



“Re-examining Elections, the African Experience”

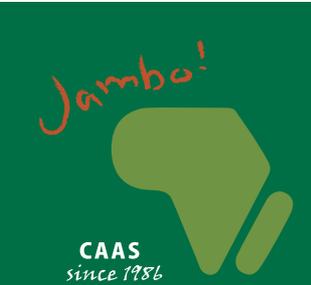
 **Friday 13 Oct 2017, 15:00 - 17:00**

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Elections are at the heart of representative democracy. This model has been presented as the ideal form of government, to be enacted across the globe. However, over the past thirty years a crisis has been developing. There has been a weakening of “mature democracies” in the West, in the same states that export this system of governance and its methods to the “young” democracies on the African continent. For the African states, the 1990s marked the end of many single party systems, and since then competitive elections have spread across the continent. Africans vote now more than ever. My comparative point is an examination of elections in Africa allows us to understand the origins and effect of today’s global political crisis through analysis of the electoral experiences and representative democracy.

The project *Re-examining Elections: the African Experience* is pioneering a new way for studying elections, based on qualitative methods which favor careful and heuristic empirical work. This approach allows researchers and actors to better understand elections by a dual examination of the act of voting and the anthropological procedures of legitimation of the elected. It is based on a comparative anthropological approach that gives greater weight to the data relating to the experience of actors from non-western countries, especially those from the African continent. This detour allows it, on the basis of ethnographic methods, to avoid adopting a pre-constructed theoretical framework of representative democracy, but to start from the idea that this definition is itself an empirical question, for both the researchers and actors.

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