

Humor in Africa

How to make light in dark times? This year's NVAS Africa Day, held on **Saturday 19 October (venue TBA)**, will focus on humor - in theory and in practice. While the humorous and the playful may sometimes seem incongruous with crises, they both find their foundation in absurdity (Martin 2022). Humor functions to address topics that are sensitive, 'off-limits,' and to subvert the status quo.

During political upheaval, cartoons and satirical images can be used to visualize discontent and ridicule those in power. Recently, a flurry of memes depicting the French president Macron express anti-colonial sentiments in West African countries, whereas the South African cartoonist Zapiro has famously captured and critiqued politicians in the country for decades. In the context of the development aid industry in Africa, European and American aid workers and volunteers have used satirical campaigns and ads to draw attention to the often-persistent power inequalities and stereotypes of an aid-dependent Africa that remain central logics for many development projects. The Instagram account of 'Barbie Savior,' depicting voluntourism and the campaign 'Africa for Norway,' positing the idea that Africans should donate radiators to help the freezing population of Norway, make visible and draw attention to the pernicious images of aid in Africa that continue to circulate.

Satire, caricature, cartoons, comedy, joking, teasing, the absurd, laughter, memes, punchlines, play – we invite you to share all the ways that people across the continent and beyond use humor to engage with the world around them. As the examples above show, humor is not merely a frivolity or distraction. It can be political, a means to protest, to articulate critique, or to engage creatively with intractable problems and circumstances. It can function as a coping mechanism, an agentive response when actions are circumscribed. Most of all, it is a social practice, a mode of communicating and a formative phenomenon in the weft of the social fabric.

We invite papers and 15-minute presentations that deal with different aspects of this topic on the African continent. Aside from presentations, we welcome different formats, including performances, stand-up comedy, (short) film screenings or other modalities that engage this topic creatively.

Please submit a title and a 250-word abstract or description of your contribution to nvasconf@asc.leidenuniv.nl before **1 September**. You will be informed whether your contribution has been selected by 15 September. For accepted contributions, we request the submission of the presentation material by 15 October.