

Workshop: Another World? Concepts and methods in East Africa's global histories

27 September 2019, 11am-4pm, Room 2.05 Geography (Old Infirmary)

Registration required (spaces limited) – please email ismay.milford@ed.ac.uk

In the framework of the Leverhulme Trust-funded project '[Another World? East Africa and the Global 1960s](#)', the Edinburgh Centre for Global History invites scholars based in Edinburgh and those at nearby and partner institutions to participate in a day of roundtable-style discussions on the problems, questions, and ambitions of researching and writing global histories of Eastern Africa in the (mid-)twentieth century, especially with reference to textual cultures. Our hope is to build a collaborative network of scholars around the existing project, including those working with similar methods or on similar questions using different methods, and thus to make the most of the potential for engaging with one another's work.

As 'Another World' has propositioned, East Africa offers a challenge to narratives that assume a linear trajectory in the history of twentieth century globalisation. East Africa's global connections were powerful and real at independence. But by the early 1970s, utopian ideas of a globally connected African future had been destroyed by introverted nationalism.

Printed material and written correspondence were crucial vehicles for global thinking in East Africa and as such are one powerful way to trace how a vision of a connected postcolonial world shattered. They were vehicles of connection, through which links were forged and affinities were imagined, and of disconnection, in which incommensurable difference was asserted and networks ruptured. Over the course of the workshop, we would like to address some of the methodological and conceptual questions that arise from these assertions.

Programme

11:00-11:15 Welcome and introductions

11:15-12:45 Roundtable 1: Text, networks and materiality

12:45-13:30 Lunch (provided)

13:30-15:00 Roundtable 2: Thinking globally

15:00-16:00 Roundtable 3: Concluding reflections and ways forward

Roundtable 1: Text, networks and materiality

What do networks of global affinity between authors and readers look like? Is the unequal and uneven nature of 'global networks' visible in textual sources? (How) can we recover from textual sources the materiality of their production: bodies, technology, and the natural and built environment? Or, where should we look to see how the 'material world' and the 'world of ideas' interact? Where is the colonial and postcolonial state in this? What is gained (and lost) from an 'East Africa' perspective compared to a focus on a national space, a specific 'borderland' or a smaller locality? Where, then, are East Africa's edges?

Opened by:

- Emily Brownell (University of Edinburgh) Tracing the transnational in urban materiality through texts
- Josh Doble (University of Edinburgh) Postcolonial slang in 'Ode to the Kenya Cowboy'
- Anna Adima (University of York) Women's writing in 1960s East Africa
- Tom Cunningham (University of Edinburgh) Interwar Gikuyu ethnic nationalism and the journal *Muigwithania*
- Ismay Milford (University of Edinburgh) The making of the journalism profession

Each speaking for 5-10 minutes on an aspect of their own research, with reference to some of the questions above. Followed by open discussion.

Roundtable 2: Thinking globally

Black cosmopolitanism? Cosmopolitanism from below? Or from the middle? Where is the overlap between cosmopolitanism and internationalism? Are these worldviews, modes of expression, or practice? Are they necessarily utopian? Does an increasing engagement with one's place in the globe invite communality across pre-existing divides, or in fact invite conflict? Can a focus on textual cultures help to recover African 'nationalisms' (as Miles Larmer and Baz Lecocq have recently described them) 'as a process intimately bound up with morally constituted concerns about the nature of society and how to live a good life'? What is the role of religion? What in any of this is specific to East Africa and/or to the historical process of decolonisation?

Opened by:

- George Roberts (University of Cambridge) Decolonisation of Comoros
- Daniel Heathcote (University of Edinburgh) Kenyan urban spaces and the body
- Gerard McCann (University of York) East African literary institutions and global networks, 1960s-70s
- Dan Branch (University of Warwick) Nairobi in the Era of Decolonisation: A Global City?
- Emma Hunter (University of Edinburgh) Tanzania's twentieth-century global history

Each speaking for 5-10 minutes on an aspect of their own research, with reference to some of the questions above. Followed by open discussion.

Roundtable 3: Concluding reflections and ways forward

Opened by Emily Callaci, with comments on the day's discussions.

Followed by open discussion.

Optional recommended reading

Emily Callaci, *Street Archives and City Life: Popular Intellectuals in Postcolonial Tanzania* (London: Duke University Press, 2017).

Derek R. Peterson and Emma Hunter, 'Print Culture in Colonial Africa', in Derek R. Peterson, Emma Hunter, and Stephanie Newell (eds.), *African Print Cultures: Newspapers and Their Publics in the Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

Afro-Asian Networks Research Collective, 'Manifesto: Networks of Decolonization in Asia and Africa', *Radical History Review*, 2018 (2018).