

AEGIS CRG 'Africa in the World – Rethinking Africa's Global Connections'

First Call for Papers

Conference

Destination Africa

Contemporary Africa as a global meeting point

Leiden, 22-23 March 2018

We live in an era of rising anxiety in Europe over African immigration, fuelled by media images and politicians talking of a 'tsunami' of migrants from Africa 'invading' Europe, chasing 'our' wealth and challenging 'our' values. This conference proposes to reverse the perspective and to consider current movements *towards* Africa and *Africa* as a centre of global connectivity. Examples abound: Western and Asian companies increasingly invest in Africa to capture one of the world's largest unsaturated markets in consumer goods and services; hundreds of thousands of Chinese migrants have settled in Africa; the Arab states, Turkey and Malaysia are heavily investing in the Islamic education sector; Indian ICT companies are investing huge sums in the telecommunications sector; Brazilian agricultural schemes are implanted in Mozambique; Indian and Korean academics lead new Ethiopian universities, and the highly prized safari tourism in Tanzania or Botswana has reached new heights, thanks to an influx of new upper-class clients from Asia and the Arab countries, among others. In addition, the migration of young African professionals returning to their 'home' countries, investments in African land markets by African migrants, and intra-African investment by African multinationals (for instance, supermarket chains, ICT firms, mining companies, construction companies) are booming.

It is true that the wave of 'Afro-Optimism' of the last decade – from 'Africa on the Rise' to 'Africa is the new Asia' – has suffered severe setbacks in recent years. One of the factors for this readjustment is the obvious mass migration of young Africans, who frequently originate not from failed states and civil war regions, but from countries like Ghana or Senegal, which are considered internationally as top-performing and democratic countries. Furthermore, the economic and political turmoil in South Africa, the state collapse in South Sudan, and the reappearance of pictures of mass starvation of African children have darkened the picture. On the other hand, an increasing number of Africans and non-Africans consider Africa as the place to be and stay.

The newly established AEGIS Collaborative Research Group (CRG) 'Africa in the World – Rethinking Africa's Global Connections', will organize the 'Destination Africa' conference as its inaugural activity, during which this idea of contemporary Africa as a global meeting point

will be explored. Important questions include the ways in which people in Africa perceive this new influx and how they navigate, negotiate, engage, and possibly struggle to strike a balance between their own interests and those of the 'newcomers', including their evaluation of questions concerning integration, and the distribution of profits and resources. The conference also aims to shed greater light on the motivations, interests, negotiation strategies and navigating practices of those who see Africa as a destination. Finally, it will be important to put these current global encounters on African soil in a historical perspective.

The organizers welcome abstracts for papers on topics including:

- Competition and collaboration between investors (including international and local companies) and their effects in specific African settings;
- African immigration policies and the integration of new migrants in African societies;
- Diasporic engagements with Africa (projects, policies and politics);
- Cultural encounters in international peace keeping missions;
- Christian and Islamic missionary engagements with Africa;
- Competing development models and actors, both at civil society and state level
- Tourism as a connective or fencing off practice;
- The rush for African art objects and its global commercialization,
- Transnational engagement in Africa's changing educational landscape;
- The role of the media in establishing Africa as a global meeting point;
- Innovation and technology transfer: opportunities and challenges for Africans

Scholars are invited to express their interest in contributing to this conference by sending an abstract of a maximum of 250 words to the organizing committee in Leiden at asc@acleiden.nl before 1 October 2017. Please mention 'Destination Africa Conference' in the subject heading. Authors of selected abstracts will be informed before 1 December 2017.

Depending on the quality of the papers, we will consider developing the contributions into a special issue after the conference.

Please note that participants to the conference are expected to cover their own expenses.

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