways of being/relating thrive.
2. Different approaches towards collaborative knowledge production and curation about cities, that foreground the diverse voices of ‘local intellectuals’, artists, and other kinds of ‘knowers’, and transcend static and monochrome knowledge regimes, and particularly, conventional but increasingly normative forms of scholarly writing.

3. Explore how such experimental forms of collaborative scholarship and multi-modal forms of knowledge production offer genuine, productive, and open-ended alternatives to increasingly stale and tired debates about the ‘decolonization’ of African Studies.

## Hall 111

### **13:15 – 14:45 RTB3 - Re-centering African Subjects and Subjectivities - Discussing a New Research Agenda on Regionalism**

The participants of the roundtable are part of a scientific network with the same name which started its work in January 2024. The network brings together 14 internationally renowned scholars from different disciplines, united in shaping a new research agenda on African regionalism over the next years. Stemming from political science, international relations, sociology, and anthropology, and with each member having several months to years of extensive field research and/or personal lived experience, the network is able to leverage diverse expertise on African realities which will be the basis for the discussions also of the proposed roundtable for the ECAS conference.

The roundtable will explore novel perspectives on African regionalism by taking seriously that (inter)subjectivities are powerful determinants of knowledge. The roundtable’s main starting point is that African agencies have not been sufficiently accounted for in mainstream/Western scholarship on regionalism. The invisibility of African subjectivities in regionalism studies has led to several problems, such as that portrayals of African regionalism remain overly simplistic and generalizing because the diverse ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and conceptual understandings of African subjects about their own regionalism projects have been poorly accounted for. Furthermore, the resulting research questions and theories in mainstream regionalism studies remain irrelevant to addressing the challenges being experienced by African subjects currently.

In the roundtable a diverse set of scholars will discuss the historicization and recentering of African regionalism, novel methodologies, and underutilized African theories to formulate methodological and theoretical innovations for scholarly as well as policy-making circles beyond binary categories such as white/black, African/non-African, European/non-European, Global North/South. By this aim the roundtable contributes to a recentering of knowledge(s) on Africa’s regionalism, more inclusive perceptions of identity, and situated theories in Global power relations.

## Hall 116

### **13:15 – 14:45 RTB6 - Longue Durée, Diasporic Waves and Trans-performances: Time, Space, Intersectionality and Radical Re-readings of Afropolitan and Afropean Belonging**

A well-recognized and pernicious dimension of coloniality is the projection of the norms and lenses of the colonizing ‘center’ onto the colonized ‘periphery’. Moving from the realm of space to the realm of time, a less recognized but perhaps even more pernicious dimension of coloniality is the projection of

the norms and lenses of our deeply colonial present onto the hundreds of thousands of years of less deeply colonial and precolonial human history. The presenters on this panel demonstrate how Afropolitan and Afropean belongings in the present cannot be meaningfully understood without acknowledging that these phenomena emerge from a long trajectory of dynamic hybridity that can be traced back in time over the *longue durée* of human existence and traced back through space over wave upon wave of multidirectional diasporic human displacement.

Besides upending and extending the temporal and spatial matrices within which Afropolitan and Afropean entanglements have unfolded, each speaker also highlights the fact that although, by the very nature of their lexical components, the compound terms ‘Afro-politan’ and ‘Afro-pean’ center problematic notions of ethnicity and consequent vulnerabilities to systems of ethnocentric domination, they cannot be considered in isolation from equally problematic intersectional notions of gender, class and species, and consequent intersectional vulnerabilities to systems of patriarchal, economic and anthropocentric domination. Among the most interesting insights that emerge from the temporal, spatial and thematic border-crossings engaged in by the presenters are novel understandings of Afropolitan and Afropean belongings as ingenious, contingent, messy, resistive, and contradictory trans-performances.

## Hall 201

### **13:15 – 14:45 RTB7 - Medicine, Racism, Gender, and Anti-Colonial Imaginaries: African Nurses' Experiences under Portuguese Colonialism**

Research into European colonial expansion has highlighted the inseparable link between colonialism as a political project, its tools of exploitation, and the development of biomedicine as a scientific field. In particular, studies on nursing within colonial contexts have shown how nursing can be understood as a space of tensions and conflicts that permeated European colonialism in Africa. In the context of Portuguese colonialism, research on the various aspects of colonial biopolitics power has expanded in recent years. The Portuguese colonial administration in Africa, developed in the last quarter of the 19th century, structured Health Services in its overseas territories according to racial hierarchies. Health posts, maternity wards, infirmaries, and hospitals were segregated into sections for white Europeans and black Africans. From the outset of the Health Services' implementation, African nurses — both men and women — were essential to the functioning of these healthcare structures, playing a key role in supporting colonial power. Yet, while they served colonial interests, they also acted as agents of change, challenging European exploitation. African nurses became a focal point of tension within colonial policies that sought both to differentiate and incorporate African populations into the "civilized world". This roundtable aims to explore key questions such as: What motivated Africans to pursue nursing during colonial rule? What were the educational environments like for training African nurses? Was there a connection between the pursuit of better living conditions amid the racist dynamics of colonial segregation, nursing experiences, and the emergence of anti-colonial imaginaries? Focusing particularly on the cases of Angola and Mozambique, this roundtable will

engage in a broader discussion on Colonialism, Medical Power, Gender, and Racism, examining the paths Africans followed to become nurses, their experiences in the workplace, their interactions with Portuguese colonial segregation policies, and the potential links between nursing and anti-colonial or liberation movements.

## **Hall 217**

### **13:15 – 14:45 RTB8 - Taking Spirits Seriously: the challenge for academics (Spirits of Peace project)**

This roundtable explores some of the difficulties (and even disapproval) that academics face, when seeking to find ways to write about how spirits can be seen as actors in everyday life.

The topic is part of the ongoing The Spirits of Peace project led by historians and religious studies researchers. It is currently working to recover Zimbabwe's heritage of traditional reconciliation systems for today's peacemakers, working with traditional healers, archives and oral history. Our project has encountered two levels of resistance to our research into how spirits are routinely invoked in conflict resolution. On the one hand, local middle-class mediators and conflict management professionals are reluctant to admit in public that they used these approaches, because they are seen as 'backward' and 'unChristian'. On the other hand, within the global academy, these systems are described as 'beliefs', and not taken seriously, except as discursive claims.

This roundtable will focus on how far personal backgrounds & positioning impact on our knowledge constructions on & about Africa. It will identify what conditions generate expressions & claims of African modes of being and belonging, and what conditions work against making these claims. It will discuss the ways to identify how and why claims about everyday, routinely recognised, spirit agency are submerged, distorted or misrepresented in the global academy and in international legal, development and peacebuilding initiatives.

## **Hall 225V**

### **13:15 – 14:15 RTB12 - AEGIS Summer School Roundtable on Research Ethics and Security for Researchers.**

Research ethics for social sciences and humanities generally provide national guidelines to conduct responsible research. This includes an evaluation of the risks that the research eventually poses to research participants and collaborators. Researchers are responsible for not exposing partners and participants to unacceptable risks. This often implies that researchers will ensure that data will be produced and gathered in safe conditions, that the research material will be stored appropriately, that consent is provided, that confidentiality is assured and that sources for information are protected.

Other aspects must be considered when disseminating research findings to minimise threats, sanctions, and damage. This is somehow business as usual.

However, researchers are often poorly equipped to assess emotional safety, not only the safety of participants, students, collaborators, co-workers, and interpreters but also their safety and well-being. This is particularly true for researchers working in hostile environments or on sensitive and emotionally charged data. Recent research has shown that the risks are often underestimated or disregarded and that the damage can be severe (lack of appetite, lack of sleep, depression, burnout, sick leave).

Research institutions should have routines for risk assessment and specific action plans for safety and security. What challenges do we face? How does your institution or local research community address these issues?

A research community also has a collective responsibility. How do we envisage the consequences of such responsibility?

## Hall 429

### **13:00 – 14:30 RTB10 - What are the challenges of writing the history of African philosophy?**

Writing the history of African philosophy presents several unique challenges, many of which arise from historical, cultural, and methodological complexities. These challenges encompass, to mention only a few, the disruption of African intellectual traditions by European colonialism and the inferiorization of the African by (philosophically legitimised) racist theories favouring Western thought as the standard of intellectual rigor. Or language barriers: African philosophical ideas were transmitted orally, in local languages, and through cultural practices. Writing a history that includes these oral traditions requires different methods of interpretation, making it difficult to structure and codify African philosophical thought. In summary, writing the history of African philosophy involves addressing the challenges of recovering fragmented traditions, overcoming colonial legacies, navigating linguistic and cultural diversity, and integrating oral traditions into the academic framework. Moreover, the need to respect the unique methodologies and worldviews of African philosophy makes it an intellectually demanding and complex task.

Today, however, new attempts are being made to write a history of philosophy in a global perspective. One example of this is the new edition of “Ueberweg. Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie” (Outline of the History of Philosophy) in German-speaking countries. This panel discusses initial attempts to develop a series of “Philosophies of Africa” as part of this edition, and the methodological challenges of writing a history of African philosophy in its global entanglements and invites critical discussion.

## Friday 27.6.

### Faculty of Arts

#### Hall 001

#### **13:00 – 14:30 RTB4 - Rebalancing the Scales: Tackling Knowledge Production Asymmetries in Global Academic Publishing**

What role can editors and publishers play in rebalancing the asymmetries in the knowledge production process? This question is an important one to address as part of an agenda to decolonise African Studies specifically, as well as academia more generally. While there are many aspects to scholarship that take place beyond journals and books, these sources serve as a backbone of the sector. But journals and books do not operate in a value neutral space: they are part of an economy of knowledge that was shaped by asymmetric relations during the colonial era. Additionally, they can be spaces that reproduces inequalities if they do not critically reflect on ways to challenge the underrepresentation of African and other Global South scholars – both in their editorial teams and in their publications.

This roundtable discusses the different strategies that can be undertaken to challenge the norms of the knowledge production in the publication industry while discussing the barriers to change encountered. The participants will exchange their ideas to develop practical solutions (where possible) to promoting inclusive, Africanist scholarship. They will engage with the following questions, among others:

- What are the main ways that asymmetries in knowledge production are evident?
- What have been the ways that you have tried to disrupt these asymmetries in your publication?
- What have been the limitations and/or obstacles to this effort?
- Do you see your publication work as related to decolonising knowledge? Why or why not?

#### Hall 116

#### **13:00 – 14:30 RTB9 - Breaking the mould: seeking equity through reforging mechanisms for 'North-South' Research Collaborations**

Recent years have seen growing advocacy for decolonising development and academia, promoting epistemic inclusivity, and fostering North-South partnerships grounded in equity and mutual respect. Many global South actors have called for a shift away from “equitable partnerships” to promoting equity more widely in global research ecosystems. In response, numerous mechanisms, including partnership agreements have been signed between institutions in the ‘Global North’ and the ‘Global South’. Questions remain as to whether these agreements have led to meaningful outcomes or perpetuate older models of intellectual extraction and the instrumentalisation of Southern contexts for data collection and pre-conceived interventions.

This roundtable brings together academics from the 'Global North' and 'South' to share experiences and insights on how to achieve a truly equitable and power-aware transformation of global research ecosystems ‘equitable partnerships’ from aspiration to practice. Key questions to be addressed include:



- To what extent do current collaborative mechanisms entrench extractive patterns in research collaborations between 'Global North' and 'Global South' researchers, and how can we dismantle these?
- Can we envision transformative collaborative mechanisms to replace the current system? If so, what will the challenges and key features be?
- What alternative or improved mechanisms are necessary to establish partnerships and collaboration that prioritise inclusivity, sustainability, mutual recognition, and co-creation?

By tackling these questions, the session will explore the power dynamics shaping research agendas, inform ongoing debate over whether equitable partnerships are the best entry point for achieving greater equity within the global development research ecosystem, and offer practical alternatives.

## Hall 225V

### **14:15 – 15:00 RTB11 - CASSAF: an overview of art-and-research projects in African studies**

Launched in November 2024, the CASSAF project aims at identifying and analyzing projects articulating arts and social sciences in African studies. Ranging from academic projects using arts as a tool for dissemination to projects using arts as a method for research, and from works of art based on scientific research to integrated approach labelled as 'research-creation', these projects have in common to be produced by actors both within and outside the continent and from African diasporas. They all ask key political and ethical questions relating to plural positionalities and identities. At the end of a first stage of investigation this roundtable will gather three members of the CASSAF project to present initial results and open the discussion on the relevance and the challenges of associating art and social sciences in African Studies today.

## Great Hall

### **9:00 – 10:45 RTB2 - Publishing in Academic Books and Journals**

Publishers from Routledge, Taylor & Francis will coordinate a session providing advice for publishing in academic journals and books, including how to choose a target journal or publisher, how to write and submit your article or book proposal, peer review, ethics and predatory publishing.

We will be joined by Editors from leading African Studies journals, who will share their top tips for submitting your journal article and what Editors look for in a submission. Recently published book authors will also share their advice and experiences of book publishing.

There will be plenty of time for discussion and Q&A from the floor. This session is primarily aimed at Early Career Researchers, but will be of interest to anybody looking to deepen their understanding of journal or book publishing or current issues in scholarly publishing.