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Congolese Horizons: Weaving Temporalities in Congo Studies

29-31 January 2025
The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)
Sharjah, UAE

The **Congo Research Network (CRN)** is organising its **sixth international conference**, to be held at **The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)**, Sharjah, UAE, between **29 and 31 January, 2025**. This event will bring together junior and senior scholars across the humanities and social sciences, sharing a common interest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It specifically aims to provide space for productive interdisciplinary discussions, within and beyond Congo Studies.

We invite participants to **explore the diverse intersections of temporalities with the social, cultural, and political fabric of the Congo, encompassing perspectives from both the humanities and social sciences**. Through this lens, we aim to illuminate the complexities of temporal experiences, including the interplay of various timelines, historical narratives, and societal rhythms. By examining tensions, ruptures, and continuities, we seek to deepen our understanding of how individuals and communities navigate the temporal landscape, shedding light on the multifaceted dynamics shaping their lived realities.

The issue of temporality holds critical significance in today's context. Understanding how time is perceived, managed, and interpreted across various facets of human life is pivotal for grasping contemporary challenges. In a world characterized by an acceleration of technological, economic, and sociocultural changes, the question of temporality becomes increasingly relevant.

The conference will also comprise a keynote lecture (theme and speaker to be announced soon) as well as a roundtable on "decolonizing Congo studies" (participants to be announced).

In line with our theme, we would be particularly interested in paper and panel proposals that may address the following axes:

- Historical memory and narratives of the past – legacies and contestations: How are the past and history discussed, debated, interpreted, and contested in today's Congo? What are the dynamics of collective memory? How is historical memory impacting everyday life, as well as the experiences of work, family and community?
- Imagined futures – aspirations, projections, and anticipations: What are the Congolese visions and aspirations for the future? How are collective imaginaries and social utopias shaping the temporal horizons of individuals and communities? How are politicians and community leaders relating to time in their public discourse? And what are the legacies of colonialism on forms of agency, resistance, political contestation and repression?
- Time beyond the human – ecological entanglements: What are the relations between human temporalities and ecosystems? How are more-than-human life cycles, cosmogonies, invisible forces, and religious institutions shaping past and present societies and cultures?

- The time of (re)invention – technology and innovation: How are narratives of progress, decay, and stagnation coexisting in today's Congo? What is the relation to global economic developments, postcolonial experiences of extraction, and economic marginality? How have Congolese international migrations and practices of translocality resulted in new patterns of movements and forms of exchanges in recent decades?

Panel proposals (title + name(s) and affiliation(s) of organizers + description of up to 750 words) should be sent to the organisers at congoreserchnetwork@gmail.com **by 15 June 2024**. Panel proposals should include at least two agreed papers. **Individual paper proposals** (title + name and affiliation of speaker + abstract of up to 400 words) should be sent to the same email address **by 15 June 2024 as well**. Proposals can be written either in French or English. Full papers in English are preferred. **Decisions regarding accepted papers and panels will be sent out to applicants on 30 June 2024**. Online attendance will be possible, although physical participation is of course encouraged.

Unfortunately, the organising committee cannot refund participants' travel and accommodation expenses. We will offer lunches, coffee breaks and one conference dinner to the participants.

Scientific committee:

Emery Kalema (Assistant Professor of History, The Africa Institute, GSU, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates)

Sataan Al-Hassan (Associate Director of Administration of Operations, The Africa Institute, GSU, United Arab Emirates)

Grieve Chelwa (Associate Professor of Political Economy, The Africa Institute, GSU, United Arab Emirates)

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Igor Matonda (Associate Professor of History and Archeology, University of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Don Bosco Mbawmbaw (Visiting Assistant Professor of African Studies, Universidad Anàhuac, Mexico)

Pedro Monaville (Associate Professor of African History, McGill University, Canada)

Katrien Pype (Associate Professor of African Cultural Anthropology, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium)

Binyam Sisay Mendisu (Associate Director and Professor of African Languages and Linguistics, The Africa Institute, GSU, United Arab Emirates)

Rosette Sifa Vuninga (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Cape Town, South Africa)

Rosa Vieira (Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia da Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil).