



Call for Abstracts & Call for Papers

International Conference & Book Project

Negotiating the Fabric of the African University: Global Trends and Local Realities

Date: 12–14 September 2023

Place: University of the Western Cape (UWC), University of Cape Town (UCT)
and Stellenbosch University (SU)

The Rationale for the Conference

A ‘global’ model currently shapes our imagination of universities in the 21st century. This prototype responds to global trends in policy discourse and practices, including the embrace of research excellence initiatives, university league tables (rankings), market-driven funding models (e.g., cost-sharing), climate change and other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, there are growing concerns with quality, equity, gender, employability, decolonisation, and emancipatory agendas.

Against this backdrop, African universities are braced with existential challenges at regional and national levels. These universities have to negotiate their character between the pursuit of excellence and difficult political and economic conditions. In the convergence of global trends and local realities, the modern African university’s character and fabric emerge and gain specific forms.

To critically examine the current dynamics of change affecting the African university we have raised financial support from the German Volkswagen Foundation to convene two international conferences, the first in Maputo, Mozambique, which took place in 2022, and the second to be held 12–14 September 2023 in Cape Town, South Africa. The two gatherings aim to deepen critical reflection on the modes of production and conditions of the possibility of the African university as it negotiates its character between the pressures of local realities and global trends.

Furthermore, the salient sociological understanding of the university as a unified global cultural reference system is to be interrogated and recalibrated. What are the peculiarities of African universities and how should they respond to the push for global standardisation? Finally, from a political standpoint, the conferences aim to enrich the debate and strengthen the development of the higher education systems in which African universities are located. For the upcoming conference in September 2023 in Cape Town, we invite scholars from higher education studies, adjacent fields, university leaders and policymakers to share their critical analysis, experiences and expertise on the current developments of the African university.

We hope to unearth the defining and emerging features of the current university in Africa as we begin the second quarter of the millennium. We intend to combine different lines of inquiry and understanding of African universities’ organisational, institutional, and systemic features. We invite contributions that help ask the pertinent questions: The questions should address the global trends, regional and local realities shaping the African university as it reconciles with its past and negotiates its present and future.

The Call for Book Chapters

The second conference includes a call for book chapters. The projected book will be published in a book series on “African Higher Education: Developments and Perspectives” (Brill). It will also provide a critical overview of global trends and practices shaping the African university’s fabric. The promises, perils, and paradoxes of pursuing global agendas, such as the quest for excellence, decolonisation, and effects of local realities and demands, produce an unintended texture informed by historical legacies, structural and existential conditions, and the pursuit of new possibilities. The book will be structured according to thematic areas and issues discussed in the two conferences. The thematic areas include, among others, essential functions, emerging trends, and models shaping the realities of universities in Africa.

We welcome submissions critically examining the emerging trends, models, and practices in African universities in the following thematic tracks:

- Track One: Teaching and Learning
- Track Two: Research and Innovation
- Track Three: Community Engagement, Outreach or Third Mission
- Track Four: Leadership, Governance, and Management
- Track Five: Internationalisation and Cooperation

We consider scholarly, professional, policy and critical approaches, including conceptual, theoretical, methodological, epistemological, empirical, ethnographic, and case studies, illustrating the visible or underlying forces influencing the lives of African universities.

Important Dates

- Abstract submission deadline (500 words): **30 April 2023**
- Notification of acceptance for the conference: **31 May 2023**
- Full paper submission (5.000 words): **30 August 2023**
- Conference attendance & feedback by the editors: **12–15 September 2023**
- Peer review feedback: **31 October 2023**
- Final book chapter manuscript submission: **15 December 2023**
- Revision drafts returned (if needed): **15 February 2024**
- Publication: **2024**

Application Deadline: 30 April 2023

We invite scholars to submit a short abstract (500 words) and a short CV (1 page) through the online application form:

<https://forms.gle/fHMfazmLwH6nCxr38>

If you have any questions, please contact: lea.weigel@uni-bonn.de

Conference Organisers and Book Guest Editors

Prof. Patrício Langa (IPSS/UWC) & Prof. David Kaldewey (University of Bonn).

Funding Information

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