



China in Africa and Africa in China

Impact on local societies, economies and cultures

12-13 December 2019

Call for papers

Since the late 1960s, China has gradually gained prominence on the world stage, first politically, but increasingly also economically and culturally. One of the most eye-catching developments in this respect is China's focus on Africa. Although China developed an 'Africa policy' since the early 1950s, focusing on political support and cultural collaboration, it is especially China's economic development ('Go Global') since the 1990s that explains this Africa focus. In the past five years, China's Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI) has paved the way for an even more prominent Chinese presence in Africa.

China's Africa policy emphasizes the logic of a "win-win partnership" among developing countries, featuring China's own experience in development as well as its much-vaunted "non-interference in domestic affairs" policy. Spearheading this policy, Chinese enterprises have been awarded major contracts in the continent, mainly in the fields of transport and seaport infrastructure, the energy sector, and mining activities. This enhanced presence of China in Africa not only impacts local societies, economies and cultures, but it also has important implications for the economic and political relations of the African nations with Europe and the United States.

Not only is China strengthening its presence in Africa, but also the African presence in China is gaining importance. Over the last couple of decades, Africa has been participating intensely in the Chinese economy, for instance by African traders and their direct interaction with Chinese manufacturers (in places like Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Yiwu). These traders have complemented the communities of African students in China who have shifted their fields of study from medical studies in the 1980s, to more commercially oriented studies, in this attracted by future job opportunities provided through the framework of China's BRI. This diversified student population not only raises questions with regard to curriculum building, but also touches upon the issue of cultural integration, an area of concern that already existed with regard to the African merchant communities in China's big cities.

Related to the attractiveness of China for Africans, further, is the issue of China's growing *soft power* (the use of cultural, educational, and diplomatic tools) to highlight the opportunities China offers for Africa.



It is clear that 'China in Africa, Africa in China' touches upon a range of economic, cultural, political, and educational issues that play an important role in the daily lives of Chinese and African local communities, and a series of political, economic, and geopolitical issues that concern the world order as we know it today.

This relationship between Africa and China and in particular the impact this collaboration has on local structures is the focus of this conference.

The conference therefore invites abstracts on the following subthemes:

- Local economies
- Local cultures and ecology
- Education
- Religion
- Soft power
- Migration
- Social identities
- Urban infrastructure and development
- Transport infrastructure development
- South-South collaboration
- Geopolitics
- Peace and security
- Developmental models
- Discovering worlds: daily life cosmopolitanism and tourism

Organizing committee

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Abstract submission

Abstracts should not exceed 500 words and should be written in English. Submission occurs by mail and before 20 June 2019 to Gap@UGent.be mentioning "Africa-China symposium – abstract title".

The full programme of the symposium will be made available in the course of September in order to allow partners in China and Africa to make travel arrangements.

Poster presentations

The Africa-China symposium also offers UGent doctoral students, MA students and other researchers the opportunity to present their research projects by means of a poster. Through these poster presentations the Africa and the China Platforms seek to give an overview of all current Africa- & China-related projects and doctoral research at Ghent University Association. These posters will be given a DOI-number and thus count as a publication.

Researchers who would like to submit a poster should also send in an abstract of this poster (before 20 June 2019). The posters (A0 format-portrait) should be delivered to the secretariat of the Africa Platform (Ghent University, Dpt. of Plant Production, Campus Coupure, Block A, room A2.062, Coupure Links 653, 9000 Gent), by December 1st 2019.



Special issue

The 2020 autumn edition of our international and double-blind peer-reviewed journal *Afrika Focus* (<https://ojs.ugent.be/AF>) will largely be devoted to the theme of the Africa-China symposium. Regular speakers as well as guest speakers are invited to submit their papers for publication in this special issue of *Afrika Focus*. The deadline for submitting manuscripts is 1 January 2020. If the paper is accepted, it will be published in autumn 2020.

For more questions, please contact the coordinator of the Africa Platform (Annelies.Verdoolaege@UGent.be) or the China Platform (Inge.Mangelschots@UGent.be)