

The Cadbury Conference 2014 call for papers

Posted on Monday 6th January 2014



The annual Cadbury conference will take place at the **Department of African Studies and Anthropology** ([/schools/historycultures/departments/dasa/index.aspx](http://schools/historycultures/departments/dasa/index.aspx)), University of Birmingham, from 15 to 17 May 2014. This year's theme is ***Class in Africa: a reassessment***.

Since the heyday of debates about class analysis and its relevance to Africa during the 1970s and 1980s, there has been a noticeable shift in the nature and focus of academic interest in class. In more recent studies of socio-economic behaviour and transformations, scholars in the arts, humanities and social sciences have formulated new concepts and terms. For example, research into livelihoods has complicated occupational categorisations and stimulated debate about the nature and significance of the 'informal' economy, whilst work on consumption and performed identities has resulted in a focus on class-based

status, alongside competing understandings of group formation and social differentiation. Recent media and policy interest in the emergence of a 'new middle class' in Africa, Asia and Latin America invites new questions about the economic, political, social and cultural significance of this 'class' at a variety of scales, including the global and trans-national. This challenges us to reconsider how Africa is implicated in processes of globalisation and neo-liberalism, how such processes manifest themselves in specific contexts, and whether they can be interrogated effectively through questions about class formation, reproduction and struggle.

We invite papers from scholars working across the arts, humanities and social sciences, whose work is related to one or more of the following areas:

- Conceptual / historical - Is class still relevant in the analysis of historical and contemporary transformations in Africa? If so, how should the study of class proceed?
- Cultural / comparative - How can idioms of class in particular linguistic and cultural contexts offer the basis for comparison between different African settings, and those beyond Africa? Does literary and cultural production shed new light on African understandings of class?
- African workers and the global economy – Are Africans experiencing new forms of proletarianisation as a result of new trans-national flows of capital? How do these 'new workers' understand their social and economic position, and are new forms of solidarity emerging?
- Rural / urban Africa – Is landlessness on the increase, and if so, how is this altering the livelihoods and coping strategies identified in seminal studies of African labour migrants? What is the place of a labour / working class focus in settings where widespread joblessness and increased informalisation make wage-earners look like aristocracies of labour?
- The state against the middle class – Have Africa's middle classes been overly-dependent on the state since the colonial period, and in what sense has the state turned upon the middle classes since the 1980s?
- Who is middle class now? – Have the expansion of formal education, new remittance flows and dramatic increases in the value of urban land contributed to new forms of social and economic mobility? In what respects do men and women aspire to middle class status, and do they adopt different strategies in their efforts to achieve this? How are we to relate these approaches to the middle class with recent policy-focussed research definitions which emphasise levels of income?
- **Cadbury conference 2014 website** ([/schools/historycultures/departments/dasa/events/2014/cadbury/index.aspx](http://schools/historycultures/departments/dasa/events/2014/cadbury/index.aspx))

If you would like to present a paper, please email your title and abstract to Tom Penfold on t.w.penfold@bham.ac.uk (<mailto:t.w.penfold@bham.ac.uk>) by 14 February 2014. If you wish to organise your own panel, please indicate in your email the names of the presenters, and include their titles and abstracts.

Please remember that if you will need to apply for a visa in order to attend the conference, the earlier we receive your title and abstract the earlier we will be able to prepare the necessary letter of invitation.