

HistGeogUni

A Global Research Network on the Historical Geographies of the University



HistGeogUni Lecture 2023

Thursday, 18 May 2023, 9:00 to 10:30 (BST/UTC+1)

Dr Ruth Craggs

King's College London

**Learning from African geographers:
Decolonising the discipline of geography**

*Livestreamed in the James France building, room CC.0.21,
and online via Teams*

School of Social Sciences and Humanities
Loughborough University

Please register online via this [link](#) from April 2023 onwards.

Contact: Professor Heike Jöns, email: h.jons@lboro.ac.uk

HistGeogUni Lecture 2023

Learning from African geographers: Decolonising the discipline of geography



Dr Ruth Craggs

King's College London

How should we go about decolonising the discipline of geography? This question is hotly debated today, but it is not new.¹ In this lecture, I ask how geographers in Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania responded to the political transfer of power in the late 1950s and early 1960s. What did decolonisation mean to these geographers, and how did they seek to put it into practice in their professional lives within the university?

The term decolonisation was seldom used to discuss the processes transforming African higher education in this period; rather, the debate was about the process of 'Africanisation'. However, in many ways the demands of the time echo contemporary debates, not only in the focus on the need for change in institutional structure, personnel and curricula but also in the more fundamental demands to recentre the African academic world on the continent and away from the West. This lecture demonstrates the opportunities, ambiguities and challenges of decolonising work, and it ends with a brief reflection on what thinking historically might offer us in relation to the real and crucial imperative for decolonisation today.

Ruth Craggs is Reader in Historical and Political Geography at King's College London. She is currently researching histories of diplomatic training in postcolonial Africa with Fiona McConnell (Oxford University) and Jonathan Harris (KCL), funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

¹ Craggs, R. and Neate, H. (2020) What happens if we start from Nigeria? Diversifying histories of geography. *Annals of the American Geographers Association* 110 (3), 899-916.