

Programme Point Sud 2020

Mobility and Displacement in ‘Post-Slavery’ West Africa: A South-South-North Dialogue on Concepts, Conflicts and Civic Engagement

1st-6th December 2020, Point Sud, Bamako, Mali

Conveners

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Abstract

This workshop focuses on the linkages between movement and legacies of slavery in contemporary West Africa, establishing analytical connections between migration, displacement studies and (post-) slavery studies. Our empirical point of departure is the aftermath of an ‘anti-slavery movement’ called *Ganbana* or *Ganbanaaxu* (Soninke: equality), which since 2017 has gained traction in the West African subregion and its worldwide diasporic ramifications. The movement demands equality and dignity for people categorized as descending from slaves (*komo*) vis-à-vis people of free descent, and in particular the dominant elite (*hooro*). *Ganbana*’s contestations over the meaning and value of ‘slave descendants’ have resulted in violent conflicts and forced displacements in the Kayes region of Mali and in several other Soninke areas in the Gambia, Senegal, Guinea Conakry and Mauritania.

Strategically based in Bamako, it will provide a forum for regional experts and civil society stakeholders to debate recent events, while also situating them in a wider perspective. The *Ganbana* case raises poignant questions about the contemporary legacies of internal slavery in relation to contexts – such as Soninke areas – strongly marked by mobility and diasporic relations. It interrogates the historical and contemporary role of human mobility in the social reproduction and contestation of (post)slavery. The workshop will thus invite discussion on the nexus between slavery and migration studies in Africa and the African diaspora. It will then broaden the conversation both historically and geographically in a bid to generate a south-south-north dialogue on long-term processes of silencing/contestation and integration/displacement in post-slavery societies. Returning to the region, the workshop will finally promote knowledge transfer among all stakeholders, bringing into focus the circumstances under which phenomena like *Ganbana* emerge and evolve over time.