Call for Panel Proposals

African Connections

Biennial conference of the African Studies Association in Germany (VAD e.V.),
University of Leipzig, 27-30 June 2018

The African continent has an extremely rich history of entanglements, connectivities and exchanges with the rest of the world. However, for many years parts of the scientific communities as well as public media have looked at this history from just one side: Africa as being at the receiving end of global changes. Yet, largely unnoticed outside the continent, African actors have long written themselves into the globalizing world. This change of perspective from Africa as a mere object of study to a subject of its own choice and making is at the core of the conference.

Connections exist on various levels and scales, from the individual to the global. They have different forms and ranges, they involve various human and nonhuman entities, they change with time and they are valued differently according to the context. Translocal and transnational relations within Africa as well as between Africa and other world regions include a wide spectrum of historical as well as recent entanglements, economic links, social networks, political connections, and new virtual communities. They include ties between rural and urban Africa as well as historical and contemporary alliances between and across regions. Connections enable new modes of expression by providing social, spatial and imaginary mobilities as well as links to global arenas and diasporas.

Connections can be inclusive as well as exclusive. They can be clandestine and criminal, but also emancipative and innovative. They perpetuate inequalities if the gains of connectedness are unevenly distributed. The making and re-making of connections also implies disconnection and non-connectedness, the production of borders, and boundary work accompanied by violent processes of connecting and de-connecting.

This conference looks at African connections in the past and the present. It aims to discuss and compare how processes of connecting and de-connecting are and were done in and with Africa, and to question received assumptions and narrations about African connections and Africa’s delayed participation in the new social order of the global.

We invite panel proposals that explore the nature of connections in and beyond Africa on different levels and scales in the past and the present. We also invite panel proposals that investigate the means that enable different forms of connectivity and the types of normativity that they are charged with. We are open to various disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives, and encourage a focus on the agency of Africans in shaping these connections.

Panel proposals of max. 300 words in German, English or French have to be submitted by 15 August 2017 latest via http://vad-ev.de/en/next-conference/call-for-panels/.