

# INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

## Africa-China Relations in an Era of Uncertain Future

13 – 14 April 2023  
(Thursday – Friday)



## Concept Note

It is undeniable that the world is in a state of uncertainty as nations are struggling with battle socioeconomic downturn partly induced by the COVID-19 pandemic, wars and political and civil unrest. Rates of inflation, unemployment and social unrest, such as demonstrations and strikes due to economic challenges, are commonplace even in high-income countries. For low and middle-income countries such as those in Africa, the current global situation presents a significant challenge to political, social and economic stability, making their prospects gloomy.

This symposium will deliberate on the effect of current global socioeconomic and political instabilities on various aspects of Africa-China relations presently and in the future. With China being a significant stakeholder in African economies (e.g., being the largest trading partner for most countries), conditions within China and how the country positions itself relative to global economic and political issues are relevant to how African countries can withstand current challenges and attempt to plan for a future, which is increasingly becoming unpredictable. With China's borders yet to be fully opened, African traders, students and even Chinese workers/investors in African countries are still grappling with an uncertain future.

Aside from dealing with economic recessions, many African countries must continue preparations against future pandemics/epidemics as COVID-19 has exposed significant weaknesses in health services/infrastructure in these countries. Going forward, analysis of the prospects Africa-China relations cannot ignore the state and future of health-related partnerships and projects. Furthermore, the relations between China and African countries have grown significantly and attracted lots of attention during the first two terms of President Xi. However, it remains to be seen what his third term in office, confirmed at the just-ended 20th Communist Party of China congress, would mean for Africa-China relations despite commitments made at the 8th Ministerial Conference of FOAC.

With these issues in mind, this symposium aims at addressing these questions:

- i. What are the state and prospects of critical Africa-China policies (e.g. Belt and Road) and projects given the global economic downturn?
- ii. What are the implications of current global economic and geopolitical conditions for African agency in Africa-China relations?
- iii. How are current global and internal conditions shaping the future of people-to-people engagements in Africa-China relations?
- iv. How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the dynamics of China-Africa political, economic and other development partnerships at macro, meso and micro levels?
- v. What are the implications of the proceedings of the 20th Communist Party of China

## Key Themes of the Symposium

The symposium will deliberate on these questions from theoretical and empirical approaches in four main areas, including:

1. Political and economic aspect of Africa-China engagement
  - a. Geopolitics and Africa-China relations
  - b. Chinese investments and industries in Africa
  - c. Infrastructure development and policies
  - d. Knowledge and innovation transfer in China and Africa
  - e. Natural resource interests and trade
  - f. Governance and development policy
2. Security and peace
3. People-to-people engagements
  - a. Perceptions and attitudes towards Africans in China and Chinese in Africa
  - b. Cultural exchanges between China and Africa
  - c. Migration trends and experiences
4. Human development and well-being
  - a. Health and well-being
  - b. Educational partnerships and experiences of people involved

### Invited Speakers and Guests

- Monday Semaya K. Kumba (Embassy of the Republic of South Sudan to China)
- Obert Hodzi (University of Liverpool, United Kingdom)
- Ana Cristina Alves (Mohammed VI Polytechnic University, Morocco)
- Liang Xu (Peking University, China)
- John H. S. Åberg (Malmö University, Sweden)
- Derrick Becker (University of Nottingham Malaysia, Malaysia)
- Roberto Carlos Castillo (Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR)
- Shun Man Chow-Quesada (Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong SAR)
- Ivy Wei Ye (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen)
- Tingting Li, Tak Hin Chan (Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR)
- Austin Strange (The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR)
- Ansoumane Douty Diakite (University of Saint Joseph, Macao)
- Mark Kwaku Mensah Obeng (University of Ghana, Ghana)
- Nicholas Loubere (University of Lund, Sweden)
- Niall Duggan (University College, Cork, Ireland)
- Aydin Hasan (Shanghai University, China)
- Clifford J. Pereira (The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR)
- Tewodros Woldearegay, Soumyodeep Deb (Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR)
- Ignatious G.D Suglo (University of Pennsylvania, United States)

## Programme Rundown: Day 1

Thursday, 13 April 2023

- 10:00am-10:20am **Welcome Address**  
*Professor Joshua Ka Ho Mok*  
*Vice President and Dean of School of Graduate Studies, Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR*
- University Video & Group Photo**
- 10:20am -10:50am **Opening Remarks:**  
*H.E. Mr. Monday Semaya K. Kumba,*  
*Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of South Sudan to the People's Republic of China*
- 10:50am -12:20pm **Session One**  
Chair/Discussant: *Terry Shen Yang, Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR*
- Infrastructure, Incumbency, and Influence: China's High-Profile Global Development  
*Austin Strange, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR*
- A Case Study of China's Aid Delivery Conditions for Poverty Alleviation in Guinea  
*Ansoumane Douty Diakite, University of Saint Joseph, Macao*
- 12:20pm -14:00pm **Lunch (invitation only)**
- 14:00pm-15:30pm **Session Two**  
Chair/Discussant: *Ansoumane Douty Diakite, University of Saint Joseph, Macao*
- Africa amid US-China Tech Rivalry  
*John H.S. Åberg, Malmö University, Sweden*
- The Changing Power Dynamics in the HoA between the US and China: The Cases of Djibouti and Ethiopia  
*Tewodros Woldearegay, Soumyodeep Deb, Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR*
- Rising of Non-Continental Actors in Africa: Comparison of China's and Turkey's Approaches to the Continent  
*Aydin Hasan, Shanghai University, China*
- 15:30pm -15:45pm **Break**
- 15:45pm-16:45pm **Session Three**  
Chair/Discussant: *John H.S. Åberg, Malmö University, Sweden*
- Return to isolationism? China and the decoupling of people-to-people relations in China's relations with Africa  
*Obert Hodzi, University of Liverpool, United Kingdom*
- Intervention to Oppose Interference: China's Holistic Approach to the Civil War in Ethiopia  
*Ivy Wei Ye, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen*

16:45pm-17:45pm

**Session Four**

*Chair/Discussant: Obert Hodzi, University of Liverpool, United Kingdom*

Chinese Chiefs in Africa: Scale, Reasons, and Perceptions

*Liang Xu, Peking University, China*

Xiaobei: a complex Sino-African site of anthropological knowledge production  
(and extraction)

*Roberto Carlos Castillo Bautista, Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR*

18:30pm-20:00pm

**Dinner (Invitation only)**

## Programme Rundown: Day 2

**Friday, 14 April 2023**

- 10:00am–11:15am **Session Five**  
*Chair/Discussant: Emily Shun Man Chow-Quesada, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong SAR*
- Transcultural Sonic Encounters and Knowledge Production in Africa-China Relations  
*Ignatious G.D Suglo, University of Pennsylvania, United States*
- Sankofa – A deeper personal understanding of Sino-African relations.  
*Clifford J. Pereira, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR*
- 11:15am-12:30pm **Session Six**  
*Chair/Discussant: Clifford J. Pereira, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR*
- Affective journeys in Transatlantic slavery heritage: An auto-ethnographic study in Liverpool  
*Tingting Li, Tak Hin Chan, Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR*
- Towards a Dialogue: initiating engagements on the cultural front  
*Emily Shun Man Chow-Quesada, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong SAR*
- 12:30pm-14:00pm **Lunch (Invitation only)**
- 14:00pm-15:15pm **Session Seven**  
*Chair/Discussant: Ivy Wei Ye, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen*
- Knowledge transfer in the global south: Re-using or creating knowledge in China's Special Economic Zones in Ethiopia and Cambodia?  
*Ana Cristina Alves, Mohammed VI Polytechnic University, Morocco*
- 15:15pm-16:30pm **Session Eight**  
*Chair/Discussant: Roberto Carlos Castillo Bautista, Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR*
- Transformative Encounters: Reciprocal Flows and the Chinese Gold Rush in Ghana  
*Nicholas Loubere, Lund University, Sweden*
- Mistrust and Trust-Making in the Distribution and Consumption of Chinese-Manufactured Electronics in Ghana  
*Mark Kwaku Mensah Obeng, University of Ghana, Ghana*
- 16:30pm -16:45pm **Break**

## Programme Rundown: Day 2

- 16:45pm-18:00 pm **Session Nine**  
*Chair/Discussant: Mark Kwaku Mensah Obeng, University of Ghana, Ghana*
- African Agency and the Problem of Sovereignty  
*Derick Becker, University of Nottingham Malaysia, Malaysia*
- The EUs Global Gateway vs the Belt and Road Initiative. What does the EUs global gateway policy mean for African agency in Sino-African relations?  
*Niall Duggan, University College Cork, Ireland*
- 18:00pm-18:15pm **Final Discussions:** *Padmore A. Amoah, Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR*

## **Infrastructure, Incumbency, and Influence: China's High-Profile Global Development**

**Austin Strange**

The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR

Why do donor and host country governments cooperate on expensive, risky infrastructure? I argue that high-profile infrastructure uniquely reinforces incumbency advantage in host countries and generates policy influence for donors. Overseas infrastructure generates significant risks for donors given its scale, complexity, and visibility relative to other development projects, and allocating infrastructure to experienced leaders helps mitigate uncertainty. High-profile infrastructure helps host country leaders consolidate power by acquiring national-level capital with both material and symbolic functions, and facilitates donors' pursuit of influence in return. Analyzing new evidence on Chinese development finance since 1949, I show that high-profile infrastructure flows to host countries with longer-tenured leaders, helps extend their tenures, and generates donor influence. Other types of projects do not follow the same patterns. Accompanying historical and contemporary case studies illustrate how donor and host governments use high-profile infrastructure to pursue their political goals. The findings contribute to research on the political economy of aid, Chinese development finance, and infrastructure in international relations.

## **A Case Study of China's Aid Delivery Conditions for Poverty Alleviation in Guinea**

**Ansoumane Douty Diakite**

University of Saint Joseph, Macao

A substantial part of the discussions regarding traditional donors as well as (re)emerging donors like China have also focused on the issue of conditionalities attached to aid and the extent to which those conditions address poverty alleviation. From the 1980s onwards, traditional donors began imposing conditions in order to guarantee the effectiveness of their aid. China, however, adopted a no strings attached policy much earlier in 1960. By adopting this policy, China implies that it does not impose any conditions on its recipients. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the discrepancy between the principles stated in China's aid policy documents and the practices of its aid in its partner countries. Furthermore, the study examined China's aid delivery conditions and those of Guinea's traditional partners, primarily France. As a result, both donors' conditionalities were examined in relation to their focus on poverty reduction. Based on the findings of this study, China's assistance is subject to some hidden conditions. It is evident that there is a discrepancy between what China claims and stands for and how its aid is actually implemented. Despite France adhering to the OECD/DAC declaration to enhance local ownership, the findings indicate that some old generations of conditionalities (political and economic) remain associated with France's aid delivery. Furthermore, the finding indicates that both China and France's aid conditions are concerned with reducing poverty. There are however differences in the way poverty reduction is explicitly (France) or implicitly (China) incorporated into the conditionality.



**Africa amid US-China Tech Rivalry**

**John H. S. Åberg**

Malmö University, Sweden

Prevailing metaphors and analogies are framing US-China relations in terms of a new “Cold War” and a new “Era of Great-Power Competition”. This competition threatens to turn Africa, yet again, into a geopolitical playing field. Unlike previous eras of colonial and ideological partition, African countries now risk becoming incorporated into different technological spheres as US-China competition increasingly revolves around digital infrastructure and tech rivalry. The aim of the paper is to explore this emerging phenomenon. First, the paper aims to map how US-China rivalry plays out in the technology field on the African continent. Second, using IR theories and concepts, the paper seeks to make sense of what is unfolding and how it can affect African states. Third, the paper also intends to contribute to the academic debate by offering novel theorizing.

**The Changing Power Dynamics in the HoA between the US and China: The Cases of Djibouti and Ethiopia**

**Tewodros Woldearegay, Soumyodeep Deb**

Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR

This paper will try to look at the changing power dynamics in the Horn of Africa between the US and China. The paper uses the case study of Djibouti and Ethiopia to analysis how there is an on-going alteration in the distribution of power between the US and China which is having an implication on the overall power dynamics in the region. Although the US still holds a power advantage vis-à-vis China in the HoA region the recent rise of China is challenging this discourse. With the launch of the BRI in 2013 China has slowly become the largest economic partner of both the nations both in terms of investment and trade. It is also expanding its political sphere by backing the current governments and helping in the establishment of various political infrastructure projects. With the establishment of its first offshore military base in Djibouti, China is also increasing its military footprint in the region. It has also become the major military hardware supplier to these nations which in a way is dynamically increasing China’s value in the region. This is directly challenging the US position and has led the US to come up with various countermeasures. This is therefore challenging the balance of power in the HoA. This we argue will enhance the power competition in the HoA region between both the nations in the coming times.

**Rising of Non-Continental Actors in Africa: Comparison of China's and Turkey's Approaches to The Continent**

**Aydin Hasan**

Shanghai University, China

The importance of Africa in international politics is increasing with every passing day. This is mainly due to the economic, political and strategic importance of the continental countries. Especially in the 21st century, many actors have developed various policies to increase their influence in Africa. China and Türkiye, whose visibility and image on the continent have improved positively, are among these actors. When the recently published studies on the Africa policies of non-continental actors are examined, it is inevitable to encounter the significantly increasing influence of the Beijing and Ankara governments. For this reason, it is particularly important to comparatively evaluate how China and Turkey approach African countries. In this respect, it is possible to mention some similarities about the approaches of Turkey and China to Africa. For instance, these two countries adopt a trade and investment-oriented approach in their relations with continental countries. From this point of view, Turkey and China, who separate politics and trade, don't interfere in the internal affairs and sovereignty rights of the African countries. Moreover, Chinese and Turkish statesmen criticize Westerners over their colonial experience in Africa and neocolonial attempts. Being aware of the economic and political importance of the continental countries, Beijing and Ankara governments try also to consolidate their influence in Africa with various soft power elements. Despite all similarities, these countries' different economic and political capacities significantly affect and differentiate their presence in the continent. Therefore, in this study, China's and Turkey's presence in Africa will be examined comparatively in various aspects.

**Return to isolationism? China and the decoupling of people-to-people relations in China's relations with Africa**

**Obert Hodzi**

University of Liverpool, United Kingdom

In its history, China has used self-isolation as a strategy to deal with perceived internal and foreign 'existential threats.' This strategy frames the non-Chinese and outside world as the 'dangerous other', thus justifying self-isolationism as a survival and preservation strategy. This paper, explores how China has employed this strategy to deal with the COVID pandemic. The COVID pandemic triggered this survival instinct in China and resulted in its self-isolation. The paper examines how Beijing's zero COVID rate strategy, ostracization of foreigners, particularly Africans, and their framing as the other has resulted in the decoupling of people-to-people engagement from Beijing's foreign policy. It further explores how the self-imposed Isolation of China and framing of Africans as the dangerous other challenged China's self-portrayal as the continent's all-weather friend, and how that has exposed the schism between the responses of African elites and ordinary citizens to the othering of Africans in China.

### **Intervention to Oppose Interference: China's Holistic Approach to the Civil War in Ethiopia**

**Ivy Wei Ye**

The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen

The Belt and Road Initiative underscores China's dilemma of protecting overseas interests while adhering to non-interference. It is particularly the case in the Horn of Africa where China has massive infrastructure investments. The Ethiopia civil war (2020-2022) in this region highlights China's challenge of protecting overseas interests in instability. As instability intensified by uneven development in modernization is a common trend in many African countries, the challenge in Ethiopia has far-reaching implications for China's practice in Africa. This challenge is more formidable in a hostile strategic environment featured by the U.S.-China competition. China's effort to mediate the Ethiopia civil war reveals a shift from its solution for the Darfur crisis in Sudan in the 2000s. Despite domestic and international pressure, Beijing adopts a holistic approach to mediating the Ethiopia civil war without interference. This approach integrates peace, development, and security and advocates regional collective efforts in the Horn of Africa. It enriches the non-interference doctrine by emphasizing "African solutions to Africa problems" to oppose interference from external powers and helps foster a more favorable strategic environment for China in this region. Instability arising with economic growth in this region subtly changes Beijing's understanding of the nexus between security and development. These changes will drive Beijing toward more mature policy and practice in Africa. For countries in the Horn of Africa, Beijing's approach appears as a force and reference to support their refusal of external interference.

### **Chinese Chiefs in Africa: Scale, Reasons, and Perceptions in the Post-COVID Era**

**Liang Xu**

Peking University, China

In recent years, some Chinese have been conferred chiefly titles in African countries for their contributions to local development. Using news and magazine reports from both domestic and foreign sources, this paper reveals that since the 1980s, at least 23 Chinese chiefs have been appointed in Africa – all in West African countries. Chinese chiefs are mainly engaged in infrastructural construction, commerce, and industry, and can be broadly defined as "developmental" chiefs. There are four major types of Chinese chiefs: "infrastructure chiefs", "community leader chiefs", "individual businessperson chiefs," and "cultural and educational chiefs." Two important reasons explain this recent phenomenon. On the one hand, the Chinese receive chieftaincy titles due to their outstanding contribution to local socio-economic development. On the other hand, the dynamism and absorption capacity of the host country's chieftaincy system are equally important. In particular, the emergence of new mechanisms such as "development chiefs," "returnee chiefs," and "immigrant chiefs" in countries such as Ghana and Nigeria has played a key role in absorbing foreign chiefs (including the Chinese) since the 1980s. The overall response of the African community to Chinese chiefs has been positive, but there is some criticism about their performance, reasons for being appointed, and their status as outsiders. Therefore, it is critical for the Chinese chiefs to balance "business interests" and "community interests" and continue to invest in community service and sustainable development in the local context.

### **Xiaobei: a complex Sino-African site of anthropological knowledge production (and extraction)**

**Roberto Carlos Castillo Bautista**

Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR

Xiaobei, a neighbourhood area in Guangzhou's Yuexiu district, was an important site of anthropological knowledge production in China for almost two decades. The place was full of entrepreneurial explorers, such as traders, travellers, fortune seekers, students, preachers, scholars, journalists, and film directors, who roamed in search of different types of knowledge. In this paper, I focus on the often problematic production of academic (and to a lesser extent journalistic) knowledge from the relatively small confines of this geographical location. I do this by providing a critical review of how scholars and journalists staked diverse claims to knowledge about contemporary social, cultural, local and global transformations that were epitomised by how what was taking place in the multilayered spaces of Xiaobei was represented.

### **Transcultural Sonic Encounters and Knowledge Production in Africa-China Relations**

**Ignatius G.D Suglo**

University of Pennsylvania, United States

China's engagement with the world is shaped by how China understands itself, the world, and China's place in the world. In this talk, I explore media not only as material and cultural products, but as sites of knowledge production and circulation in China. By focusing on the social lives of media products and how they contribute to understandings of Africa in modern China, I argue that knowledge production and circulation of Africa contributes to how China understands itself since the 20th century when China sought to (re)define itself and its place in the world. I pursue this argument by examining the life and works of Zhu Mingying- an influential Chinese folk musician in the 20th century, tracing the circulation of her artform into twenty-first century classrooms, and its implications for transcultural learning in modern China.

**Sankofa – A deeper personal understanding of Sino-African relations**

**Clifford J. Pereira**

The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR

The present relationship between China and Africa is embedded in a past, and especially in the period of decolonisation since the First World War. This presentation seeks to explain that this relationship has occurred in multiple layers and spaces that have led to the present China-Africa political and/or economic space. This historically dialogue has been largely forgotten or ignored by major global powers and publics, but not by Africans. In the spirit of looking back to understand the present (i.e., Sankofa), before addressing the possibilities for the future. This presentation is based on a MRes on the African presence in Southeast Asia 1900-1960 that highlights Asian influences in African decolonisation and nationalist movements with a focus on Mozambique and Angola.

**Affective journeys in Transatlantic slavery heritage: An auto-ethnographic study in Liverpool**

**Tingting Li, Tak Hin Chan**

Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR

This study draws upon non-representational theory and affective atmosphere to explore how two researcher-tourists affectively confront the slavery discourses of Liverpool. A performative auto-ethnography was conducted to exhibit the process of how complex and embodied feelings emerged in this understudied slavery space. The findings suggest affective encounters in slavery spaces represent a highly nuanced, intricate and personalised assemblage of sensing and feeling, shaped by uncertain, shifting and multiplicity of affective atmospheres co-constructed under the interplay between individuals, their encountered objects and bodies. Our reflections further unveil how visitors' personal characteristics (identity, cultural values and understanding of Humanism) conflict with slavery discourses, and together shape their memorable journey. This study extends debates on human affect and embodiment in tourism scholarship by providing a cross-cultural and more-than-representational lens. The findings advance the human-centered approach in experience design which should privilege visitors' personal characteristics and their embodied and deeper affective experiences.

**Towards a Dialogue: initiating engagements on the cultural front**

**Emily Shun Man Chow-Quesada**

Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong SAR

This presentation discusses the forms and significance of people-to-people engagements by examining projects that initiate cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and Africa. As COVID-19 becomes endemic, the world is resuming normal. But what does it mean to re-engage ourselves in cultural dialogues with the emergence of new possibilities and crises? To answer this question, the presentation looks at two projects of such nature and discusses the impacts. The first one is a documentary on Black women artists in Hong Kong (produced by the presenter with an HKBU grant). The Black artists featured employ their art forms to negotiate their identities in HK, a postcolonial space fuelled by various discourses. By examining the data collected from the audience of the film, I look at how they understand the intersectionality of the gendered socio-political discourse as well as the artists' reconciliation of (dis)placements and homogenous beauty standards. The second project adapts and stages plays written by South African women playwrights. By inviting them to collaborate with local directors in HK, the project aims at bringing HK audiences to the forefront of synthesising postcolonial female subjectivities. It probes the interactions among SA playwrights, HK theatrical practitioners, and audiences to excavate women's subjectivities adapted and how they reshape the local audience's understanding of female identities. With these two projects in mind, the presentation aspires to look at the roles played by education (university and public-facing) in interrogating multi-lateral cultural identity on the cultural front of engagements between Hong Kong and Africa.

**Knowledge transfer in the global south: Re-using or creating knowledge in China's Special Economic Zones in Ethiopia and Cambodia?**

**Ana Cristina Alves**

Mohammed VI Polytechnic University, Morocco

Chinese special economic zones (SEZs) have played a key role in attracting Chinese overseas investment and in facilitating knowledge and technology transfer to local companies. This explains the mushrooming of Chinese-led SEZs and industrial parks in parts of Southeast Asia and Africa since the early 2000s, and more recently its prominence in the planning of the economic corridors along the Belt and Road Initiative. Our interest in SEZs derives from the fact that they provide novel grounds to investigate the dynamics of knowledge transfer (KT) in South–South exchanges and the extent to which it diverges from more traditional exchanges. This study undertakes a comparative analysis of KT in the Eastern Industrial Zone (EIZ) in Ethiopia, and the Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone (SSEZ) in Cambodia. The case studies suggest that, although the provision of training by Chinese investors has added value to the labour force, its transformative impact is limited owing to the concentration on explicit KT modalities at lower skills levels and the top–down approach to KT by Chinese companies. These limitations are largely a function of the wide absorptive capacity gap between China and the host countries studied and the absence of more conducive industrial policies.

## **Transformative Encounters: Reciprocal Flows and the Chinese Gold Rush in Ghana**

**Nicholas Loubere**

Lund University, Sweden

Since the mid-2000s, tens of thousands of Chinese nationals have travelled to Ghana to engage in small-scale alluvial gold mining. The majority of these migrants are from Shanglin County, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Shanglin has a long tradition of alluvial gold mining, and also has been a nationally designated ‘poverty-stricken county’ (pinkun xian). The Shanglin miners introduced new mechanised technology for extracting gold in Ghana, which has dramatically increased production, while producing severe environmental degradation. In 2013, the Ghanaian government began initiating a continuing series of military-style crackdowns aimed at eliminating the Chinese presence in the country’s small-scale mining sector. In both the media and popular discourse, Chinese miners have been depicted as feeding into corruption, destroying the environment, and stealing resources from marginal sectors of Ghanaian society. However, we still do not know much about who these miners are, the factors that compel them to travel to such a distant land in the hopes of ‘striking it rich’, or how the spoils of this gold rush have been distributed. Drawing on in-depth fieldwork, this lecture revisits this intense episode. It explores the ways in which this particular cultural encounter has shaped and transformed relationships between people, places, and the natural environment, and examines the impact that it has had on the lives of those involved, both in Ghana and China

## **Mistrust and Trust-Making in the Distribution and Consumption of Chinese-Manufactured Electronics in Ghana**

**Mark Kwaku Mensah Obeng**

University of Ghana, Ghana

Although trust is central to almost all human interactions, it is generally taken for granted and assumed that every party will diligently play its part. Key to this neglect is the tendency to deal with people with whom we share strong social ties. Trust however becomes a critical subject when one must deal with a third party or discredited brand. Using made-in-China brands in Ghana as a case study this paper discusses trust and the making of trust between Ghanaian distributors and consumers of made-in-China electronics to highlight how the taken-for-granted phenomenon of trust is “resurrected” in the distribution and consumption of made-in-China products because of the uncertainties involved in having to navigate the historical and normative complexities of the made in China brand. Also discussed is how the absence of trust is skillfully resolved by the distributor and consumer to enhance their various interest through trust-making measures. Whilst the distributors employ strategies such as engaging celebrities as brand ambassadors, sponsoring events/products and entering a partnership with established and strong goodwill brands. Similarly, the consumer adopts measures such as seeking enhanced product warranty and after-sales services. This paper combines various aspects of our ethnographic research on Africa-China over a period of ten years.

**African Agency and the Problem of Sovereignty**

**Derick Becker**

University of Nottingham Malaysia, Malaysia

Lost in debates over Africa's agency in contemporary geopolitics is the question of whether the present represents a stark divergence from the past that it might empower or imperil African agency. Centering the question of agency in geopolitical terms blinds us to its normative basis in the principle of sovereignty and the juridical right to speak and act. If this geopolitical moment is unique it is only because this principle itself has come under sustained critique in the face of global poverty and climate change. This critique compels us to move beyond the negative sovereign obligation of non-intervention and to instead ask what, as a community of states, we owe each other. Thomas Pogge has powerfully shown how this negative duty of sovereignty produces a principled indifference to domestic affairs which belies our role in the maintenance and production of domestic poverty and human rights abuses. If we are to speak of African agency today then we must look beyond its material manifestation as an adroit weapon of the weak in geopolitical rivalry. We must instead recognise its normative and political nature too. Following Shapcott, I wish to argue not that we let historical guilt tempt us to a positive obligation to act in the name of justice with its connotations of intervention and lost sovereignty; instead I argue that the present moment compels us to expand our negative duties to do no harm. In doing so I argue we will necessarily expand African agency.

**The EUs Global Gateway vs the Belt and Road Initiative. What does the EUs global gateway policy mean for African agency in Sino-African relations?**

**Niall Duggan**

University College Cork, Ireland

On 1 December 2021 the European Union (EU) launched the global gateway. The European Commission and the EU High Representative have set out the Global Gateway, a new European strategy to boost the EU involvement in areas such as energy and transport sectors. The EU has openly stated that the global gateway is the EU response to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Africa is the focus of the Global Gateway, using the system of Team Europe Initiative the early funded project is focus on area which the BRI has been leading as an external development actor in Africa. However, while there is some research which compares the BRI and the Global Gateway there is little focus on what this means for African agency in its relationship with both the EU and China. This paper will focus on how African agency in Sino-Africa relations is affected by the Global Gateway and will focus on how African states have reacted to the Global Gateway and see if African states have used the new EU strategy to leverage their relations with China.



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