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Vortrag

## **~~The West~~: Under the African Gaze in the Digital Age**

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This paper argues that inversion working through the mode of studying back centers the question of who can study who and functions as a form of decolonization that deviates from epistemic power hierarchies that traditionally privilege the Global North over the Global South in knowledge production. Drawing on theoretical insights from Black feminism, postcolonial studies, African studies, and digital studies; the paper first deconstructs the ethnographic gaze and shows it as neither the preserve of anthropologists nor of a single racial group. However, it acknowledges that there are power dynamics at play within specific historical contexts that construct a particular race as privileged and in charge of the gaze that defines, disciplines, allows, and restricts. Mindful of this caveat, the paper then considers how in the digital age selected transnational African knowledge producers create counter-hegemonic texts which are simultaneously circulated across a variety of online mediated public spheres such as blogs, Facebook, YouTube and X (Twitter). Drawing on two different examples of (i) the hashtag movement #CadaanStudies and (ii) the skits of comedian Trevor Noah, the paper shows how these texts crisscross and reconfigure African and Western borders playing with the ethnographic gaze and directing it at whiteness. Specifically, the paper asks, how does whiteness feature in black imagination? Unpicking the pitfalls of inversion such as its homogenizing tendencies of otherwise disparate formations, its assumptions of a simplistic reversal of power hierarchies, and its re-inscription of a binary logic of centre and periphery; the paper shows the potential of the texts to transcend these pitfalls and to demystify whiteness as a social construct whose constructions can be differentiated along gender, class, ethnicity, geography, and power interests. The implication of this demystification is that it dislodges whiteness from its powerful position as indivisible and shows its fragmentations within.

Ein Vortrag im Rahmen des Kolloquiums der Arbeitsgruppe Ethnologie und Kulturanthropologie. Alle Interessierten sind herzlich eingeladen.