The Local and the Global in African Studies: An Essay in Honour of Prof. Ayodeji Olukoju @60

Lynn Schler
Department of Politics and Government
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel
lynnschler@me.com

Abstract
The construction of knowledge in African Studies cannot be detached from the specific spatial contexts within which research, writing, teaching and advocacy take place. Building upon Ayodeji Olukoju's work on "the spatial dimension" in Lagos' history, this article argues that in every geographic context, African Studies evolves as an intersection between local and global flows of ideas, politics and capital. While efforts to examine the relationship between the local and the global will often confront a lack of certainty regarding the boundaries of each, we have much to gain from raising questions about each possible vantage point. Drawing on examples from Nigeria, South Africa and Israel, we see how an interrogation of the contested and ambiguous notions of space and place can reveal the politics of knowledge in African Studies. It will be seen that when we critically engage with how spaces are constructed and disputed through the dialogue between "here" and "there," we can help to ensure that African studies remains relevant and vibrant for years to come.

Keywords: *Decolonizing knowledge, African Studies, Ayodeji Olukoju, methodology, situated knowledge*

Introduction

Professor Ayodeji Olukoju's seminal work, *The Liverpool of West Africa: The Dynamics and Impact of Maritime Trade in Lagos, 1900-1950*, engages with the most central tension in the field of African studies - the intersection between the local and the global in African contexts. His book envisions Lagos as the local axis around which regional and international exchanges have historically revolved:

"Lagos trade and society functioned at the interface of the colonial and the metropolitan, the local and the global, and the junction of port-hinterland-foreland relations."[1] As a port-city, Olukoju argues, the economic history of Lagos must be seen through the movement of goods, people and ideas through the port. All aspects of political, economic, social, and cultural history of the city, including its demography, housing, wages, infrastructure, municipal politics, urban commerce, and entrepreneurship - must be understood in relation to global trade that flowed in and out of the city via ships. Olukoju's book thus makes the case for what he calls, "the spatial dimension" and envisions Lagos as crossroads between the local and the global. Lagos' development can be traced as a dialogue between local agendas and worldviews on the one hand, and global influences and interventions on the other. Olukoju's many other works also reflect these tensions between the local and the global. In his article, "Currency Counterfeiting and "Substantial Justice" in Colonial Nigeria: Rex vs Tijani Ali, 1931–33," Olukoju makes the argument that the local context was highly instrumental in shaping the particular ways that the penal code was adopted against counterfeiters in Northern Nigeria in the colonial era.[2] Likewise, with regards to seaports, Olukoju has argued "they exist in a symbiotic relationship with local, national and supranational economies."[3]

This article argues that the future of African studies will be largely shaped by the framework of analysis such as the one articulated in *The Liverpool of West Africa* and Olukoju's many other works. The mutually constructive relationship between the local and the global is what constitutes African contexts of the past and present, and it is what constitutes African Studies in every place it exists. This dialogue between the local and wider currents and flows must inform both Africanist research agendas, and the curriculum for all African Studies programs. At every geopolitical or historical juncture at which we interrogate the relationship between local contexts and broader economic, political, and cultural influences, we help to strengthen the need for more research and more knowledge of both the micro and the macro. Research and teaching on Africa must give voice to the complexities that emerge at these junctures.

But embracing the "spatial dimension" is not always a clear-cut process. Our efforts to identify and examine the relationship between the local and the global will often confront a lack of

certainty regarding the boundaries of each, and the boundaries between them. Where is the local? What are its borders and where does it end? Where does the global begin? There is no one answer. Yet, by merely raising these questions and examining the new vantage points that emerge with each possible response, we have much to gain. When we pay closer attention to space and how its boundaries shape our research questions and findings, we will be better able to discern the politics behind the construction of knowledge. Likewise, the ways in which we teach about Africa should reflect a critical engagement with the dialogue that shapes the relationship between the local and the global, and curriculums of African Studies programs should maintain a view to both "here" and "there." Rather than attempting to identify and set boundaries for where "here" and "there" can be found, we should focus on the tensions around the various possibilities for bounded spaces and places as the very starting point for our research and teaching in African Studies. The notion of the "local" is complex and contested, and there can be many "locals" in one space, and the "global" can pervade them all in very different ways.

This article provides a few examples to demonstrate how unpacking the contested and ambiguous notions of space and place can reveal the politics of knowledge in African Studies. It will be seen that when we critically engage with how spaces are constructed and disputed through the dialogue between "here" and "there," we can help to ensure that African studies remains relevant and vibrant for years to come.

Which Lagos? Urban Spaces and the Construction of Knowledge

Historians of Africa have embraced oral history as a requisite component of research, but there are no clear guidelines on the need for incorporating spatial awareness into the interview process, despite the fact that there are clear links between notions of particular "places" and the construction of narratives that arise in them. On the contrary, methodological guidelines often focus on the need to neutralize space as a factor in the interview process. As Ritchie argued, "Historians tend to isolate interviewees from their environment and to put them in a quiet place where they will not be interrupted during the interview."[4] Likewise, authors in *The Oral History Reader* advocate for quiet space as the ideal for conducting

interviews: "Sessions should be held at a time convenient to the interviewee and in a suitable location, preferably somewhere which offers seclusion, comfort and familiarity. There is often no better place than the narrator's home."[5] Yet, historians of Africa have taken a different approach to engaging with space. In many African contexts, it is impossible to neutralize space and there is little benefit to doing so. As Sarah Zimmerman argued, the busy spaces of Dakar often fostered unique opportunities for a variety of voices to emerge in the interview process: "Conducted in French and Wolof in hallways, homes, restaurants, cars, and veterans' bureaus, these interviews were rarely completed without interruption of audiences."[6] Time and again, historians of Africa have demonstrated the dynamic and enlightening ways in which space, with all its complexity, can actually be leveraged during interviews as an additional source of knowledge. Physical space can trigger memories, provide clues of the past, and it can also reveal conflicts and resistance.[7] Historian Isaac Olawale Albert warned us of the dangers of not "reading" the physical setting in which oral histories are conducted. As he wrote, "researchers often go straight to the interview techniques without first engaging in any formal process of ethnography and participant observation. In a real life situation, however, it is not possible to interview without first observing."[8] Indeed, we need to keep our eyes and ears open to what is happening around us,[9] but we also need to pay attention to how the specific places emanate specific discourses, ideologies and relations of power. Honing our spatial awareness, we can learn how each location, as a juncture between local and global flows, impacts our research findings and how we understand them.

These tensions became clear to me while collecting oral histories in Lagos over the course of several research trips from 2007-2011. My research was focused on the history of the former Nigerian National Shipping Line (NNSL) from its inception in 1959 until its demise in 1995. I conducted over seventy interviews with former seamen, officers, and managers of the NNSL to understand the history of the national shipping line within the broader history of nation-building in Nigeria. My research was focused on the rank and file seamen who worked for the NNSL, and aimed to shed light on working class perspectives on the NNSL as a symbol of nation-building. I drew upon several archives to conduct this research, such as the Merseyside Maritime Museum in Liverpool and at the British

National Archives in Kew Gardens. While these written sources were vital to the research, it was vital to conduct oral interviews to get the perspectives of those whose lives had been personally entangled with the NNSL. I began by interviewing rank-and-file seamen who had worked on colonial and NNSL ships, but it was also imperative to interview former captains, engineers, and managers in order to gain a fuller perspective of life on board the ships.

It was immediately evident that the experiences of Nigerian captains and engineers were starkly different from those of rank and file seamen. Nigerian seamen had begun their careers working on British merchant vessels, and many were exploited as a cheap form of labor within the colonial shipping industry. The rise of nationalism inspired them to hope for better opportunities, and they invested their expectations of independence in the establishment of the NNSL. But poor management and rampant corruption ultimately meant that Nigerian seamen had to contend with new hierarchies of power and forms of exploitation under Nigerian leadership. The NNSL was doomed by both internal politics and the inequalities of the global shipping industry, leading to its demise by the 1990s. For the rank and file seamen who had invested hopes in the national line, the NNSL emerged as a symbol of the unfulfilled promises that followed independence, and seamen's experiences reflected how decolonisation produced many disappointments for working classes. On the other hand, the experiences of Nigerian captains and engineers were starkly different from rank and file seamen. NNSL officers received extensive professional training while working for the national line, and they skillfully exploited benefits, prestige and opportunities for profit. Once the NNSL folded, they were able to leverage their connections and professional experience to secure new opportunities. Rather than feeling disillusioned, they possessed a wealth of knowledge about the political economy of international shipping, and offered ambitious blue prints for how the national line could be resurrected. There were thus stark contrasts between the narratives that emerged in interviews with working classes versus the elites.

Early on in the process of interviewing, I became attuned to how space was influencing the interviewing process for both classes, and playing a pivotal role in enabling informants to articulate their claims regarding the NNSL. This was not an even process, and the

relationship between physical spaces and the testimonies emerging in them greatly diverged across class lines. Managers, officers and captains actively leveraged the physical settings of interviews to construct and validate their perspectives and claims regarding the history of the NNSL. Interviews with working class seamen were also deeply informed by the spaces in which they were conducted, but these spaces echoed their disempowerment. Thus, the structures of power that were emanating from the interview settings were shaping which narratives were told, how they would be heard, and how they would be interpreted. Moreover, they were reproducing the same hierarchies and inequalities that pervaded the NNSL, and it was therefore essential to unpack the testimonies from the physical settings in which they emerged.

Two examples will demonstrate these contrasts. Isaac Bezi was a former member of management, and several informants had identified him as one of the notable beneficiaries of the rampant pillaging that had contributed to the NNSL decline in the 1980s. I was therefore eager to hear his perspective on accusations of corruption. During an introductory phone conversation, Bezi was extremely reluctant to set up a meeting, and he only agreed to meet after I promised that I would not press him on issues he did not want to discuss. He set ground rules for how the interview was to be conducted, and he itemized the subjects he would be willing to talk about. For the interview, Bezi suggested that we meet at the exclusive Apapa Club in Lagos. Entry to this private country club is by invitation only for non-members, and I was severely cautioned by two guards after taking a photo of the front gate. Entering the club along with my research assistant, Friday Aworawo, we passed by a parking lot filled with the latest Mercedes models, and we were led to Bezi, who was waiting in the club's restaurant. After we were seated, the waiter approached Bezi by bowing in reverence, and the former NNSL manager issued an order for refreshments. From start to finish, Bezi directed the conversation, and I cautiously adopted the same accommodating approach as all the others around us had seemed to do. I avoided topics that were predetermined to be off-limits, and instead listened to a carefully crafted narrative explaining the downfall of the NNSL. Bezi was largely preoccupied with setting the record straight regarding his own role in any wrongdoing, and he spoke with disdain for many former employees of the NNSL. His

most disparaging remarks were directed at the working class seamen, whose ongoing protest to demand proper pensions he dismissed as unjustified clamour from "migrant workers." Bezi's definitive narrative concerning the NNSL was conveyed with authority and conviction. The setting of the Apapa Club, radiating wealth and deference for those in power, helped to boost his narrative authority.

The settings in which I interviewed the former working class seamen of the NNSL provided a stark contrast. Unlike the elites, working class seamen left the NNSL without financial resources, pensions, or prospects for future employment. Most of the former NNSL seamen live today in dire poverty, and some are homeless and living under bridges in Lagos. While these were extreme cases, most of the seamen resided in some of the poorest and most chaotic neighborhoods of Lagos with malfunctioning or nonexistent infrastructure. Cell phones were either turned off to preserve power or without airtime, and it was usually a complex operation to even find the people we had scheduled with. After finally locating one of the seamen for an interview, we were invited into his home where there often was not a convenient place in which to sit down and conduct a long interview. Their homes were lacking electricity and rooms were often dark. Flowing sewage, mosquitoes and rats also created disincentives to extended sessions. In some of the most dire cases, seamen's homes were built on top of massive garbage dumps, and after only minutes in these areas, I was eager to leave. The places seamen lived in thus constituted a deterrent to the process of historicization, and these conditions of extreme poverty left an indelible mark on the historical narrative that emerged in the interview process. While interviews with captains and management took place in spaces that boosted their narrative authority, the spaces and places in which I interviewed working class seamen replicated seamen's despondency and disempowerment.

By paying attention to the interaction between space and the construction of knowledge, it was possible to gain important insights into the lasting impact of inequalities that emerged in the process of decolonization and nation-building. But it was the *contrast* between the elite and working class spaces that proved the most revelatory. The Lagos of the NNSL elite was a universe away from the Lagos of the working class seamen. Both reflected a history of the NNSL, but each offered a very different testimony on the history of

decolonization, economic nationalism, global trade and world systems. The vast urban landscape of Lagos is in fact a complex conglomeration of innumerable vantage points for viewing how the local and the global interact. Tacking back and forth between these starkly divergent spaces in the process of research, it was clear that space matters, but that each space provides a unique articulation of the relationship between “here” and “there”. Thus, our claims about the links between space and the production of knowledge must be based on an awareness of the politics of place-making. Before we can postulate about the role the city plays in the construction of knowledge, we need to first critically acknowledge *which* Lagos we are in. Spatial awareness can be used to our methodological advantage, but it requires that we interrogate how spaces evolve as intersections of local and global dynamics.

Where is Africa? Localising African Studies

The dialogue between the local and the global does not only shape research agendas, but also the way in which the field of African Studies has evolved over time. In each place where African Studies has been established, the field has grown and developed in relation to both the specific local context and more universal trends shaping the field across the world. Since its inception in the 1950s, how African Studies is defined, how it is taught, and the underlying political agendas that shape the field - are all determined by a negotiation between “here” and “there”. African Studies, Robbe wrote, are “rooted in different national traditions, different histories of colonialism and Orientalism, and maintaining particular (instituted) regional, disciplinary and thematic foci. Depending on the local historical circumstances – the interests of individual scholars, the priorities of state and academic institutions, the availability of materials and contacts with specific parts of Africa or sectors of African diaspora, the ideological agendas of the state – what came to be called “African studies” in different countries was based on very diverse political, theoretical and disciplinary grounds.”[10]

Highly divergent agendas have sometimes led to outright conflicts between Africanists in different geo-political, historical, or ideological contexts. The long standing and sometimes virulent debates between Africanist scholars of the Global North and those from the continent have been the most outstanding tension

throughout the history of African Studies. As Paul Tiyambe Zeleza has argued, African Studies has been in a perpetual state of crisis "rooted in the unyielding intellectual, institutional, and ideological solitudes and bitter contestations among the producers and consumers of Africanist knowledge who are divided by the inscriptions and hierarchies of race and nationality, locational and spatial affiliations, epistemological orientations, and ambitions. Particularly destructive is the continuing gulf between African American and European American Africanists and between the latter and African scholars."[11] Zeleza quotes Thandika Mkandawira's 1996 speech to the African Studies Association, in which he claimed that African scholars based in the continent were angered by Africanists from the Global North for honing "gatekeeping" devices that left African scholars at a disadvantage with regard to professional advancement. Mkandawira also complained about exploitative practices of Africanists who relied on local research communities for assistance in research, and habitually preserving the "conceptual work" for themselves while relying on Africans to do the hard work of field research. The lack of mutually beneficial relations, as well as the condescending way in which Africanists of the Global North tended to theorize and write about Africa, have also been sources of tremendous discontent.[12]

The gulf between the agendas, worldviews, theoretical frameworks and methodological practices between Africanists scholars in the US and Europe on the one hand, and scholars based in Africa on the other, has its roots in the bitter histories of racism and colonialism. As Mkandawira said, "In many ways, how American social sciences view Africa has had a lot to do with the politics of race relations..."[13] Likewise, Victor Uchendu admonished that African Studies in the United States and Europe was plagued by "a terminal colonial order."[14] While the divergences between the foundational conceptualizations and practices of African Studies in the United States and Europe and those of African Studies within Africa can be easily associated with a long history of colonial and neo-colonial dominance and inequalities, the influences of politics, economics, and culture are shaping the face of African Studies in locations that are found outside the Africa-Europe/US axis. Moreover, in examining the politics of knowledge construction in the field of African Studies in a context more peripheral to the history of colonialism, it is possible to gain new perspectives on the ways in

which the "local" and the "global" come to play in how Africa is defined, and the ways that African Studies evolves as a discipline. A few examples from my experiences as an Africanist scholar based in Israel can help to illuminate how African Studies emerges in every context as a dialogue between local national agendas and universal paradigms emerging from the broader field.

From its inception, the field of African Studies has been engaged in a very lively debate on the conceptual boundaries of "Africa" itself. On the one hand, there is clear rejection of the "tendency to treat Africa as one homogenous terrain"[15] and essentializing references to "Africa" as a single entity. Scholars, writers, activists, and artists all rebuff stereotypical discourses of "Africa" as a single idea or nationality. For example, in the widely viewed and influential TED talk, "The Danger of a Single Story," Chimimanda Ngozi Adichie describes her annoyance when the flight attendant on her recent flight had made an announcement referring to "India, Africa and other countries". I, too, confront this phenomenon all the time in my classroom at Ben-Gurion University in Israel, when students make references to "African culture" or "African development." Again and again, I challenge them to specify "*which* African culture," "*which* African development?" It is an uphill battle to help Israeli students appreciate the immense diversity of the continent, and to carefully consider specific local contexts and their unique political, economic, social and cultural histories. Throughout their lives, these Israeli students have confronted generic references to "Africa" in the media and popular culture. As Curtis Keim argued, western media generally portrays Africa as a place for either "wild animals, park rangers, and naturalists, or "war, coup, drought, famine, flood, epidemic, or accident."[16] Moreover, there is little specificity or contextualized knowledge when it comes to references to any of news events. Thus, Keim argues, popular perceptions of Africa led most westerners to believe that "Africa is just one large country; Africa is all jungle; Africans share a single culture, language, and religion," and he charges his readers: "If you think you have escaped these concepts, you are either extraordinarily lucky or you fool yourself easily."[17] Even for Israeli students who enroll in the African Studies program out of desire to learn more about the continent, it is nearly impossible to think outside these homogenizing images at the outset of their studies. We therefore invest time and

effort, particularly with first year students, to break down these stereotypes and encourage them to seek out specific, grounded and localized knowledge.

At the same time, there is also an intellectual and ideological need for those of us in African Studies to engage with the universal identification with "Africa" as a basis for common identity. Ndlovu-Gatsheni contended with the rhetorical question, "Do 'Africans' exist?" by suggesting that historical events and circumstances have created Africa as a place, and Africans as a people. As he wrote, "processes as the slave trade, mercantilism, imperialism, colonialism, migration, and globalisation have combined to fashion human identities in Africa" and produced "Africa as an idea and cartographic reality and African identity as a contingent phenomenon."[18] Similarly, Appiah acknowledged that Africa is comprised of multifarious communities that have evolved through vastly different cultural and historical circumstances, but nonetheless, he positioned "African solidarity" as a vital rallying point. Appiah claimed that commonalities in history and contemporary challenges have forged a "continental identity" that can be mobilized to address shared concerns: "We share a continent and its ecological problems; we share a relation of dependency to the world economy; we share the problem of racism in the way the industrialized world thinks of us [...]; we share the possibilities of development of regional markets and local circuits of production..."[19]

The future of African Studies depends upon our ability to explain the need for *both* locally situated knowledge and universalising paradigms. Thus, while I chide my students for asking questions like, "why isn't Africa developed?", and encourage them instead to ask about the history of specific development initiatives in specific political and economic contexts, I also want them to understand how histories of the slave trade, colonialism and neoliberalism, along with intellectual movements such as Pan-Africanism, Garveyism, Negritude, and the African Renaissance have all contributed to a process of collective identity formation for "Africa" and "Africans".[20] And, that this collective identity is a vital tool for forging solidarities needed to address common needs.

Understanding this tension between a rejection of generalisations on the one hand, and an embrace of universalising intellectual agendas on the other hand is indeed a complex

undertaking, particularly for students in western universities who come to African Studies with cultural baggage that weighs them down with negative stereotypes of "Africa." As Ndlovu-Gatsheni wrote, "Africa is a continent that is ceaselessly seeking to regain and negotiate itself above the Eurocentric egoisms of singularities that continue to inform conventional and often insensitive notions of identity imposed on it and its people by external agents."[21] But it is not only students who are guilty of "singular" conceptualisations of Africa. Academic bureaucracies and funding structures also reflect a monolithic conceptualization of the continent, and rarely differentiate between the specific contexts and needs for conducting research in "Africa." This has broad implications for the ways in which research is funded. I was able to exploit this situation to my advantage for my last sabbatical, when I sought a position as a visiting scholar at the University of Cape Town. I was a bit worried when I submitted the necessary forms to my university bureaucracy, as the rules for sabbaticals clearly stipulate that funding will only be provided for those going to destinations that are directly related to their research. Throughout the process, I anticipated receiving an email from some committee member asking me why an historian of colonialism and decolonisation in West Africa should receive funding for a fellowship in Cape Town. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this email never came, and instead I was granted the fellowship. Indeed, the "eurocentric egoisms of singularities" played a role, and no one questioned why a professor in African Studies should be provided funding to go *somewhere* in Africa. But ironically, when I arrived at UCT, I remember being greeted with great enthusiasm by the head of the institute where I was to be hosted, who declared how "happy he was to have an Africanist around." I was surprised to hear there were few scholars who defined themselves as Africanists in a South African university. Indeed, the question of what role, if any, African Studies should play in the South African academic institutions erupted into a virulent public debate only a few years before, when plans to "disestablish" the Centre for African Studies at UCT were proposed.[22] This was only the first of many confrontations I had throughout the year with the divide between South African intellectual traditions and African Studies as I recognised it.

It would thus seem that African Studies has not reached a universal consensus on the idea of "Africa". But I would argue that

this lack of consensus is in fact the key to ensuring the fruitful future of African Studies. The only consensus we must reach is a commitment to maintaining a critical dialogue between the local and the global in determining the contours of our field. From the vantage point of every local context, African Studies must constitute a space of analytical engagement with the boundaries, the mission, and the transformative power "Africa" as an idea. While the debate will produce outcomes that reflect different priorities in each location, Africanists everywhere should be unified in our demand for a rigourous and informed engagement with all descriptions of place, and a vigilant awareness of how the politics of knowledge production continues to shape our field. We need to consistently ask what is at stake in the bordering process, and what are the material and ideological costs of drawing a border around any one location.

This dynamic could be seen in a recent conflict that threatened to split the already tiny community of Africanist scholars in Israel. A foundation that gives out annual prizes for scholarly achievements in various academic fields decided to grant a prize in the field of African Studies. This decision was itself quite a remarkable development, and many of us hailed the recognition that it granted the field. It was a prestigious prize and included a considerable sum of prize money for the recipient. As a few of our elder statesmen in African Studies have earned an international reputation, such as the political scientist, Naomi Chazan, many of us were dismayed when the winner announced was an Ethiopianist. Immediately an outcry went up from within the community, protesting that the prize was intended for someone in African Studies. This objection understandably drew some public backlash, including newspaper headlines that proclaimed that Africanist scholars in Israel do not know that Ethiopia is in Africa. Of course, those who objected to the chosen recipient are well aware that Ethiopia is in Africa. But the prize winner was a scholar who had spent a large part of his career arguing that his work should be situated in the field of Middle East Studies, and he continually disassociated himself from the ideological agendas and theoretical approaches of African Studies. For the community of African Studies in Israel, and I suspect elsewhere also, the prize winner's contempt for being associated with the ideological traditions of African Studies is a disqualifier for a prize in African studies. African Studies cannot

be separated from its historic mission and identity. As Insa Nolte argued, African Studies is the product of wider inequalities,[23] and since its inception, it has been inherently tied to struggles for liberation, transformation and empowerment.

Thus, the future of African Studies must be a deliberate and dedicated identification with the goals of empowerment that underlie the idea of "Africa". As Robbe argued, African Studies must offer scholars a "laboratory of transdisciplinary thinking," a space to address matters of public concern, and effective tools for addressing political, economic and cultural issues.[24] As Chinua Achebe wrote, "You have all heard of African personality; of African democracy; of the African way to socialism, of negritude, and so on. They are all props we have fashioned at different times to help us get on our feet again. Once we are up we shall not need any of them anymore. But for the moment it is in the nature of things that we may need to counter racism with what Jean-Paul Satre has called an anti-racist racism, to announce not just that we are good as the next man but that we are better."[25] Similarly, at the opening of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana in 1963, Kwame Nkrumah made his case for African Studies: "we must re-assess and assert the glories and achievements of our African past and inspire our generation, and succeeding generations, with a vision of a better future." Yet, he continued, "But you should not stop here. Your work must also include a study of the origins and culture of peoples of African descent in the Americas and the Caribbean …"[26] For Achebe and Nkrumah, the borders of "Africa" expand and contract in response to political and ideological necessities.

A comparison of African Studies across the globe reminds us that knowledge is always situated, but also the product of the mutually constructive relationship between the local and the global. As Achille Mbembe wrote, "African identities are a product of the combination of the 'the elsewhere' and 'the here'."[27] The same can be said for African Studies - it is the combination of "the elsewhere" and "the here". What we research and what we teach about Africa must be rooted in both a conscious engagement with the local, and an ongoing examination of its relationship to the global. To "localize" African Studies, we have to set an agenda that reflects a deliberate and dedicated identification with the goals of empowerment that underlie the idea of "Africa", but to make it relevant in each local

context. As an Africanist in Israel, I feel an urgency to include South African history in our curriculum, as the history of apartheid and struggles against it can provide vital food for thought for my students in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. In Nigeria, or Namibia, Mozambique, Japan or Mexico – the agenda for African Studies will be based on different political exigencies, economic realities, and social tensions. From each vantage point, "Africa" can become a rallying cry, but it will be heard differently and mobilized in particular ways in each context that we research or teach African Studies. The future of African studies thus requires us to see double. "Africa" is both a singular idea and a conglomeration of vastly diverse cultural contexts. We need to take note of what is distinctive in local contexts, but also look across locations to see global problems and global solutions.

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