Africa and the Historical Sociology of ‘the international’

Collaborative workshop hosted by the BISA Working Groups on Historical Sociology and IR and Africa and International Studies

26 May 2010 - The Open University, Camden, London

Workshop outline

African states and societies are shaped in many ways by developmental dynamics specific to the region. But they are also shaped by their international relations – both with each other and with the wider global system beyond. Can these internal and external, (societal and inter-societal), factors be reconciled theoretically, or must they remain largely the preserve of separate disciplines of Development Studies/Sociology and International Relations? In recent years a resurgence of historical sociology in IR has sought to reconnect the study of the international with processes of social development in general. But are the concepts it has produced too general to throw light on the particular African experience? Is it possible to overcome these intellectual divides between IR-based and Development-based theories on the one hand, and between analyses of particular regions and of the worldwide system on the other?

The African experience offers numerous themes which point to the need for such a reconciliation: the shaping of social and economic development in the continent by its particular insertion into the international system, the particularities of processes of state formation and the consequent effects of these on relations with external powers, the interrelations between states and networks of non-state actors regionally and externally and how processes of intervention of various forms reshape the dynamics and direction of social change within Africa.

Justin Rosenberg (BISA Historical Sociology and IR Working Group)
William Brown (Africa and International Studies Working Group)
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Programme

10.00-11.30  Session 1
  - Branwen Gruffydd Jones (Goldsmiths, University of London) Africa’s Postcolonial Condition and the Pitfalls of Disciplinary Consciousness
  - William Brown (Open University) Aid, sovereignty and history: colonial antecedents and contemporary aid relations

11.30-11.45  Coffee

11.45-13.15  Session 2
  - Fouad Makki (Cornell University) The Imperatives of Uneven and Combined Development: Dynastic Centralization and Official Nationalism in Ethiopia
  - Meera Sabaratnam (LSE) The Uses and Limits of Historical Sociology as a critical approach to the International Relations of Africa (and other places)

13.15-14.15  Lunch

14.15-15.00  Session 3
E.A. Brett (LSE) Reconstructing Development Theory: Understanding Contested Institutional Transitions in Africa

15.00-15.15  Coffee

15.00/15.15-16.30  Session 4 Round Table
  - Justin Rosenberg (Sussex University); Gavin Williams (Oxford University) [tbc]; Tom Young (SOAS); George Lawson (LSE)

Registration
Spaces are limited and advance registration is necessary. Please contact William Brown at: w.brown@open.ac.uk to register.
TRAVEL: Camden Town (Northern Line), Camden Road (Silverlink) are both a short walk from the Regional Centre. Buses: C2, 24, 27, 29, 31, 46, 88, 134, 168, 214, 253, 274.

PARKING & ACCESS: There is no parking available at the regional centre. There is limited metered parking in the area, but we advise travel by public transport. A parking space for delegates with mobility difficulties can be booked through Office Services on 020 7485 6597. The regional centre is fully accessible for guests with mobility difficulties.