**Africa Knows!**

**Conference in The Hague at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (Haagse Hogeschool): 2-4 December 2020**

**Closing activity of the Africa 2020 Year of the Leiden African Studies Assembly**

**[draft] CALL FOR PAPERS AND POSTERS**

**Introduction**

The Netherlands has a long history of critical scholarly engagement with Africa and of Africa-oriented teaching, research and policy advice. Its African Studies Centre Leiden, and the related Leiden African Studies Assembly, have decided to use the year 2020 to place Africa more firmly on the national and international academic agenda[[1]](#footnote-1). This year will feature a variety of activities, organized with many partnering universities and other knowledge institutions in the Netherlands, elsewhere in Europe, and in Africa. It concludes with an international conference on Africa’s knowledge landscape: *Africa Knows!*

**Decolonizing the minds**

In recent years, Africa’s universities, research institutions and other knowledge agencies have undergone tremendous change. A growing demand for scientific forms of knowledge and for higher education has pushed many of them to expand rapidly and to show a combination of daring initiatives and institutional, scientific, and educational creativity. New knowledge organizations, for example, with ties to religious groups or the private sector, have also been established. ‘Decolonizing the academy’ has become a strong call within and outside the continent. Eurocentrism is increasingly questioned, while calls for ‘looking East’ and ‘looking inside Africa’ are gaining momentum.

Contemporary African trends thus fundamentally challenge inherited ideas about a colonial-hierarchical relationship between European and African knowledge organizations. While most of Europe’s scientists continue to ignore Africa, European governments, bureaucrats, and funding organizations often remain wedded to a ‘capacity development’ approach. At the same time, a growing number of African scholars and Africa-based knowledge institutions vehemently object to Africa’s presumed dependence on foreign funding and ideas. Emphasizing their autonomy and ‘leapfrogging’ achievements, they increasingly reject offers of benign paternalism from European partners. Perhaps it’s time that Europeans finally decolonize their minds too!

**Needed: open-minded debate**

The dynamism of Africa’s knowledge landscape and the debate about ‘decolonising the academy’ both call for an open-minded debate. The conference *Africa Knows!* aims to facilitate this debate, by taking stock, describing and analyzing dynamics as regards the making of knowledge in and of Africa, and critically addressing dominant perceptions and biases. Guiding questions are:

* What is currently happening in the knowledge arena in Africa?[[2]](#footnote-2)
* What are the histories of knowledge development in Africa and what are likely developments in the near future? What are the drivers of change?
* How can Europe-Africa relations move away from the remnants of colonialism to genuine partnership and ‘co-creation’ in the new global environment?
* How does the digital revolution create new ways of linking, learning, and contesting?

With the *Africa Knows!* conference we aim to provide a free and open space to discuss these controversial and yet vital topics. Up for discussion are regional and trans-regional knowledge production on Africa including, but not limited to, attitudes and lingering power hierarchies in Europe-Africa partnerships, commercialization of knowledge production, fraud, overstretching of human resources, problematic research environments, transparency, and academic freedom. We intend to make the conference a physical and virtual space for engaging with these pivotal questions on the basis of academic integrity and mutual respect.

**Partnerships are essential**

In the spirit of partnership, *Africa Knows!* will be a joint effort of African, Dutch, and other European knowledge organizations. In organizing the conference, we have opted for diverging from ‘purely academic’ partners and joined hands with the applied sciences, think-tanks, and NGOs as well as traditional research universities. An important role will be played by NUFFIC, the organization in the Netherlands with more than fifty years of experience in funding knowledge partnerships with African knowledge centres. The conference will take place at one of the Universities for Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, the one in The Hague, an institution with a strong internationalization agenda, and a growing relationship with Leiden University. The conference’s activities, papers, posters and results will be made available for a larger public online, with options for virtual participation for those who cannot come to The Hague. Part of the conference fee will be used to offset carbon emissions associated with the travel of participants to The Hague.

**Collaborating partners[[3]](#footnote-3)**

From the Netherlands, *Africa Knows!* will be organized by the Leiden African Studies Assembly - LeidenASA (including the African Studies Centre Leiden, and under its authority, also involved the International Institute of Asian Studies), Erasmus University Rotterdam (both the University as a whole and the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague as well as the Partnerships Resources Centre), The Hague University of Applied Sciences (Haagse Hogeschool), Delft University of Technology, Wageningen University and Research, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, ECDPM, NUFFIC, NABC, Edukans, Aflatoun, the Knowledge Platforms INCLUDE and Food & Business, and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Plenary Board of AEGIS – the association of African Studies Centres in Europe - has unanimously and enthusiastically agreed to endorse Africa Knows! as a **Thematic Conference of AEGIS**. Key AEGIS partners coming with this request were Leiden, Edinburgh and Cologne. After that, the following AEGIS partners shared an interest in co-organizing this event: Paris-URMIS, Paris-Cessma, Bayreuth (Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence), Barcelona/Lleida  (Grup d'Estudi de les Societats Africanes), Lisbon (CEI-IUL/ISCTE), Uppsala (NAI), Leuven (IARA), Copenhagen (CAS), Mainz (IEA), The Czech Association for African Studies (CAAS, probably), and the African Studies Association of Italy (ASAI); other AEGIS institutes are welcome to join. From outside AEGIS, RWTH Aachen has joined, as well as the University of Konstanz.

So far, the following African collaborating partners have agreed to participate:

* + Botswana: University of Botswana
  + Burkina Faso: Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Ouagadougou
  + Chad: CRASH
  + Egypt: NVIC and their Egyptian partner universities, including Al-Azhar University.
  + Ethiopia: University of Addis Ababa, Mekelle University
  + Ghana: University of Ghana at Legon, and Tamale University of Development Studies
  + Kenya: Univ. of Nairobi, Moi University, PAL (People’s Action for Learning Network), AERC (African Economic Research Consortium), and ACTS (African Centre for Technology Studies)
  + Morocco: NIMAR and their Moroccan partner universities, including Université Internationale de Rabat, Université Mohamed V in Rabat, Université Hassan II in Casablanca
  + Mozambique: UEM Maputo
  + Niger: LASDEL, Niamey
  + Nigeria: Univ. of Lagos, and University of Ilorin
  + Rwanda: University of Rwanda
  + Senegal: CODESRIA (Dakar)
  + South Africa: University of Stellenbosch, UCT, Wits, Machine Intelligence Institute of Africa, Rhodes University, Pretoria University, NESO
  + South Africa: International Network for Higher Education in Africa (via Damtew Teferra at UKZN)
  + Tanzania: REPOA, and Nelson Mandela Institute of Technology
  + Uganda: Makerere University and Ruforum, Kampala
  + Zambia: University of Zambia
  + Zimbabwe: Great Zimbabwe University

**Venue and provisional planning of the three days; 2-4 December 2020**

Venue: The Hague University for Applied Sciences (Haagse Hogeschool)[[4]](#footnote-4). Next to the academic programme, there will be other activities (round tables, exhibition, meet and greet, creative activities, etc.).

Wednesday 2 December 2020

11.00-11.30 Opening speeches (with attention for the exhibition)

11.30-13.30 First keynote Lecture

12.30-14.00 Lunch

14.00-15.30 Ten parallel sessions for panels (with each three papers)

15.30-16.00 Tea/Coffee

16.00-18.00 Ten parallel sessions for panels (with each three papers and three posters)

19.00-21.30 Dinner for organizers (Leiden/Europe/Africa) and guests

20.30-22.30 Films/Music/Etc

Thursday 3 December 2020

9.00-10.30 Ten parallel sessions for panels (with each three papers)

10.30-11.00 Coffee/Tea

11.00-12.30 Ten parallel sessions for panels (with each three papers)

12.30-14.00 Lunch

14.00-15.30 Ten parallel sessions for panels (with each three papers)

15.30-16.00 Tea/Coffee

16.00-18.00 Second keynote lecture and debate

19.00-22.00 Network drinks

Friday 4 December 2020

9.00-10.30 Ten parallel sessions for panels (with each three papers)

10.30-11.00 Coffee/Tea

11.00-12.30 Ten parallel sessions for panels (with each three papers and three posters)

12.30-13.00 closing ceremony

13.00-14.30 Lunch

Together: 70 panel sessions in seven rounds, each with three papers and some also with posters and/or other activities; together ca 210 papers and ca 60 posters. Popular topics will have a sequence of panel sessions. Each panel session will be chaired by a team of one person working at an institution in The Netherlands, one European colleague and one African colleague. In each panel session there will be two students who will take notes, and two students who will ‘stream’ the session and take pictures. Each of the panel sessions can accommodate ca 35 people.

**Student involvement**

It is the intention to get the organizational input of 40 dedicated students. Part of those will be Leiden/Delft/Rotterdam-based students in the Minor African Studies, and in ongoing (Research) masters and PhD programmes dealing with Africa. Other students will be from the ‘Heart of Africa’ student group in and around The Hague University for Applied Sciences. Others will be recruited from our collaborating partners in Europe and Africa (if paid by these partners). These students will have free access to the conference

**Conference fee**

The conference fee will be 150€ of which 20€ will be devoted to offset the environmental and climate stress this conference will produce, by sponsoring a climate change adaptation project in Africa.

**Panels**

With a theme about the dynamics of knowledge development in Africa many different topics are possible. In total there will be room for 70 panel sessions, and part of those will be related to the extent that we can talk about a string of panels around the same major topic.

Each panel will preferably have one Netherlands-based chair, and two or more collaborating chairs, at least one from an AEGIS institute and at least one from an African institute. Each panel session will have at least four students for technical and secretarial functions. The conference language will be English, but non-English speakers can present their paper or poster in their preferred language, and translation will be provided as much as possible.

There will be eight different major themes, each with various panels:

A Institutional foundations

B Decolonising knowledge

C Europe and Africa

D Cases of regional and disciplinary specifics

E Transdisciplinary debates

F Technology and innovation

G Youth and gender issues

H Knowledge and impact

Major Theme A: Institutional foundations (panel 1-6)

1. Educational foundations

This panel will discuss the educational foundations in Africa and the (differences in) quality and growth of primary, secondary and tertiary education. It will focus on recent experiences with improving human resources for high-level teaching and research in Africa [initiated by ASCL].

1. History of education in Africa

Education in Africa is not new. This panel will deal with the evidence of ancient education in pre-colonial times, and with the roles of Islamic agencies and Christian missions in education before and during colonial times. There will also be attention for the differences in colonial educational policies and practices [initiated by Paris- URMIS and Paris-Cessma].

1. Africa’s current knowledge infrastructure and institutions

This panel will deal with the current state of affairs in higher education systems, science and innovation systems and the position of universities within Africa. Continental and regional agencies and their knowledge policies. There will also be attention for so-called knowledge diplomacy and transnational networks, and it will deal with the attempts by European funding agencies for higher education and research to change from ‘capacity development’ to ‘co-creation’ [initiated by NUFFIC].

1. Research and university excellence in Africa

This panel will deal with African and European perspectives on the state of African Knowledge (knowledge about knowledge). It will deal with the measurement of performance and impact in Africa, and the variety of approaches. It will also critically examine the (ir)relevance of ranking [initiated by CWTS-Leiden and Stellenbosch University].

1. Presenting research findings

This panel will critically examine the state of affairs of African and non-African outlets for scientific publications. There will be special attention for publishers of books and journals based in Africa itself. And there will be a focus on the role of online publishing/visibility; open science initiatives; dissemination and access [initiated by the Library and Documentation Centre of the ASCL].

1. Postgraduate supervision and strengthening the postgraduate environment in Africa

This panel invites papers about experiences with supporting and improving PhD supervision in Africa, or broader, the ‘postgraduate environment’. Core papers will be based on the recent SPS-EPE-CPC experiences, programmes supported by NUFFIC and by the European Union (The SPS project (2010-2015) was focused on strengthening supervision in South Africa, while the EPE project (2016-2018) focused on broader issues related to the postgraduate and research environment of universities in South Africa. The CPC project will start in 2020 and will focus on South Africa and Kenya and will again focus on postgraduate supervision and strengthening the postgraduate environment). Other papers are invited about experiences by others, and also elsewhere in Africa [initiated by ISS] .

Major theme B: Decolonising knowledge (panels 7-12)

1. Decolonising higher education in Africa: disciplinary and pedagogical Issues

This panel will examine processes and debates about decolonising epistemologies, disciplines and pedagogy in higher education in Africa since the 1960s. The panel will discuss the contributions and stances of different actors, how they have defined decolonisation in discourse and practice, and the implications for higher education in Africa [initiated by the University of Ghana at Legon].

1. Decolonizing the knowledge linkages between Africa and the rest of the world

This panel will examine the African knowledge connections with Europe, but also with Asia, the Americas and Oceania; it will compare African and other experiences. There will be attention for African Studies in Africa and linkages with the rest of the world: the geopolitics of knowledge and innovation. And a major issue will be the attempts to get more ‘strategic fairness’ in partnerships [initiated by the University of Cape Town].

1. Negotiating Africa's heritage in Africa, and heritage networks with Europe

[tentative text] Like many European museums and archives (and other forms of heritage preservation) African museums and archives are struggling about ''the stories to tell and to show', the 'language to use', the 'identities to highlight', and the preservation techniques to apply. Heritage care has a long history in Africa, starting in precolonial times, and with many initiatives that started during colonial times. After Independence, it took a while before museums and archives adapted to the new postcolonial era, and to the new technologies that became available, but many museums are now in the process of renegotiating their existing treasures, and formulating new acquisition policies. They are also rethinking their relationships with European and other colleagues. This panel invites papers that deal with this renegotiation process, in the first place within Africa itself, in the second place with regard to the networks with Europe and others, and there is also room for some papers dealing with renegotiation processes within European museums and archives [initiated by the University of Mainz, in collaboration with Leiden University/Anthropology, and the University of Rwanda].

1. International knowledge migration

This panel deals with one of the major dilemmas (and contradictions) in European funding agencies that support African knowledge development: the fact that many trained knowledge workers from Africa join the African intellectual diaspora abroad. ‘Brain drain’/ ‘brain gain’ /’brain circulation’ are key terms used to understand the effects of mobility of knowledge workers, and ‘migrating minds’. What is the evidence of costs and benefits, and what are the effects of policies to deal with this knowledge migration? What roles do the African diaspora intellectuals play in nurturing, or challenging Africa’s knowledge sector? And what about the roles of ‘diaspora transnationals’ in decolonizing the academy, both in Europe and in Africa [initiated by NUFFIC, and ISS on the role of diaspora transnationals].

1. African knowledge workers, and the non-European ‘others’

In the past, most African students, who went ‘abroad’ for their studies, did so in Western Europe and/or North America, in addition to those who went to (then) East Bloc countries. In recent decades, ever more African knowledge workers got their degrees from Asia (Malaysia, India, China, and elsewhere), and Latin America and the Caribbean. Partly as a result of that there are flourishing knowledge networks between Africa and these ‘new partners’. What is the evidence, what is the trend, and what is Europe’s position? [initiated by IIAS-Leiden and its Africa-Asia Network].

1. Knowledge networking within Africa

Although there are signs of intensifying regional and pan-African networks among knowledge workers in Africa, there are also continuing barriers, and even a sense of ‘Afro-phobia’ among Africans engaging in international collaboration. Many African scholars still have a preference for nurturing linkages with European and North-American, and recently also Asian colleagues and conferences, and they neglect potential relationships nearby, in Africa itself. What are the recent trends, and how realistic is a pan-African knowledge network [initiated by EMU Maputo].

Major theme C: Europe and Africa (panel 13 and 14)

1. The European Union and Africa’s knowledge infrastructure

Europe has a long, and partly troubled history with supporting/influencing Africa’s knowledge sector. Not only individual ‘donor’ countries (including the Netherlands, but very much also the former colonial powers, and ever more Germany) but also the EU as a whole have designed and implemented many knowledge support programmes. What are the current plans, and how does Europe cope with the current anxieties in Africa’s knowledge landscape? [initiated by ECDPM-Maastricht].

1. Challenges of African Studies in Central and Eastern Europe

In Western and Southern Europe there is a long tradition of African Studies. But not so in Central and Eastern Europe. Currently several universities there have started research on Africa. As any multi-disciplinary field, it is characterized by divergences and contradictions. One could argue that there has been little activity in decolonising the minds of Central and East Europeans. Arguably, there may be a connection between the lack of institutionalized African Studies, and the way Africa is often represented in public and political discourse. The field of African Studies is permanently challenged not just in terms of its relevance but also regarding its comparability with other disciplines. In this panel we aim to explore the scope of this dominant ideology in current times, and the extent to which Central and Eastern European African Studies could be supported and fostered [initiated by CAAS, Czech Republic].

Major theme D: Cases of regional and disciplinary specifics (panel 15-22)

1. Country/region-specific knowledge development histories in Africa

This panel invites papers about long-term developments in knowledge institutionalization in specific countries or regions in Africa, with an aim to contribute to building histories of knowledge development. There will be a focus on recent developments and future prospects in individual African countries or regions. The panel will be linked to the attempt to present a database about the current knowledge infrastructure in all or major African countries [initiated/coordinated by ASCL].

1. Africa’s universities and think-tanks

This panel will focus on the histories of specific universities and other hubs of knowledge creation in Africa; the panel invites papers about knowledge development histories of individual African universities and knowledge institutions. There will also be attention for (changes in) internal university governance, and for trends and experiences of inclusion and exclusion [initiated by ASCL Leiden and Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence Bayreuth].

1. Disciplinary trends in Africa

There will be various panel sessions devoted to developments in particular scientific disciplines in Africa, e.g.,

* + - Medicine and health studies [coordination: EUR and LUMC],
    - Agriculture [coordination: Food & Business Platform and Wageningen University and Research].
    - Architecture and civil engineering [coordination: Delft University of Technology]
    - History [coordination: ASCL and History Department Leiden, together with CODESRIA and the Historical Association of Africa]: SOS African History: History as a Discipline and the Future of Africa
    - Language studies [coordination: Faculty of Humanities/African Languages Section, and ASCL]
    - Economics, Finance Studies, Business studies [coordination: EUR, ISS, AERC]
    - Geography and Environmental Studies [coordination: ASCL, together with Moi University]
    - etc.

1. The interdisciplinary field of health studies and economics, experiences from Africa

Besides the monodisciplinary study of medicine, many African universities and think tanks started to develop ‘health sciences’, with a broader emphasis on the relationships between health and society. And there are interesting examples of an emerging interdisciplinary field of studies dealing with the economics of health care, and the relationships between economy and society on the one hand, and the way health care functions and is being funded. Core papers will deal with experiences in Ethiopia, but other papers are being invited about experiences elsewhere [initiated by ISS].

1. Digital humanities in Africa

Digital Humanities is an experiment that will become a leading factor in many issues that are present in the discussion around African scholarship and knowledge institutes: decolonising the academia, filling gaps of access to literature, and developing new fields of research. During a DH workshop held in Leiden in July 2019, (see: <http://lorentz.bridginghumanities.com>), three fields of Digital Humanities came to the fore as important and developing in African Scholarship: cultural heritage (silenced histories), political change and the digital, and language analysis. In this panel we will continue the discussion on how DH can further develop in African knowledge institutes and how it can become one of the elements to bridge knowledge production in Africa to other knowledge centers in the world [initiated by the Faculty of Humanities, Leiden and Voice4Thought].

1. The language issue and knowledge communication in Africa

There is an old (and sometimes fierce) debate in Africa about the use of language in teaching, reading materials, literature/music and scholarly communication: English/French/Portuguese/Arabic and/or African ‘indigenous’ languages. In African universities there is a history of waves of collaboration and non-collaboration between indigenous and foreign language based studies in African institutions (e.g. Yoruba Studies vs English Studies) in the production or obstruction of African knowledge: how have studies in indigenous and foreign languages been working to promote or transform indigenous African knowledge, or have they been working at cross purposes in this area?. And how important is the study of ‘ancient African texts’ and written and oral material in African languages in Africa’s universities? [initiated by the University of Ilorin].

1. Language, religion, culture and politics: towards reconfiguring African Studies

Topics in African Studies have lately enjoyed some global panoramic attention. It has been observed that there are obvious contrasts in the Western assumptions and those of the Africans. These contrasts have afforded African Studies’ scholars the prerogative not to compare the level of development in the continent of Africa with the level in the Western world. However, it is pertinent to propose an African worldview that can sufficiently fill the gap created by the contrast between the development levels. This panel is one of the efforts put up by scholars in African studies to address the issues that reflect on the reconfiguration of African Studies in particular and in the African continent in general. It involves the rumination on the entanglements that serve as societal factors that can help develop the African society. The focus of the panel is to interrogate the interdisciplinary approaches and methods in African language, religion, culture and politics: four study areas germane to the general worldview of an African society. It is assumed that it is vital for the four study areas to go through the process of decolonization in order to achieve their utmost relevance in a typical African society. As such, the problems with these study areas need to be identified and interrogated through the process of reconfiguration [initiated by the Institute of African and Diaspora Studies, University of Lagos].

1. Language history and its present relevance

Language history is an important element of construction of pre-colonial history in Africa. In the last decades the appreciation for cultural diversity has grown substantially and with a growing interest in the past. Stories of origin have gained importance and many cultural festivals have been initiated. The interest in the past has the potential of highlighting differences and engendering discourses of belonging. Balanced language history with a central interest in language contact can engender interest and positive attitudes to the history of ones’ neighbours. The panel is interested in papers that deal with current discourses about the past, specifically in communities in Africa, their literary and political dimension as well as their bases in language history. Language history, here includes historical reconstruction, contact linguistics, oral history, philology and manuscript culture [initiated by the African Languages Department of Leiden University, in collaboration with the ASCL].

Major theme E: Transdisciplinary debates (panel 23-27)

1. Local knowledge and its (non-)integration in ‘formal’ education institutions

In official curriculae of African schools and universities there is often a lot of resistance to include and use indigenous African knowledge : modes of knowledge - scientific and metaphysical, and modes of their transmission: through oral/informal forms, written/'formal’ forms, through institutional and non-institutional routes, through language(s), the arts and through artifacts of indigenous science and technology. What are the experiences of attempts to bring these ‘local’ forms of knowledge together with ‘formal’ forms, especially in African universities? [initiated by the Grup d'Estudi de les Societats Africanes/Barcelona, and with input from the University of Ilorin].

1. Re-imagining the Sahel: the place of endogenous knowledge

The Sahel is currently a site of intense securitization in response to the counter-insurgency priorities of several regional and global entities. This securitization is however built on a generalized misunderstanding of the broad evolution of the Sahel as a spatial reality that reflects and captures the flows and ruptures that define a deeper history and reveal deeply embedded and complex livelihoods that are currently under stress. This panel will seek to re-imagine the Sahel as a place that defies easy generalisations, challenges statist assumptions (with their heavy security narrative) and as a place that accommodates multiple temporal and spatial realities. The panel locates the Sahel as a connector in Africa and will use the historic role of endogenous knowledge in the region to illustrate this [initiated by CODESRIA].

1. Decolonizing the academe in ‘red areas’, with a focus on the Great Lakes region

This panel deals with doing research in ‘dangerous areas’ in Africa, areas regarded as ‘red zones’ on the maps of Foreign Affairs departments of European countries: ‘no-go zones’. The Great Lakes Region has (had) many of these ‘red areas’. Local universities in or near these areas are often functioning in very difficult circumstances, and ‘fieldwork’ is often regarded as ‘not possible’. Also foreign researchers are often discouraged (or forbidden) to do research there. Those who do are confronted with many ethical dilemmas. Those who want to contribute to decolonizing the academe in these ‘conflict-affected areas’ are often struggling with the fact that research is often even more unequal and less participatory than elsewhere, as people use arguments of access and security to dismiss such ethical concerns. What are the experiences with countering this predicament? [initiated by ISS].

1. Other ways of knowing? Exploring religious knowing and development in Africa

All over the African continent, ways of knowing are playing an important role in people’s everyday lives which are not mediated by formal education or science. These religious ways of knowing are rarely acknowledged in development efforts and university curricula, and yet are important for understanding how people in Africa make sense of developments in the wider world. Given the diversified and pluralist nature of religion in Africa, practitioners are faced with competing claims to truth and a multitude of different knowledge practices that range from the experience-near heuristics of the spiritualist variety to sophisticated religious knowledge transfers. What is therefore at stake in this context are not only the specific contents of authoritative religious knowledge but also the much more basic question of how this knowledge can be gained in the first place. The panel examines religious knowing in Africa and concentrates on the limitations of understanding these ways of knowing. Conceptualizing religious practitioners to be ‘knowledge seekers’, it asks what specific aspects of reality are assumed to be ‘unknown’ or even ‘unknowable’ by them. It explores the strategies employed to link religion with the development of knowledge and, in other empirical instances, to accommodate to the fact that certain things can or should not be known [initiated by the ASCL, and the University of Konstanz, together with partners in Botswana and Zambia].

1. Towards a multispecies approach in African Studies

Scientific evidence nowadays leaves no doubt that humans differ from animals only in degree and not in kind. Human exclusivity and anthropocentrism therefore no longer hold, hence non-human animals, and their absences / invisibilities, need to be included in African Studies. However, taking non-human animals as serious participants or ‘respondents’ in African Studies, in the same ways that humans are part of such research, comes with huge theoretical and methodological challenges. The anthropocentrism of conventional African Studies has not really equipped scholars with tools to answer these intellectual challenges in adequate ways so far. Nonetheless attempts are increasingly made all over the African continent and universities (as elsewhere around the globe) to rectify this reductionist approach and include non-human animals in the African Studies research practices [initiated by the ASCL and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam].

Major theme F: Technology and innovation (panel 28-32)

1. Scaling bottom-up initiatives

Africa is full of local initiatives, and full of local change agents that play major roles in transformation processes. But an important issue is how these local skills and know-how of local change agents can be used for ‘upscaling’, and how successful local initiatives can reach many more people, and also many more areas. A programme like 2SCALE has experienced many attempts of ‘partnering’ in order to realize systemic change. What are these and other experiences? [initiated by Wageningen University and Research / Science, Technology & Innovation studies, together with PrC Rotterdam and African and European partners in 2SCALE].

1. Frugal innovations

Leiden University, Delft University of Technology, and Erasmus University Rotterdam (‘LDE’) have developed a successful programme to study ‘frugal innovations’ in Africa, and comparing the evidence with for instance India. This panel invites papers about experiences of teaching ‘frugal innovations’ in African universities, and of doing research about frugal innovation practices and designs in Africa [initiated by the Frugal Innovations group of LDE]

1. Artificial intelligence and smart manufacturing in Africa

It is often claimed that Africa is de-industrializing and that structural transformation will have to proceed without development of the manufacturing sector. This panel proposes an alternative narrative: one in which the manufacturing sector’s recent performance has been under-appreciated, wherein future manufacturing is possible, and moreover wherein a resurgence of indigenous tech-entrepreneurs will play a leading role. In this narrative, new technologies including Artificial Intelligence, additive manufacturing and digital business models provide an opportunity for boosting local, indigenous production, for shortening global value chains, and for broadening labour market access. The panel will discuss the current knowledge about recent manufacturing performance and varieties of industrialization in Africa; will make the case for the relevance of additive manufacturing; will discuss the extent and impact of artificial intelligence and automation on jobs, start-ups, economic growth and public services; identify obstacles that slow down the uptake and impact of digital technology, such as infrastructure, skills, data regulations in Europe, internet censorship and controls, cybercrime; and make the case for new forms of industrial policy in Africa wherein entrepreneurship is central, to be supported by the knowledge sector in Africa [initiated by RWTH Aachen University, in collaboration Machine Intelligence Institute of Africa, South Africa and the Nelson Mandela Institute of Technology, Tanzania].

1. The privatization of knowledge production

This panel deals with knowledge strategies of businesses and financial institutions in and with Africa. It invites papers that deal with seeing knowledge development as a business model, and its effect on inclusion and exclusion. The panel will deal with the question how public and private knowledge centres compete with each other, or work together, and it deals with the issue of Public-Private hybridization, and how to understand that. There will also be attention for the growing role of private religious agencies within Africa’s knowledge infrastructure [initiated by NABC].

1. Citizen science and environmental monitoring

Agencies supporting sustainable resource use in Africa, as well as those that support adaptation to climate change, often make use of knowledge generated by citizens, or of monitoring activities by citizens and their organizations. What are recent trends and where does citizen science and university-based science meet? [initiated by Wageningen University and Research/ Science, Technology & Innovation studies, together with Ruforum and African Centre for Technology Studies].

Major theme G: Youth and gender issues (panel 33-36)

1. Youth employment, knowledge and the labour markets; knowledge and society

This panel will focus on the (mis)match between higher education (or even education in general) in Africa and the demands from the labour market. There is a lot of attention lately for increasing youth employment, but not enough attention for the (dis)connections between education and employment/labour market demands. Non-governmental agencies have played a key role in putting this issue on the global development agenda. What are the experiences with youth employment programmes and linking the education sector with labour markets. There will be special attention for gender issues in access and practices [initiated by Edukans].

1. Empowering Africa’s youth, harnessing their creativity, and hearing their voices

This panel investigates the issue of improving the social and economic empowerment of children and young people across Africa, looking at initiatives that are helping young women and men to take control, to self-determine, and to achieve their life and work goals. Economic limitations are frequently referenced as a barrier to a child or youth’s social mobility, papers and other types of presentations will therefore provide experience or research related to: (1) pathways to greater child social and economic empowerment, (2) enablers to help address the economic barriers in health, education, social protection and other sectors’ programmes; (3) the means to bridge the transferable skills gap from education to the workforce, and make better use of existing creativity and pioneering ideas [initiated by Aflatoun International].

1. Youth employment in African data ecosystems

This panel will deal with a specific element of the youth employment conundrum. In circles of African organizations supporting rural and agricultural development often there is doubt as to whether well-educated young African women and men want to stay and work in these rural areas, because of the image of a stagnating sector in a stagnating and isolated countryside. However, new innovations in agriculture and rural environments create new and more attractive forms of work in rural areas, and there is a growing demand by public and private agencies to collect and use (digital) information. What is the evidence for the impact on rural employment? [initiated by Wageningen University and Resource Centre/ Science, Technology & Innovation studies, probably together with the Food and Business Knowledge Platform].

Major Theme H: Knowledge and impact (panel 36-38)

1. Knowledge and action

With a focus on: the enduring land question in parts of Africa, and the role of intellectuals. In some parts of Africa, the colonial heritage is particularly visible in an enduring land question, with a continued struggle about ownership and management of agricultural and mining land and property. Intellectuals who became ’action researchers’ in favor of land redistribution often had to cope with forms of violence, racism, and nationalism, that challenged their integrity. How did they cope with that? [initiated by UCT].

1. Bridging the gap between research and policy

The failure of development policies and programmes in Africa can be blamed in part on the poor state of policy-oriented research. Arguably, the inter-relationship between policy and research on the continent is generally unimpressive. The current thinking among perceptive observers of the African public policy environment is that research is not making sufficient impact on policy process. How do we explain the poor link between research and the policy environment in Africa? This panel is expected to review the state of policy-oriented research in Africa, delineating the trends, patterns, opportunities and challenges. In this regard, papers presented will be invited to discuss the institutional setting of policy-oriented research in various African countries, its historical foundation, economic basis, and other environmental factors that influence its functioning in relation to the policy process.  In addition, the panel will draw attention to the global, regional, and national contexts for policy-oriented research, the main sources of policy-oriented research in Africa, and the dominant responses of the policy makers and implementers [initiated by NAI Uppsala]

1. Knowing impact? Reflections on policy processes in Africa

Notions of policy impact in research today are closely linked to a desire to influence the policy process in order to shape the future of Africa. But do African researchers truly understand the policy process? In CODESRIA, we have grappled with what policy impact means and whether researchers are adequately equipped to understand the policy process in order to work towards achieving impact. CODESRIA holds that basic research is the critical entry point to policy making; that knowledge produced with sound conceptual and methodological tools and with an eye to relevance carries enormous potential for policy uptake and impact. Thus, our framework does not treat the policy question as a settled debate in which intellectual work is treated as a supplicant to particular policy demands. On the contrary, and without questioning the value of policy relevance itself, this panel will open up for debate the assumption that academic work must have policy implication. It argues that the policy process is itself a subject of intense debate and policy actors unleash complicated decisions that have even more contradictory effects on policy making and implementation. Thinking through the policy process helps sharpen our understanding of the complicated process of policy uptake. This panel will allow for a reflection that carefully thinks through the numerous and complex dimensions of policy and policy process and to allow the issue of policy uptake and relevance to be properly situated in the work of many research organisations that struggle with demands for policy impact [initiated by CODESRIA].

**Requirements for Papers and Posters**

Abstracts for papers and posters should indicate:

* + Author(s) and affiliation
  + Is it a paper, a poster or something else (e.g., vlog, blog, podcast)
  + Title of paper or poster
  + Preferred panel [from the list; you can also indicate two other options] or suggestion of an additional panel if your paper/poster idea does not fit any of the listed panels.
  + 200-400 words description of contents (in English, or French, or any other preferred language among those spoken in Africa)
  + Agreement that the abstract will be published online before the conference
  + Visa requirements if selected.
* Abstracts should be sent to: NomadIT, and that should be done before April 1, 2020.

ADD WEBSITE DETAILS NomadIT

* Selection of papers and posters will be done by a panel-specific team from collaborating partners. Selection outcomes will be communicated before June 15, 2020.
* It is the intention to have a fair representation of members from partner institutions, of all panels/themes, of a great variety of disciplines, countries, and language backgrounds, and with a fair representation of gender and age.

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**Core team in the Netherlands**

* **ASC Leiden:** Prof. DrJan-Bart Gewald (host), Dr Mayke Kaag, Prof. Dr Chibuike Uche, Dr Harry Wels, Jos Damen, also prof. dr Marleen Dekker (also for INCLUDE), prof. dr Rijk van Dijk, dr Abdourahman Idrissa (a.o. representing Lasdel Niamey), dr André Leliveld;
* **Leiden ASA:** Dr Felix Ameka, Prof. Dr Mirjam de Bruijn, Prof. Dr Ton Dietz (chair), Dr David Ehrhardt, Dr Ingrid Samset, Prof. Dr Robert Tijssen, Maaike Westra, Marieke van Winden; also Prof. Dr Maarten Mous, Dr Philippe Peycam, Prof. dr Peter Pels;
* **EUR:** Prof. DrJan Nouwen, Dr Anthony Ongayo (EUR-ISS), Prof. Dr Rob van Tulder (PrC), Dr Sietze Vellema (PrC);
* **Delft University of Technology:** Dr Ir Maurits Ertsen;
* **Haagse Hogeschool**: Antonio Frank, Marina Labrana, Rajash Rawal;
* **Wageningen University and Research**: Prof. dr Cees Leeuwis;
* **NWO**: Dr Eric Beerkens;
* **ECDPM Maastricht**: Jean Bossuyt;
* **The Broker**: Dr Anika Altaf (also for Food and Business Knowledge Platform);
* **NUFFIC**: David van Kampen, Samira Zafar;
* **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**: Paul Litjens, Prof. dr Dirk-Jan Koch;
* **NABC**: Marina Diboma;
* **Edukans:** Brigitte Cerfontaine, Pieter Stoer;
* **Aflatoun**: James Lawrie, Livia Remeijers.

**Advisors from AEGIS and other European Partners:** Prof. dr Victor Adetula (NAI Uppsala), Dr Marie-Pierre Balarin (URMIS Paris), Dr Maria-Antonia Barreto (Lisbon), Prof. dr Filip de Boeck (Leuven), Prof. dr Michael Bollig (Cologne), Dr Anna-Maria Brandstetter (Mainz), Dr Amanda Hamar (CAS Copenhagen), Dr Hana Horakova (CAAS), Prof. dr Thomas Kirsch (Konstanz), Prof. dr Didier Nativel (Paris: CESSMA), Prof. dr Wim Naudé (Aachen), Prof. drPaul Nugent (Edinburgh), Dr Antonio Pezzano (ASAI), Dr Albert Roca (Barcelona), Prof. dr Rüdiger Seesemann (Bayreuth).

**Advisors from partners in Africa:** Dr Assefa Admassie (University of Addis Ababa), Prof dr. Seidu Al-hassan (Tamale, Ghana), Mervin Bakker (NESO South Africa), Prof. dr Léon Buskens (NIMAR, Rabat), Dr Ifdal Elsaket (NVIC, Cairo), Prof. dr Muyiwa Falaiye (University of Lagos), Dr Rudolf de Jong (NVIC, Cairo), Prof. Patricio Langa (UEM Maputo), Dr. Jacques Ludik (Machine Intelligence Institute of Africa, South Africa), Dr. John Kamara (Nelson Mandela Institute of Technology, Tanzania), Dr Paul Kamau (University of Nairobi), Dr Paschal Mihyo (REPOA, Tanzania), Dr Godwin Murunga (CODESRIA, Dakar), Prof. dr Peter Ndege (Moi University Eldoret), Prof. Njuguna Ndungu (AERC Nairobi), Prof. Lungisile Ntsebeza (UCT), dr Taiwo Oloruntoba (University of Ilorin, Nigeria), dr Sarah Ruto (PAL), Prof. dr Damtew Teferra (INHEA, and UKZN), Dr Dzodzi Tsikata (University of Ghana at Legon, Ghana).

Preparatory Logistics will be in the hands of **NomadIT** (who have organized various ECAS Conferences so far), and during the conference together with a team from Haagse Hogeschool.

1. See: <https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/africa-2020> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Part of answering this question involves documenting the current evidence of the rapid changes in Africa’s knowledge arena. That will be done by combining existing knowledge from existing websites (like Wikipedia, AAU and 4icu), and expanding it with additions from our own African and European network. We will put that information online on the country portal of the African Studies Centre In Leiden (see: <http://countryportal.ascleiden.nl/> ), and later intend to further improve the existing Wikipedia information. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. So far, the sponsors of the core fund for organizing this conference are Leiden University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, ISS The Hague, Haagse Hogeschool, Wageningen University and Research, ECDPM, NUFFIC, NABC, Edukans, and Aflatoun in the Netherlands, and the AEGIS partners at the University of Cologne, Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth, NAI Uppsala, IARA Leuven; as well as the University of Lagos. Other funding discussions are ongoing, from the Netherlands, from other countries in Europe, and from Africa. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Maybe the opening ceremony and first keynote lecture will take place in one of the buildings of Leiden University in The Hague. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)