



Postgraduate Students' Seminar

Africa-China Doctoral Mobility and University Research Cultures in Ghana, Ethiopia and Tanzania



Prof. David Mills
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Biography:

Prof. Mills's current research focuses on the political economy of the global science system and its impact on institutional research and publishing cultures in African universities. His most recent book, 'Who Counts: Ghanaian Academic Publishing and Global Science', co-written with colleagues from the University of Ghana and Oxford, is available open access from African Minds.

Trained in Anthropology, and with interdisciplinary research interests, Prof. Mills uses ethnographic methods to examine the inequalities created by global higher education. He is particularly interested in African university research cultures and the role of Diamond Open Access scholarly journals within knowledge ecosystems.

In this seminar, Prof. Mills will present findings from his recent research on Africa-China doctoral mobility, focusing on how returning African scholars with Chinese doctorates have sought to influence research cultures in their 'home' universities. Drawing on interviews conducted in 2021 and 2022 with 26 doctoral and post-doctoral researchers from Ghana, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, Prof. Mills will explore the motivations behind pursuing doctoral research in China, the experiences of African researchers in China's performance-driven academic environment, and their attempts to replicate or adapt these research practices in their own institutions.

These three countries, with long-standing historical ties to China, sent large numbers of doctoral students to China, particularly in the decade leading up to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many participants were seconded from academic positions to upgrade their qualifications, entering an environment with a different research structure and expectations, including rigorous publication requirements and involvement in China-focused research projects.

Prof. Mills will discuss the challenges faced by these researchers in fostering research cultures in universities with limited resources and infrastructure, and the broader implications of such mobility for academic development in Africa.