

Call for papers

Panel 44: Negotiating statehood in Africa

This panel invites papers that empirically analyse how local, national and transnational actors forge statehood in Africa through processes of negotiation, contestation, and bricolage. We draw attention to the way in which statehood is negotiated between different sets of actors, how competing normative repertoires are mobilised to legitimise state practices, and how new types of political institutions emerge in this process.

According to prevailing academic and policy discourse, states in Africa are conspicuous by their 'failure', 'collapse', 'fragility' and 'weakness'. Criminalised, globalised and privatised, the post-colonial African state seems to have mutated to nightmarish 'shadow' and 'quasi' state entities void of legitimacy and administrative capacity. Because of its inability to provide basic security, justice, or welfare to its citizens, the African state is depicted in recent literature as an 'empty shell' that has ceased to fulfil its core functions.

Against such normative perceptions, this panel conceives of statehood in Africa as dynamic historical and political processes that reflect the outcome of at times contradictory, at times overlapping interests and repertoires. Rejecting the image of African states as a-historic pathologies or as fix and objectified entities, we focus on how social forces such as 'traditional' and religious authorities, professional and community organizations, politico-military authorities or development and humanitarian actors define and reproduce, erode and reinvent statehood through daily interactions. They do so by referring to existing and by 'reinventing' new discourses which aim at legitimising their exercise of power (typical examples are references to 'good governance', 'human rights', 'democracy', ethno-politically defined types of citizenship, religious and cultural identities). In turn, existing state practices and ideologies are contested on the basis of these very same repertoires by other individuals and social groups. It is at the interface between these different actors and repertoires that the material and symbolic definition of today's African state is negotiated.

Contact

Dr. **Didier Péclard** (didier.peclard@swisspeace.ch) & **Tobias Hagmann** (tobias.hagmann@swisspeace.ch), Swisspeace, PO Box, Sonnenbergstrasse 17, CH-3000 Bern 7, Switzerland.

Submission of abstracts

You can submit your abstract (maximum 500 words) via <http://ecas2007.aegis-eu.org/Commence.aspx>. The deadline for the submission of abstracts is **31 December 2006**. The proposals will be reviewed in **January 2007** and those who have submitted abstracts will be notified as to whether their paper has been accepted or not in February 2007.