

‘Africa Rising’: utopic or real normative power?

Conveners:

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The debate on the notion of ‘Africa Rising’, portrays an African continent as one on its journey towards self-reliance and sustainably equitable growth. This notion seems to challenge Walter Rodney’s notion of Africa-Europe dependency relationship, in which case, the latter develops at the expense of the former. Although scholars have examined the question of African development contraction from a colonial and neo-colonial optic. With the renewed Pan-African movement, there are emerging issues on the continent that are not necessarily of material development in nature, yet they continue to psychologically influence the position of African states in the new world order (NWO). It is not clear though whether the rising emancipation for African growth is genuine form of developing normative agenda/power for African states or simply a diplomatic propaganda?

Therefore, the proposed panel will examine whether African states’ position in the NWO is driven by normative agenda, or the notion of ‘Africa Rising’ remains a political rhetoric. The Panel will interrogate the ingenuity of this agenda in re-directing development theory construction and practice. For instance, what are the implications of the current African development agenda that preclude values, rules and psychological space? Is the continent stuck in push for material development at the expense of an effective normative agenda? How does lack of an effective intellectual framing of African development practice and theory forsakes Ali Mazrui’s dream of a Pax Africana? Could it be that the notion of ‘Africa rising’ is simply juxtaposed as an excuse to the rather tethered rhetoric of ‘African solutions to African problems’ thereby serves the narrow political objectives of the ruling class?

In view of these questions, the proposed Panel seeks to interrogate appropriateness of the notion of ‘Africa Rising’. By so doing, the panel intends to establish existence or lack of ‘normative power’, as key component of an African intellectual architecture. The panel is framed in three broad issues/arguments:

1. Response mechanisms to the notion of Africa rising’
2. State-state relations/interactivities
3. Viability for an African Intellectual Architecture