8th Biennial Afroeuropeans Network Conference
"Intersectional Challenges in Afroeuropean Communities"
Brussels, 7-10 July 2021

Stream Descriptions

1 - Stream "Intersectionality as theory, practice and movement: Re-centring Black feminist legacies"

Stream convenors: Sophie Withaeckx (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and Emma-Lee Amponsah (Universiteit Gent)

Intersectionality has been widely recognised as a crucial theoretical framework to understand and analyse how social inequalities are shaped by a multitude of social divisions that reinforce and influence each other. The actual coining of the term by Crenshaw (1989) was preceded by a longstanding tradition of Black women's scholarship, which highlighted the impact of multiple systems of discrimination in Black women's lives and has emphasized how 'race', class, gender and sexuality are all equally important and indivisible in Black women's lives. Grounded in Black women's lived experiences and knowledge, intersectionality has been pivotal in the recognition of Black women's specific location, and in denouncing how these experiences have been consistently been made invisible in dominant theoretical, feminist and policy-making frameworks. However, the immense popularity of intersectionality, its 'traveling' to a variety of social contexts and movements, and tendencies to 'universalise' intersectionality in order to apply it to a multitude of social groups, have elicited much concern from scholars who criticise the detachment of intersectionality from its foundation in Black feminist thought, the 'erasure of Black women as quintessential subjects of intersectionality' (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Hancock, 2016) and the 'whitening' of intersectionality (Bilge, 2013).

Both in research and activism, intersectionality may become subject to processes of co-optation, to the extent that top-down demands to integrate an intersectional framework in research and actions can become experienced as a burden for grassroots activists rather than as a useful tool and emancipatory strategy. Nevertheless, current challenges in Afroeuropean communities and the necessity of recognizing, understanding, and discussing internal differentiations and power inequalities based on gender, religion, sexuality, age, citizen status... still make intersectionality particularly relevant and timely.

This stream interrogates the past, present, and future of intersectionality and invites interventions that critically engage with the boundaries, opportunities, uses, and abuses of intersectionality. It seeks to examine if and to what extent intersectionality can be applied to a variety of experiences of marginalization, and what this means for activist movements and solidarity. It particularly wants to explore how intersectionality's reconnection with its Black feminist legacy can inspire Afroeuropean communities to engage with pressing challenges, like

the ecological crisis, enduring internal differentiations based on gender and sexuality, and the resurgence of extreme-right and racist movements.

We are particularly interested in panels engaging with one of the following questions:

Intersectionality as a theoretical and analytical tool:

- Intersectionality and accessibility: Has intersectionality become too academic and elitist? Is intersectional theory still useful and accessible for those who were supposed to benefit from it in the first place – groups marginalised based on 'race', gender, class, sexuality?

- Black masculinities in the contemporary intersectionality paradigm: What are the challenges or limitations of intersectionality in addressing gender-based violence on the Black male body?

- Intersections of Blackness: How can other-than-human injustices make sense of/co-shape imaginations of the Black human existence, oppression and liberation?

- Whitening of intersectionality: Has intersectionality become divorced from its roots in critical race theory and Black feminist activism? How can we make sense of the quests for reclaiming or abandoning intersectionality?

Intersectionality as a tool for social action and solidarity:

- Intersectionality and social action: What does it mean to apply intersectionality in practice? How can intersectionality be useful to address inequalities within Black communities? How to address bias, prejudice and oppression within Black communities? (cf. calling in & calling out)

- Global movements and Blackness: How can intersectionality be useful in addressing the challenges the world, as a whole, is facing; and which particularly expose Black communities to additional vulnerabilities? (E.g climate change, food-(in)justice, non-human animal liberation, neoliberalism & "managerialism" in institutions and social work, the continuation and transformation of racism and the resurgence of alt-right movements…)

- Intersectional solidarity: How can intersectionality forge solidarity between different groups of marginalized people?

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2 - Stream "Religion and spirituality in Afro-Europe"

Stream convenors: Emma-Lee Amponsah (Universiteit Gent) and Nadia Fadil (KU Leuven)

Religion holds a contested status in the decolonial mobilisations across the world. Whereas several movements have challenged the role of Christianity because of its central role in the colonial and imperial oppression of indigenous peoples across the world by European nations, others have rather drawn upon this faith as a source of inspiration and mobilisation (e.g. evangelical churches). Religion also continues to serve as a racial marker, and can thereby exacerbate both internal and external differentiation. Notably Islam has increasingly become a tool for racialisation and discriminatory violence. This violence tends to exclusively target so-called Arab and Maghrebi people, due to the intersectional invisibilisation of Muslims of Subsaharan African descent both in and outside diasporic Muslim communities. However, despite widespread Islamophobia and negrophobia (also in the Muslim world), Islam is flourishing among Black communities. The phenomenon of Black conversion to Islam is commonly perceived as a counter-hegemonic cultural practice (Curtis, 2005; Reddie, 2009). Counter-hegemonic belief systems such as Nation of Islam, but also the Rastafari movement, have long served as a framework of resistance against the religious 'colonization of the mind and the spirit' and continue to exist in various forms across the Black African diasporas. More recently, syncretistic interpretations of Egyptian cosmologies, Candomblé, Vodun (voodoo), and Akan and Yorùbá symbolism have become increasingly visible in Black popular culture. This phenomenon raises questions about the role and place of religion and spirituality in the African diasporic quest for preserving, reviving or reclaiming Black cultural identities.

This stream engages with reconfigurations of religion and spirituality in constructions of Black diasporic cultural memories and identities. We invite contributions reflecting on processes of spiritual and religious resistance, identity (trans)formation, and memory and boundary-making among Afroeuropean communities. Some of the themes we seek to include are:

.   Religion, race, gender & class

.   Religion as source of contestation

.   Religion, internalized racism and spiritual self-chastisement

.   Religious conversion and counter hegemonic resistance

Panels and interventions may engage with the following questions:

.   How are religious and ideological experiences within Afroeuropean communities positioned
    within Western European societies?

.   How are religious practices reconfigured and transformed?

.   How can intersectional theory help shape our understanding of religion as a racial marker?

.   Can intersectional approaches to religion and/or spirituality generate new forms of social justice activism?

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3 - Stream "Structural racism, racialization and exploitation"

Stream convenors: Ojeaku Nwabuzo (European Network Against Racism/Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Sibo Kanobana (Universiteit Gent) and Folashade Ajayi (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Structural racism is described as a system in which public policies, economic forces, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial inequalities.

Structural racism manifests in all areas of the social and economic life of Black people in Europe and is grounded in Europe's history of modernity, imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism. In Europe these dimensions of history and culture have sustained privileges associated with "whiteness" and disadvantages associated with "colour", albeit in different and complex ways dependent on time and place. Indeed, Black people in Europe are more likely to live in poverty, be imprisoned, drop out of education, be unemployed and experience poor health outcomes like diabetes, heart disease, depression and other potentially fatal diseases.

Available research often focuses on social inequality among people categorized as 'migrants', 'Muslims', 'non-EU-nationals', non-native speakers, etc. This categorisation frames social inequalities as a matter of migration or culture. Consequently, dynamics of intersectional invisibility often result in the absence or neglect of 'race' and the specific position and experiences of people of Sub-Saharan descent in research. This stream aims to bring to the discussion the structural and institutional practices that see white privilege prevail. We invite papers that will cover processes of racialisation and exploitation of Black people in Europe.

This stream invites abstracts for panels discussing the following themes:

- Structural racism: Analyses of discrimination that pays attention to the historical, cultural, social and psychological aspects of our currently racialized society.

- The political economy of race: How is racialisation imbricated with the logics of capitalist (neo)liberal democracy?

- Institutional racism: Exploring the policies and practices within and across institutions that, intentionally or not, produce outcomes that chronically put Black people in Europe at a disadvantage.

- Intersectional analysis of racial inequality: How do class, gender, sexuality, language, culture and other social processes reinforce and/or challenge the existing racialised structures of European society?

- White privilege: How can the concept of white privilege contribute to a better understanding of Black people's historical and contemporary disadvantages in access to quality education, decent jobs and liveable wages, homeownership, retirement benefits, wealth and so on?

- Diversity policies: How are diversity policies addressing/avoiding to take into account striking disparities in well-being and opportunity along racial lines, and with what effects?

4 - Stream "Policy, activism, and political representation"

Stream convenors: Ilke Adam (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Folashade Ajayi (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and Jean Beaman (University of California, Santa Barbara)

This stream invites papers specifically focusing on mobilisation, policy, and activism against racism and structural discrimination towards Afroeuropeans. In the current context of oppression and repression of Afroeuropean communities, we emphasize both grassroots mobilisation and activism, as well as participation in formal electoral politics and policymaking. In addition, this stream incorporates an intersectional and Black Feminist framework to these questions.

This stream invites abstracts for panels discussing the following themes:

. How does government policy, in particular racial equality and integration policies, respond to and affect Afroeuropean communities and vice versa?

. How are informal and institutional modes of racism against Afroeuropean communities and individuals addressed?

. How can Afroeuropeans intervene in the public and political arena and be politically represented, taking into account the complexities arising from processes of differentiation within these communities?

. What are the central concerns and forms of Afroeuropean activism and what is their impact on contemporary European societies?

. What are effective and ineffective practices to combat structural discrimination and racism? What are the challenges for anti-racist activism? What are the limits of mobilization in different societal contexts?

5 – Stream "Afroeuropean arts: Aesthetics & politics"

Stream convenors: Elisabeth Bekers (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Joachim Ben Yakoub (Universiteit Gent), Véronique Gakuba-Clette (Université Libre de Bruxelles) & Janine Hauthal (Vrije Universiteit Brussel).

In collaboration with: Véronique Bragard (Université catholique de Louvain), Inge Brinkman (Universiteit Gent), Matthias De Groof (Universiteit Antwerpen), Anne Wetsi Mpoma (Wetsi Art Gallery), Katarzyna Ruchel-Stockmans (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Arvi Sepp (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Aesthetics and politics intertwine in manifold powerful ways in Afroeuropean arts. This conference stream aims to reflect on the cultural and political power of Afroeuropean artistic practices and other forms of creative (self)expression, which resides as much in their exploration of pressing concerns as it does in their aesthetic impact. It examines how Afroeuropean artists give expression to the existential depths and sensitive dimensions of anti-racist struggle and how they engage in abolishing different forms of coloniality, from the coloniality of knowledge, being and power to the coloniality of aesthetic itself. In keeping with the conference theme, this stream takes a special interest in the plurality of creative ways in which artists address the complex intersectionalities affecting Afroeuropean his/herstories, experiences and identities.

Given the cross-disciplinary scope of this stream, contributors may approach the topic from a range of disciplinary and inter/trans/post-disciplinary points of view, including but not limited to such various fields as theatre, performance, film, (digital) media and literary studies, art history, and cultural studies. They may address the broad range of geographies and temporalities of Afroeuropean artistic practices and explore local, national, international as well as transnational avenues of production, reception and circulation. Panels may consist of typical academic papers, but we encourage also other performative formats, such as readings or showings of work-in-progress, practice-as-research, artistic interventions etc.

For this conference stream on the politics and aesthetics of Afroeuropean arts, we invite proposals for panels that, for example, engage with the following questions:

. How do Afroeuropean artists/artistic practices give expression to the complex intersectionalities affecting Afroeuropean his/herstories, experiences and identities? What aesthetic choices do they make?

. How do Afroeuropean artists/artistic practices transform dominant modes of knowledge, being, power and aesthetics? (How) Does Afroeuropean arts criticism contribute to these transformations?

. How do Afroeuropean artists/artistic practices engage with intersecting struggles to dismantle the omnipresent coloniality of power that still permeates hegemonic imaginaries?

. What are the specificities of oral, written, visual and plastic modes of Afroeuropean artistic creation? What aesthetic innovations are produced? What kinds of readership and spectatorship are forged or mobilized in Afroeuropean art practices?

- What are the specific affordances of artistic responses in comparison to other forms of political activism?

- What role do language, multilingualism and translation play in the production, reception and circulation of Afroeuropean artistic practices?

- What are possible (fugitive) strategies and tactics in Afroeuropean arts and arts criticism to counter institutional racism and the whiteness of the canon, art institutions and the art market?

- How do Afroeuropean artists (re)imagine Europe? How do they (re)imagine Africa? How do they (re)imagine the relation between Africa and Europe? How do Afroeuropean artists/artistic practices negotiate the historical division between North and Sub-Saharan Africa?

- How do Afroeuropean artists/artistic practices create spaces in which counter-memories (for instance of Africa's anti-colonial or Europe's anti-racist struggles) and the re-emergence of Pan-African and Pan-Arabic utopias produce new form of collective agency?

6 – Stream "Health and racial inequalities"

Stream convenors: Sarah Demart (Université Saint-Louis Bruxelles) & Charlotte Pezeril (Université Saint-Louis Bruxelles)

In comparison to North America, in Europe racial inequalities in health and care are poorly documented (Paradies, 2006; EU-MIDIS II, 2018). Not only is racial categorisation not permitted in most of European countries, but there is also a structural confusion between "African migrants" and "Black Europeans" that tends to naturalise and homogenise highly diverse situations (Fassin, 2000; Sauvegrain, 2012; Carde et al, 2012). As a consequence, the reduced access to health and well-being is often framed in terms of "cultural difference" and attributed to a lack of integration, poor ethno-linguistic understanding, "deviant behaviour", etc. On the other hand, there is a growing number of Afroeuropean caregivers as a result of the racial and gender organisation of the labour market (Benthouami and Khadhraoui 2018; Emejulu and Bassel 2017) and of the transnational circulation of high-skilled migrants that may create new possibilities for people of African descent becoming agents for health.

This stream addresses racial inequality in health and care in relation to a wide range of practices and interactions linked to medical research, health/care institutions, access to specialised health services, adhesion to medical procedure, relations with caregivers (doctors, nurses, etc.). We are particularly interested in intersectional approaches to health and care. Panels may address the following topics:

- How does the confusion between race-nationality-migration affects practices and interactions with Afroeuropeans when it comes to medical research, medical practices and institutional routines?

- What quantitative data can be mobilised or built up to document racial inequalities in access to health and care both in practices and discourses?

- What are the effects of migration policies and racism on people's (mental, sexual, reproductive) health and their access to care?

- How can Afroeuropeans claim a better and more appropriate access to health in specific fields (HIV/aids, obstetrical gynaecology, etc.)?

- How does the growing number of Afroeuropeans caregivers (at various levels) in the health care system articulate with the politics of austerity?

- What means decolonizing health?

- How are people of African descent becoming agents for health?

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7- Stream "Family, 'mixity' and identity"

Stream convenors: Sophie Withaeckx (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and Sibo Kanobana (Universiteit Gent)

The establishment of Afroeuropean individuals, families and communities in Europe has a long, though not always recognized history, arising from long-standing demographic and geographical expansions, intensified in the wake of Europe's imperialism and colonialism, and currently arising from increasing mobilities and immigration in the context of globalization. The actual diversity within Europe's borders is often the subject of contentious discussions and identity struggles, with 'Blackness' notoriously considered as antithetical to (exclusionary) notions of European identity (Gilroy, 1987). Nevertheless, as Black community organising, settling and integration become incontrovertible and increasingly visible, a sense of 'Afro-Europeanness' is equally on the rise, despite the complexity and internal diversity of these communities themselves (Blakeley, 2009).

This stream wants to engage with issues and challenges arising from Afroeuropean community organizing, how this affects understanding of Black and racialised identities and gives rise to processes of 'Europeanization' and 'non-Europeanization' (Crumley & Thomas, 2011). We particularly want to focus on the role and impact of the family in the making and unmaking of boundaries and identities, as important sites for the negotiation of racialized identities. As Afroeuropean families may particularly be affected by structures of discrimination based on 'race', religion, gender, age and sexuality, family structures may change or unravel, raising specific challenges for Afroeuropean family-making in Europe. Furthermore, the crossing and blurring of ethnic and racialised boundaries within and across families may prove the precariousness of any notion of a homogenous or fixed Afroeuropean identity (or any ethnic or racial identity for that matter).

Panels, papers and interventions may engage with the following issues:

- How can Afroeuropean identity be understood and defined, and how does it develop alongside rearticulated notions of 'Europeanness'? What kind of community-based practices are conducive or undermining of notions of stable Afroeuropean identities?
- What kinds of (intersecting) inequalities underlie family formation practices such as adoption and foster care that affect Afroeuropean communities in- and outside of Europe? How does Europe deal with the history of abduction and forced adoption of 'mixed-race' children during and after colonisation?
- How are Afroeuropean families in the present and past affected by policies and regulations concerning family formation, considering the fluctuating definitions of what constitutes a family across geographical locations, ethnic groups and social communities? How do reconfigurations of family and identity relate to notions like 'mixity' and 'métissage'?

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8 - Stream "Media, digital technologies and connectivity"

Stream convenors: Emma-Lee Amponsah (Universiteit Gent) and Kim Dankoor (Univ. Utrecht)

Media research on issues of 'race' and coloniality has long been dominated by questions of representation, discourse and audience reception theories. These studies generally rely on a perceived fixed position of ethnic and racial minorities as passive receptors of (mostly mass) media. However, studies surrounding media and 'race' are increasingly invested in counter-media practices, drawing attention to the proactivity of those formerly on the mere receiving end of media. Over the past decades, social media and online content have become sites of resistance in which the notion of collectivity, resistance and experiences of racialisation and marginalization are shared and remembered (Everett, 2009; Cottom, 2016; Sobande, Fearfull & Brownlie, 2019; Brock, 2020). In this way, the cyberspace also facilitates the construction of Black realities, cultures, identities and knowledge.

This stream wants to engage with media as a site of identity construction, knowledge production and technology of remembrance. We invite panels that engage with questions related to Afroeuropean connectivity, collectivity and/or remembrance in relation to media, communication, technology, digitality and/or Afro-futurism. We particularly encourage submissions from a critical media studies perspective, but submissions from other disciplines and practice-based interventions are as welcome.

Some specific questions we would like to include are as follows:

- How can Afroeuropeans' media interference and production cause structural social change?
- When and how does mediated communication lead to mobility?
- What are the main infrastructures and technologies that enable "Afroeuropean connectivity" - locally and globally?
- What is the role of media and digital communication in Afroeuropean identity formation and cultural memory?
- How do digital technologies and connectivity between Black communities across (sub)national borders and continents co-shape (the) Black (experience in) Europe?
- How does (transnational) connectivity challenge national frameworks of communication and remembrance?
- How does the cyberspace facilitate the construction of Black realities, cultures, identities and production of knowledge?

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9 - Stream "Decolonising knowledge, spaces and institutions: from activism to transformative change"

Stream convenors: Sophie Withaeckx (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Sarah Demart (Université Saint-Louis Bruxelles) and Nicole Grégoire (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

'Decolonisation' has recently become a buzzword and a call for action in a variety of societal domains, spurring reflections in the cultural sector, social work, museums, media or public space. Educational and cultural spaces have become particularly challenged in discussions on decolonisation, as they are sites of reproduction and normalisation of racialised, gendered and classed views of the Self, of the Other, of what counts as proper knowledge, and of who can be subject or object of knowledge.

The 'decolonisation-debate' has already hugely contributed to drawing public, political and academic attention to the legacy of colonialism and imperialism in European societies, and has resulted in reflections and actions seeking to transform public spaces, for example by removing statues or plaques honouring colonial oppressors or expanding Eurocentric curricula to include non-Western voices. However much remains to be done in terms of effective inclusion of historically marginalised groups in the power structures of these institutions, as the increasing popularity of 'decolonization'-discourses may also function – just like 'diversity' – as a 'non-performative': the mere presence of policies and committees wielding such words may serve to mark such institutions as *already* decolonized while racism, sexism and the actual underrepresentation of minorities in these institutions may remain unnamed and unaddressed.

In this stream, we call for contributions engaging with the insights and opportunities offered by postcolonial and decolonial activism and theorising. The following topics and questions can be addressed:

- Which theories, movements and practices are currently developed in Afroeuropean communities to challenge dominant and exclusionary forms of knowledge production? What kinds of critical epistemologies and alternative forms of knowledge production are being used and developed?

- How are prevailing modes of representation and education challenged in institutions like museums and universities, and transformed by the activism of decolonial social movements?

- How effective have debates on the decolonisation of cultural heritage, remembrance sites and public spaces been up until now? Which actions have been taken in terms of the restitution of cultural, spiritual and religious artefacts, which were unlawfully acquired during imperial and colonial rule for display in Western museums?

- Which connections can be made between activist movements in Europe and other locations where antiracist and decolonial movements have risen (e.g. the UK, South Africa, the USA...)?

- How can dynamics of non-performativity and co-optation be identified and debunked? Which tactics and strategies for transformative change can be developed by those working within institutions that remain, despite apparent commitments, essentially resistant to claims for diversity and decolonization?

10 - Stream "Pan-Africanism, global justice and human rights in Europe"

Stream convenors: Michael McEachrane (University of Lund), Olivia Gieskes (University of Edinburgh), Stefaan Smis (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and Rahel Weldeab Sebhatu (Malmö University).

Pan-Africanism is a critical part of Afroeuropean history. The Pan-African conferences in London, Paris, Brussels, Lisbon and Manchester (1900-1945) were key to anti-colonial liberation movements in Africa and elsewhere. These conferences in Europe recognised that Africans and people of African descent across the world, with their shared physical characteristics and continental origins, find themselves in similar racially stratified social and international orders. They also recognised that what we today call "globalisation" was a result of centuries of European imperialism and colonialism. Their calls for liberation, equal rights, justice and, in the words of the Fourth Pan-African Congress 1927, an international "reorganization of commerce and industry so as to make the main object of capital and labour the welfare of the many rather than the enriching of the few"--still remain relevant today.

This stream, "Pan-Africanism, global justice and human rights in Europe," will build on the philosophy and legacies of the canonical Pan-African conferences in Europe (1900-1945) and offer reflections on their continuing relevance to understanding and addressing the predicaments of African Europeans and Europe's role in producing and maintaining social and international racial stratifications. This includes explorations of how social and international orders that discriminate against Africans and people of African descent intersect with race, gender, class, nationality and more.

This stream invites abstracts for panels along the lines of any or several of the following themes:

- How is Pan-Africanism relevant to Europe? For example, how can Pan-Africanism inform our understanding of Africa and the African Diaspora in relation to Europe; in terms of intersections of social and international justice and sustainable development; in terms of "decolonizing" Europe; and its relation to Africans and people of African descent, and its place in the world?

- How is Pan-Africanism relevant to Black European identity formations, social positions and political engagement--keeping in mind intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, nationality and so on? For example, Black European political activism and its connections to activism in other parts of the world such as the Black Lives Matter movement in the US?

- How do post-colonial relationships between Europe, Africa and the Caribbean (including, the EU, AU and CARICOM) influence themes such as international relations, economy, sustainable development, development aid cooperation, representation in international organisations such as the UN and WTO?

- How may calls for reparatory justice for the histories and legacies of European colonialism, enslavement and trafficking of Africans, native genocide and systemic racial discrimination, be situated, understood and justified; how are they relevant to African Europeans?

- What is the relevance to Europe of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024 and its parent human rights instrument, *The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action* (2001), which makes extensive reference to "Africans and people of

African descent", regarding human rights and international justice for people of African Descent in Europe and elsewhere?

- How should we, from a European horizon, conceptualize Pan-African and human rights issues such as the migration of Africans to Europe and the humanitarian crises in and around the Mediterranean, the freedom of movement of Africans compared to Europeans, anti-black racism, and the collective rights of Africans and people of African descent?

- How are Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) relevant to the African diaspora in Europe and elsewhere?

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