

Prosecutors in Africa*: Examining institutional histories, professional practices, and imaginations of law, politics and justice

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Prosecutors are powerful actors in many African criminal justice systems, as in many other jurisdictions worldwide. Prosecutors are equipped with extensive powers of discretion to initiate or discontinue criminal proceedings on behalf of the state, and are backed by the power of the state. Looking at the power and wide discretions prosecutors enjoy, it is surprising that these criminal justice actors have not received much attention from social scientists interested in the study of the state, politics and law.

Over the last twenty years a number of fascinating accounts of more visible criminal justice actors, namely judges, magistrates and the police have been written. This workshop seeks to engage with, and add to, this literature by exploring the history of prosecutors, their working life and their positionality within the juridical and political systems of various African countries. We are particularly interested in contributions that address with their empirical work one of the following questions:

1. What are the histories of the profession and of the prosecuting authorities in Africa? How are prosecutors educated? When do prosecutors become 'professional' prosecutors? How do their career paths develop and evolve?
2. What are the everyday professional practices of public prosecutors in specific settings? What does their working day look like? What are the material, political and/or social conditions of their work? How do they perceive their work and their working environment?
3. How is a prosecutor's accountability and, closely related to that, their independence envisioned, demanded or practiced in their respective jurisdictions? To whom is accountability owed, to what end, and according to which standards and mechanisms? How have these visions, demands and practices changed over time?
4. How do prosecutors relate their working environments to the juridical and political systems in which they practice? What do prosecutors' views on the factors shaping their positioning within the justice system tell us about the nature of political authority? How do prosecutors deal with the instances when politics and politicisation enter the courtroom? How does this effect the ways they imagine and engage with the law and their ideas of justice?

This 2-day workshop will bring together interested early career researchers (including those who are in the final stages of their PhD) from various disciplines (such as anthropology, history, socio-legal studies, sociology, and political science) to engage with the above and related questions. Discussions and findings from the workshop are intended for publication.

To apply, send a 250 to 500-word abstract, a CV, and an indication of where you will be located in July 2016 to prosecutors2016@gmail.com by **31 March 2016**. Funding may be available to cover participants' travel expenses and accommodation; this is to be confirmed closer to the workshop date.

* Although the organisers' research expertise is located in the African context, we welcome contributions from other areas; particularly contributions that will enable participants to speak across the geographical divides to explore key thematic, methodological or theoretical connections.