

# **Call for Papers**

## **International Conference**

# **Central Africa's Renaissance (1960-2020)**

**Organized by the Central African Studies Association (CASA)  
and the University of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Location: Kinshasa, July 6-8, 2020**

With the goal of starting a close collaboration between Central African, European and American researchers and enhancing the presence and visibility of academic research in Central Africa, a diverse group of researchers (composed of anthropologists, historians, political scientists, sociologists, specialists in literature and arts, etc.) proposes an international conference from July 6-8, 2020, at the University of Kinshasa (DRC), on the revival of Central Africa covering the post-colonial period (1960-2020). The conference sets out to examine forms of political, social, and cultural renewal in countries of the subregion. Are Central African societies developing new cultures and visions that break from those of 1960 through 2000? Are the cultures and modes of thinking that emerged after Central African independence progressively being replaced by 21st century innovations? Are central African countries celebrating the potential of man and woman? Is a renaissance of literature, arts, science taking place in central Africa?

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At the beginning of the 1960's, central African countries, like those on the rest of the African continent, celebrated their independence as the continent's emancipation from the colonial yoke. The people of the subregion experienced this moment as a new beginning and dreamed of a prosperous future. Despite this, central African countries inherited a great deal from their predecessors and functioned much like colonial states. They did not install a democratic culture, and leaders did not seek the consent of the people. To the contrary, African leaders quickly installed a single party system, dictatorial powers, and a cult of personality (Jean-François Bayart, 1989). These choices led to considerable consequences for nations in the subregion, including political instability and endless constitutional crises.

A nation state crisis can be seen in all central African countries. Leaders seek recognition from the international community and thus reinforce the outward looking nature of their regimes. In so doing, they ignore the potential of their fellow citizens, as has been examined by Achille Mbembe (1981), Fred Cooper (2002), Florence Bernault (1996), Crawford Young (1994), Christine Messiant (2008) and Pierre Englebert (2009), among others. Additionally, the state models put forth by these leaders are not inclusive and do not always incorporate the different ethnic groups living inside national borders. Such discriminatory politics violate human rights and have led to war, ethnic tensions, and regional conflicts, which have served to weaken states and their social fabric. Elikia Mbokolo and Jean-Loup Amselle (2005), Jean-Michel Mabeko-Tali (2005), Gérard Prunier (2009), Filip Reyntjens (2009), René Lemarchand (2009), Jason Stearns (2011), Thomas Turner (2013), to name a few, have proposed analyses which study recent conflicts from a transnational perspective. The numerous communities that have been ravaged by war and violence seek peace and security.

Following decolonization, the fathers of independence and African leaders led their countries without implementing policies for the protection of gender and women. It was as if their mothers, wives, sisters and daughters had played no role in the fight for liberation. They took the fruits of national independence for themselves and left in place the patriarchal systems that exist in several societies, which continue to view women as second class citizens (Gertrude Mianda (1995 & 1997), Marissa Moorman

(2001), Rachel Jean Baptiste (2017), Meredith Terretta (2007), Katrien Pype (2016), Didier Gondola (1996)).

More than half of the population of central African countries is under the age of 25, which constitutes a major challenge to the subregion. The absence of appropriate political systems for this portion of the population as well as inadequate and exorbitant educational systems serve to marginalize the young and hamper their future perspectives. These young people employ different modes of expression, namely in the vibrant popular cultures that developed in urban African milieus (Marissa Moorman (2008), Didier Gondola (1999), Achille Mbembe (1985), Alcinda Honwana & Filip De Boeck (2005), Donatien Dibwe Dia Mwembu (2015), Bob White (2008), Charles Tshimanga (2001)).

A large number of young people from central Africa have elected to move abroad, especially to the West where they make up the diaspora (Justin-Daniel Gandoulou (1989), Janet MacGaffey & Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000)). Many have become naturalized citizens of their new countries while maintaining a strong relationship with their countries of origin. Citizens of the world, they have developed a “diasporic consciousness” and frequently intervene to improve conditions in central Africa (Charles Tshimanga, Didier Gondola & Peter Bloom (2009), Dominic Thomas (2013), Charles Tshimanga (2003), and Peter Kankonde (2016)).

The first forty years after independence (1960-2000) also gave birth to significant historical and intellectual production (Florence Bernault (2003), Nancy Hunt (1999 & 2016), Isidore Ndaywel (2009), Elikia M'Bokolo & Jacob Sabakinu (2014), Joseph Tonda (2005), Achille Mbembe (2000), Didier Gondola (2016)), to art and literature (Alain Mabanckou (2006 & 2017), Bogumil Jewsiewicki (1993), which reflects the subregion's promise.

Several scholars, adopting a multidisciplinary approach, have sought to examine central Africa's role in the great epidemics of the 21st century and its status as a “hotspot” in recent epidemics, namely Ebola and HIV-AIDS (Tamara Giles-Vernick, Didier Gondola, Guillaume Lachenal, Stephanie Rupp and Bill Schneider (2013)).

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The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War suggested the arrival of a new era, that human rights would be respected and that democracy was in the process of being established in central Africa. In 1999, Thabo Mbeki proclaimed the theme of the “African renaissance” and argued that the 21st century would be African. Also, for researchers and shrewd observers, it would be wise to examine this theme in order to evaluate, as stated in the introduction, whether a cultural renewal is taking place in central Africa. The conference will thus seek to understand the challenges that have emerged since independence. It will analyze the ruptures and continuities with cultures and practices of the past, through an exploration of the state of scientific research in human and social sciences in central Africa. After taking stock of the sixty years since central Africa's rise to national sovereignty, it will be necessary to revisit the political and socio-economic illusions that followed and to analyze the opportunities that present themselves at the start of the 21st century.

Additionally, this conference aims to promote the convergence of researchers from different disciplines. By collecting works on Central Africa, the conference will showcase analyses that intersect multiple disciplines and focus on independence and/or political/cultural renaissance in order to propose pathways for the development of Central Africa. Graduate students are encouraged to participate. Revised contributions will result in a published edited volume or special issue.

### **Research Themes**

Proposals stemming from diverse, interdisciplinary fields in the social sciences and the humanities will state, in a maximum of 300 words, the issue/theme to be examined, methodology, and primary bibliographical sources. **Abstracts** may include theoretical, empirical, and methodological aspects. They should contribute to the following **workshops**:

## **Workshops**

### Workshop 1: The rule of law, democracy, and governance in Central Africa

- Human rights
- Security, Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Central Africa
- Central Africa and Globalization
- Central African Renaissance during an era of globalization
- Civil Society and the Diaspora as champions of democracy

### Workshop 2: Economy and the Sub-region

- The Economic Union of Central African states and perspectives from the sub-region
- Economic communities of the sub-region: CPGL, CEAC, SADC.
- The Franc CFA: a factor in the sub-region's underdevelopment?
- The informal sector: does it spawn or halt economic development?

### Workshop 3: Culture, Science and Technology

- Culture and cultural identity
- Ideology and cultural politics
- Cultural spaces and activities
- Restitution of the African cultural patrimony

### Workshop 4: Health

- Status of research on endemic diseases (HIV, Ebola, etc.)
- Local medical knowledge in the age of globalization

### Workshop 5: People and places in Central Africa's development process

- Migratory flows in the heart of Central Africa
- Imagining African cities of the future
- Movement in the sub-region

### Workshop 6: Youth and Education

- Who are the youth, and what do they want?
- Youth citizen movements
- Youth and popular culture

### Workshop 7: Gender-Women

- Is there a Central African #MeToo movement?
- Violence against women
- Denis Mukwege: Central Africa's first Nobel Prize

### Workshop 8: Environment and Climate Change

- Parks and protecting the environment
- Environmental Justice
- Degradation of ecosystems

### Workshop 9: Agriculture and nutrition

- Food production in Central African cities
- Food security in Central Africa

### Workshop 10: Consumption of history.

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- Deadline for proposals (300 words, format Word, Times New Roman or Arial, size 12 font): **September 20, 2019**;
- Title and abstract and a one-page CV required with registration;
- Papers will be selected by **December 15, 2019**;
- Final papers (20-page maximum, single-spaced, including a bibliography) to be submitted by **March 30, 2020** to: <[centralafricasrenaissance@gmail.com](mailto:centralafricasrenaissance@gmail.com)>.

**Organization, registration, and information:**

- Université de Kinshasa (Kinshasa, RDC);
- Conference Location: Université de Kinshasa (DR Congo)
- Conference Languages: French & English

**Organizing committee:**

Nicole Eggers (University of Tennessee-Knoxville), Didier Gondola (Indiana University Purdue University--Indianapolis), Pascal Kapagama Ikondo (Université de Kinshasa), Igor Matonda Sakala (Université de Kinshasa), Mpiana Tshitenge (Université de Kinshasa), Isidore Ndaywel (Université de Kinshasa), Floribert Ntungila (Université de Kinshasa), Jacob Sabakinu (Université de Kinshasa), Charles Tshimanga (University of Nevada-Reno).

**Scientific committee:**

Nancy Hunt (Florida University), Katrien Pype (The Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), Marissa Moorman (Indiana University, Bloomington), Elikia M'bokolo (Université de Kinshasa), Georges Mvumbi Lelo (Université de Kinshasa), Mabilia ma Ntuba Pamphile (Université de Kinshasa), Raoul Kienge-Kienge (Université de Kinshasa), Eugène Banyaku Luape (Université de Kinshasa), Aliko Songolo (University of Wisconsin, Madison).

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