



**8<sup>th</sup> Biennial AfroEuropeans Network Conference**  
**“Intersectional challenges in AfroEuropean Communities”**  
**Brussels, 22-24 September 2022**

**Stream Descriptions**

The AfroEuropeans Network conferences work with conference streams and we foresee the following two options: (i) you submit a panel (including chair and presenters) addressing a topic related to one of the seven conference streams, or (ii) you submit an individual paper. For each stream, the panels and papers that best suit the theme of the conference and the stream will be selected.

**1. Stream ‘Intersectionality as theory, practice and movement: re-centring black feminist legacies’**  
***Stream convenors: Sophie Withaecx (Maastricht University) and Emma-Lee Amponsah (Ghent University)***

Intersectionality has been widely recognised as a crucial theoretical framework to understand and analyze 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 Afro-European 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 Afro-European communities to engage with pressing challenges, like the ecological crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and other health crises, 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 'Structural racism, racialization and exploitation'**

***Stream convenors: Ojeaku Nwabuzo (European Network Against Racism/Vrije Universiteit Brussels) and Sibo Kanobana (Ghent University)***

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?

### **3. 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?
- Can we periodize antiracist activism into periodical waves?

#### **4. Stream 'Afropean literature and arts: aesthetics & politics'**

***Stream convenors: Elisabeth Bekers (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Janine Hauthal (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and Wetsi Mpoma (Wetsi Art Gallery)***

The cultural and political power of Afro-European literature and other arts resides as much in the exploration of pressing concerns, as in its material aesthetics and textual practices. This stream focuses upon the manifold local, international and transnational engagements with and by Black Europeans and understands Afro-European artistic practices and other written and oral forms of public (self-)expression as spaces that create visibility for the Black European population, Black histories, experiences and cultures.

Given the cross-disciplinary scope of this stream, papers may approach their topics from a range of disciplinary and/or inter-/transdisciplinary points of view, including such various fields as theatre, film, media and literary studies, art history, and cultural studies. In addition to 'classical' paper presentations, we also welcome other performative formats (readings or showings of works-in-progress, practice-as-research, artistic interventions etc.) that explore and chart different avenues of production, reception and cultural politics. We also invite contributions that address institutional aspects of artistic production, reception and circulation and debate the decolonization of the literary canon, the theatre, the art market etc.

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

- How do artworks engaging with or by Black Europeans challenge and transform dominant modes of image formation and knowledge production?
- How do Afro-European artistic practices create spaces in which counter memories (of Europe's colonial past) produce new collective identities?
- How do artistic productions respond to the complex intersectionalities affecting Afro-European identities?
- What are the fields' best practices in countering institutional racism and/or the idea of the canon?
- How do aesthetics and politics of the Afro-European artistic responses interact?
- How do Afro-European artists imagine Europe?
- How do Afro-European artistic practices negotiate the historical division between North and Sub-Saharan Africa?
- 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 Afro-European art and media expressions?

## **5. Stream 'Health, racial inequalities and intersectionality'**

***Stream convenors: Sarah Demart (University Libre de Bruxelles), Charlotte Pezeril (University Libre de Bruxelles) & Christian Dongmo (University Libre de 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 Afro-European 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, adherence 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 Afro-Europeans 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 Afro-Europeans claim a better and more appropriate access to health in specific fields (HIV/aids, obstetrical gynaecology, etc.)?
- How does the growing number of Afro-Europeans 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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**6. Stream 'Decolonising knowledge, spaces and institutions:  
from activism to transformative change'**

***Stream convenors : Sophie Withaecx (Maastricht University) and Sarah Demart (University 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 Afro-European 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?

## **7. Stream 'Contemporary blackness and black histories in urban Europe'**

***Stream convenors: Karel Arnaut (Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology – KU Leuven) and Lena Imeraj (Brussels Centre for Urban Studies – Vrije Universiteit Brussel)***

After centuries of African presence in Europe, from the second half of the 20th century onwards, cities all around Europe increasingly became a destination for individuals and families leaving the African continent. Ever since, Afro-European urbanites have been a major, albeit often misrecognized, force of social and cultural transformation, geo-economic connectivity and geopolitical activism. This stream seeks to identify, analyse and appraise the reach and depth of Afro-European engagements, struggles and co-realizations in Europe's inner cities and suburbs, metropolises, smaller cities, and rural towns. From a different angle, this stream wants to engage with issues of spaces of urban migration and the presence and (in)visibility of contemporary Blackness and Black histories in European cities in particular.

We invite contributions reflecting on the diverse urban realities and spatial dimensions of Afro-Europeans in Europe and specifically encourage innovative, more 'poetic' — that is, making-oriented — than conventional formats, such as roundtables with invited guests, city walks through Brussels or laboratories (i.e. sites that produce and present ethnographic works beyond text-based conventions; e.g. documentary/movie, urban street art (performance), slam poetry).

This stream invites abstracts for panels, papers and interventions addressing the following themes, perspectives and issues:

- Historical perspectives
  - Historical-geographical reconstructions of arrival and settlement processes of Africans in cities all around Europe: early history (before 20th c.) during and after colonisation.
  - African diasporic infrastructures in European (secondary) cities: historical stratification and construction, functioning in and transformation of the city
  - Recent developments/transformations of Afro-European urban communities and community-making: racial dynamics and Black social/cultural formations
- Contemporary perspectives
  - Afro-Europeans as city-makers: conviviality and inequality in emerging socialities and urban 'poesis'

- Urban policies and AfroEuropeans: planning, securitisation, city marketing of ethnic neighbourhoods or territorial/spatial stigmatisation
- Housing and residential formations since the 1960s: enclavation, segregation and dispersion (e.g. Mbodj-Pouye 2016).
- AfroEuropeans and other racialized minorities: subjectivation and changing positionings in processes of gentrification and/or ongoing migration (Erel 2011)
- Translocal/transnational urbanity
  - Transnational contacts and exchanges both through travel and through the internet: activism, religious activities, 'mobile worlding' (Beeckmans 2019)
  - Remittances of all sorts: financial, skills, infrastructure
  - Diasporic communities in the city
- Heritage
  - AfroEuropeans and urban colonial heritage: decolonial contestation, awareness-raising, etc.
  - Place-based diasporic histories, AfroEuropean chronotopes in processes of urban transformation.
- Methodological/conceptual issues of city-based 'AfroEuropeanit'
  - De-diasporisation (Krause and van Dijk 2010)
  - Afropolitanism (Mbembe and Balakrishnan 2016)
  - Conviviality (Gilroy 2007, Heil 2020)
  - Racialisation (Erel 2011)

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