

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Reinvigorating Europe-Africa Partnerships for Knowledge and Development

Multiple ASR/ASA debates have reflected on the enduring structural tensions in African Studies research, alongside the stark disconnects which exist between the realities on the ground for African scholars compared to the African Studies programs delivered outside of Africa. This is particularly relevant when we pause to reflect on African Studies research in Europe.

The connections between Europe and Africa are complex, reflecting the geographical proximity, historical ties, and mutual interests of all countries involved. Encounters with colonial rule, succeeded by postcolonial legacies, continue to inform the present-day uneasy relations between Europe and Africa. Their current interactions reflect the presently uneasy and contradictory relations across multiple fronts, throwing up complexities linked to political, ecological, economic, and social challenges. These tensions are widely examined within the numerous African Studies programs across Europe, many of which employ decolonial, anti-imperialist, or Pan-Africanist lenses to interrogate and inform their insights.

Modern-day interactions between Europe and Africa, with its multiple diasporas, have led to renewed calls for a meaningful reconstruction of relations with Africa's closest neighbor. These demands have become particularly heightened in recent times following a number of shortcomings. At the recent EU-Africa Summit held in Brussels in February 2022, European representatives revived plans initially set out in the 2020 Joint communication to the European Parliament and EU Council named "Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa" [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/communication-eu-africa-strategy-join-2020-4-final_en.pdf]. In the plans, European policymakers contemplate the charged question of what Europe was "to do with Africa," setting out the EU's position on

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the range of challenges faced by its closest neighbor; such challenges include state fragility, conflict, corruption, poverty, climate change, and environmental degradation. The Strategy presented EU solutions to the challenges but gave limited indications into the priorities preferred by Africa or proposed African solutions. Framing Africans as principally recipients of European aid, the plans indicate limited appetite for African perspectives and are silent on what, if anything, Africa might want “to do with Europe.” This sets the context for policymaking between the continental neighbors.

High-level coalition-building was similarly uniquely lacking between Europe and Africa at the Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) Summit hosted in Glasgow in November 2021, which was planned with the purpose of reaching an agreement on global climate responses. Compared to previous COPs where a united Europe partnered with African countries to gain wider agreement for emission targets, to inform the EU Green Deal, and to enable the Paris Agreement, in 2021 a divided EU was slower to agree on a common position, and despite pledging support for climate adaptation funds, ultimately blocked the crucial “loss and damage” clauses which would have enabled African countries to follow through on the desired climate pledges. Reflecting differing climate agendas, the EU prioritized support for reducing emissions while African countries focused on adaptation to address the losses and damage from climate change. Consequently, the negotiated agreements are fragile, despite impending environmental risks, and poorer African countries want to reframe and lobby for changes at the next COP27 planned for November 2022 in Egypt. These intricate high-level interactions reflect the interconnectedness between climate change, development, politics, democracy, and the role of the state in transforming relationships.

Tensions at global and international arenas are disappointingly reflected in higher education and the marginalization of African scholars in knowledge production. Despite the existence of multiple African Studies programs across Europe, the US, and Africa, concerns persist regarding so-called “proxy-readings” of Africa which fail to advance meaningful understandings of the continent or serve to further marginalize Africa and Africans, even within African Studies programs. The writings conjured up in the satirical piece “How to write about Africa” by Binyavanga Wainaina (2005), whose tongue-in-cheek insights highlight problematic themes in writings about Africa, are resonant. In Wainaina’s provocative style, he critiques the reliance on exotic spectacle, strife, deprivation, big skies, and vibrant wildlife when writing about Africa. Such writing of Africa is framed in terms of what Europeans or Americans expect or wish to see; generally, in these representations, Africa “is to be pitied, worshipped or dominated.”

The key to making particular narratives compelling and undermining alternative explanations is knowing what to include and what to leave out when writing on Africa. In order to gain accurate insights, it is vital to apply a combination of retrospective and prospective perspectives to the dynamics of

African contexts; this helps to make sense of the complex world order which Africa is part of, and as Fantu Cheru (2017), a leading African political economist based in Sweden argues, to productively inform the future of global and international partnerships for Africa's development.

Scholars on Africa have argued for the "re-centering" of Africa within knowledge production and the rejection of the hegemonic ideas that frame Africa as peripheral. Instead, scholars seek to highlight the complexities of the global system and to critique the structures which are produced. Recentring Africa aims to reimagine Africa beyond failure or peripherality. Some have argued against the idea that Africa needs to be "brought back in" to conversations; rather, it is argued that Africa is already an integral part of modernity and of the ongoing processes of domination and exploitation. What is needed is to "re-member" Africa as a vital region, to dismantle unequal power relations, and to embrace alternative decolonial visions. Faced with entrenched and multi-dimensional development challenges, it is imperative that scholars of Africa break out of their "disciplinary ghettos" and work beyond disciplinary and subject boundaries, applying a range of methods to synthesize and integrate knowledge. Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nutall's (2004) work underlines the perplexing and compelling task of "writing the world from Africa, or writing Africa into the world." Imagining Africa as an idea and as the object of academic and public discourse remains challenging.

One influential scholar of Africa's development whose journey exemplifies the highly productive exchange of relevant ideas across contexts is Thandika Mkandawire. A scholar of Malawian/Zimbabwean descent, educated at Ohio State University, his influence across academia and policy in multiple countries is noteworthy. Mkandawire's (2005, 2014, 2015) analysis of the spread of doctrines and policymaking re-examined the crisis of the previously dominant Washington consensus and the spread of neoliberalism, neo-institutionalism, and later welfarist, growth-oriented, eclectic policies. Appointed as the first Chair in African Development at the London School of Economics, Mkandawire's ideas were shared with a wider European audience. He had previously been the Director of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and had served at universities in Ghana, Zimbabwe, Denmark, and Sweden. In his later role as the Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, he transferred his academic approaches into influential policy insights on social research. His untimely passing in March 2020 is a loss to academic communities across Europe and Africa, where memorial lectures continue to be held in his honor.

The challenge of African knowledge production to inform African solutions was a central theme for Mkandawire: "If we bring back development, we have to bring back the question of knowledge at the heart of the development process."¹ Mkandawire was skeptical on the usefulness of African Studies centers in Europe, viewing them as valid mostly for helping Europe to understand Africa, but not for educating African students to understand Africa. The disconnection of African Studies centers in Europe from the realities of African contexts and their limited links with African

universities weakened their effectiveness and legitimacy. In addition to pushing for more African academics teaching in African Studies programs, his views on decolonizing the curriculum and forging sustainable and less extractive links with African universities continue to be relevant.

“Re-centering Africa” within African Studies programs in Europe remains a worthwhile yet fraught project. The entrenched constraints that shape the current boundaries of African knowledge production will take time to resolve, as will addressing the perceptions of African contexts and their links to Europe and the US. In the United Kingdom, these debates have gained traction within the Royal African Society and the African Studies Association of the UK (ASA-UK), the leading associations for Africanists within UK academia which seek to strengthen connections between UK and African academics and institutions. Leading centers of African Studies in the UK have also undertaken a number of initiatives in response. Scholars at the University of London Centre for African Studies (SOAS) recently revamped their approach to African Studies in an effort to reimagine Africa and the Black diaspora as part of broader social justice agendas. The new approaches to African Studies situate the continent within a global context and aim to advance knowledge of historical and current topics relevant to Africa. SOAS and Edinburgh University are two examples of UK universities investing further in expanding their African links, developing early career African academics, hiring African lecturers, and offering African languages such as Swahili within their African Studies curriculum. Similar efforts have been replicated to varying extents at other European universities offering African Studies courses in Germany, France, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. In a collaborative series of academic seminars [<https://www.africamultiple.uni-bayreuth.de/pool/bilder/Important-Dates/Programm.jpg>] organized by the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study (JIAS, University of Johannesburg, South Africa) and the University of Bayreuth (Germany) running to November 2022, emerging debates on the future of African Studies and new African ideas of Africa are being re-examined from multiple disciplinary perspectives.

The future of Africa’s development requires significant investments in mutually beneficial growth narratives and support for inclusive growth, green jobs, and innovation as espoused in Europe-Africa development proclamations. From the African Union’s Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, it is evident that Africans seek recognition as well as to take charge of their own development and place in the world. The African Continental Free Trade Area and the African Union Green Recovery Action Plan could provide useful frameworks for recovery and for creating empowering partnerships with the European Union; supporting and accelerating the implementation of joint initiatives and resetting strained Europe-Africa relations.

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This June 2022 issue is replete with exceptional new research from the African continent; it includes work by nine Africa-based authors, including our first full-length article in French. We are particularly excited to publish our first forum authored and edited wholly by African women scholars based at African universities. The disciplinary range of this issue is vast, from literature and cultural studies to film, communications and media, history, anthropology, ethnography, sociology, political science, and peace and conflict studies. Our volume includes work on Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, as well as Great Britain and global Africa broadly.

Our issue begins with a provocation by Carli Coetzee, in “The Myth of Oxford and Black Counter-Narratives” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.127>]. The essay explores the legacy and echoes of the supposedly unchanging world of privileged white youth in a prestigious university setting, read against counter-traditions which decenter Oxford and related epistemologies, geographies, and networks. Rather than focusing on ascendant Black/black excellence and achievement, Coetzee documents histories and accounts of Black marginalization, failure, and disconnection.

We then turn to “Early Ethiopian Cinema, 1964–1994” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.49>] by Steven Thomas and Eyerusalem Kassahun. The authors survey the first generation of Ethiopian filmmakers, whose significant fictional and documentary films have remained difficult to access. Drawing on filmmaker interviews, Thomas and Kassahun compare early Ethiopian production with Haile Gerima’s internationally celebrated *Harvest: 3000 Years* (1975), to complicate meta-narratives and foreground debates about art and politics.

In “Laughing through the Virus the Zimbabwean Way: WhatsApp Humor and the 21-day COVID19-induced #Lockdown” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.20>], Albert Chibuwe and Allen Munoriyarwa investigate how citizens in Zimbabwe have used humor to cope with the COVID-19 crisis. The authors analyze popular jokes that circulated among Zimbabwean WhatsApp groups, which provided momentary relief from personal fear and state dysfunction. Humor enables Zimbabweans to confront and rationalize death and suffering, while at the same time speaking truth to power.

Cheikh Sene’s contribution, “La Maison des Esclaves de Gorée: Histoire, Mémoires et émotions en intersection” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.135>], revisits the legacy and memory of one of the key sites of the transatlantic slave trade. Gorée is not only an important symbol of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery in Senegambia more broadly, but more recently it has become a locus for intense debate about its role and scope. Sene documents scholarly efforts to safeguard the place of Gorée in the past as well as the present.

We are proud to continue our African Studies Keywords [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.10>] series with Kathryn Mara’s and Katrina Daly Thompson’s provocative co-authored essay [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.58>] “Autoethnography.” For the authors, autoethnography is a

methodology to foreground personal experience both during research and in writing about it. Mara and Thompson engage in critical self-reflexivity regarding positionalities, within the broader context of efforts to decolonize African Studies and to work collaboratively.

Finally, we are thrilled to publish Mary Setrana and Patience Adzande's forum on farmer-herder conflict, which begins with an introductory essay, "Farmer-Pastoralist Interactions and Resource-Based Conflicts in Africa: Drivers, Actors, and Pathways to Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding," [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.45>] and features four related essays.

The first essay, by Fekadu Beyene Kenee, "Pastoralists and Violent Conflict along the Oromia–Somali Border in Eastern Ethiopia: Institutional Options towards Peacebuilding" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.89>], considers four theories about the causes and dynamics of violent conflict along the Oromia–Somali border. Kenee's effort to understand the main drivers of violence focuses on the politicization of ethnicity and the self-centered behavior of political elites, and considers the role of customary institutions in building inter-regional peace.

Mary Setrana's intervention, "Promoting Peace and Managing Farmer-Herder Conflict: The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Agogo, Ghana" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.92>], examines how clashes between nomadic pastoralists and farmers exacerbate concerns about the capacity of community-based civil society organizations to mitigate conflict. Her evidence shows that Agogo and Fulani associations ostensibly manage farmer-herder conflict but with mixed results, and the outcome partly depends on whether the organizations are perceived as indigenous or non-indigenous.

In "Cattle Rustling and Competing Land Claims: Understanding Struggles Over Land in Bunambutye, Eastern Uganda" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.93>], Pamela Khanakwa investigates the chronic insecurity arising from cattle rustling with a focus on a particular plot of land. The relationship between livestock theft and social conflict speaks to the failures of local political leadership to resolve tensions and the urgency of arbitration.

In the final of the four contributions, Patience Adzande explores an underutilized resource in conflict management, Nigeria's youth. In "Harnessing the Social Energies of Youths in Farming and Pastoral Communities in Managing Conflicts in Nigeria" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.116>], Adzande uses qualitative fieldwork to examine how young Nigerians contribute to the management of farmer-herder disputes, with a particular focus on informal policing, mediation, and restorative justice.

We conclude this print issue with three review essays. Theo Williams tackles the large and expanding literature on Black globalism in "The Many Faces of Pan-Africanism" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.141>], and Meuy Saeteurn reviews several books which narrate the lives and experiences of "Commodities, Consumption, and Capitalism" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.142>]. In a new film review essay, "Moustapha Alassane, the

Retrospective of an Adventurer" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.28>], Amelie Garin-Davet revisits the legacy of Niger's most celebrated filmmaker. The volume also features an excellent collection of book and film reviews, all of which are available online and accessible freely.

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Note

1. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2020/05/06/thandika-mkandawire-taught-me-about-african-international-development-obituary/>