



~Final Programme~

'Diplomacy and Development in the Digital Age: Civil Society as an Influencer or Influenced?'

Thursday, 4 August 2022

15:00 – 17:00 (SAST)

Hybrid Event

About this event:

This event aims to provide a platform for undergraduate and postgraduate university students in International Relations, Development Studies, Political Studies, Sociology, Economics, Law, Communications, Media and Journalism to gain a better understanding of the career opportunities that are available to them.

The discussion will centre around the theme 'Diplomacy and Development in the Digital Age: is Civil Society as an Influencer or Influenced?'. The Covid-19 pandemic forced the world to embrace virtual platforms for daily activities. Businesses moved to a work-from-home model and global leaders conducted multilateral negotiations through large split screens. Digital Diplomacy has had a transformative and disruptive impact on international affairs. Digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have been used to manipulate voting behaviour, spreading disinformation and targeting individuals to sway their vote. On the other hand, digital diplomacy has also been lauded as ushering in the age of citizen diplomacy, with the electorate having a stronger and more visible voice in policy choices made by their governments. The digital revolution is sure to have an impact on the setting, and achieving, of development agendas in the years to come.

The vast implications and possibilities of cyberspace in the field of humanities and specifically international affairs and related fields remain underappreciated. It is expected that the digital revolution will continue to reshape the world of work significantly. This event will explore the challenges and opportunities that the digital age creates for new entrants from the humanities into the job market by learning and hearing from current practitioners who are passionate about their fields.

Speaker's bio:

Dr Bob Wekesa

Dr. Wekesa is the Deputy Director of the African Centre for the Study of the United States based at the University of the Witwatersrand. He is a distinguished academic and researcher. He holds a Bachelors degree from the University of Nairobi and Masters and doctoral degrees from the Communication University of China, Beijing. In the Wits Journalism and Media Studies Programme, Dr Wekesa serves as both a lecturer and postgraduate student supervisor, contributing to African research at various organisations such as Good Governance Africa and the Public Diplomacy Council in the USA. Dr Wekesa's current research work includes international communication; diplomacy with a focus on digital and public diplomacy; African diaspora; the internationalisation of African cities; the geopolitics of Africa and established and emerging powers. Recently, he contributed to a Special Edition of the South African Journal of International Affairs, looking at Digital Diplomacy in Africa.

Cayley Clifford

Cayley Clifford is the Deputy Chief Editor at AfricaCheck, an independent and non-partisan organisation guiding public debates by assessing the authenticity of important public statements. Cayley is a 2018 KAS-SAIIA Scholar and holds a first class Masters Degree in International Relations from the University of the Witwatersrand. Cayley also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science and an Honours in International Relations, Summa cum Laude from the University of KwaZulu Natal. Cayley continued her work with SAIIA on the African Governance and Diplomacy Programme. She, along with Steve Gruzd, spearheaded the Russia-Africa project at SAIIA which produces cutting edge analysis on Russia's role in Africa.

Barend Lutz

Barend co-founded VoxCroft in 2018 and is now the Vice President of Global Operations and the CEO of VoxCroft's South Africa mission. Barend is responsible for leading the global team that supports VoxCroft's eagerness to assist with private industry business development, analytic, technological, and administrative efforts. Before founding VoxCroft; Barend spearheaded data-driven socio-political and economic open-source intelligence methods and tech in the private, public, and academic landscape. His published work focuses on understanding the new public spaces that are emerging with technological growth. He used this expertise in the private industry working as a political-security risk and digital media manager – developing tradecraft for data-driven risk analytics. Barend brought this tradecraft to the US government as an open-source media and data expert. Here he explored how big data and machine learning can further the fields of political, security risk analysis and population-centric intelligence – as well as how this experience can be integrated into high-performance global multi-disciplinary teams.



Matebe Chisiza

Matebe is the Country Manager in Public and Private Partnerships for the Southern African region at the International Committee for the Red Cross. Matebe is one of the 2016 (first scholar to get support on Honors) and 2017 SAIIA/Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Scholars who completed a research internship at the South African Institute of International Affairs. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Studies from Jacksonville University in Florida, USA and completed her Masters Degree in International Relations from the University of the Witwatersrand. Her research interests include gender equality, peace and security, technology as a tool in humanitarian assistance and conflict resolution. Matebe has formerly worked as the Foreign Policy Advisor at the Embassy of Switzerland in South Africa.

Time slot	Topic	Name and Designation
15:00 – 15:15	Welcome and Introductions	KAS Representative Ms Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive, SAIIA
15:15- 15:35	‘Setting the scene’	Dr Bob Wekesa, Acting Director, African Centre for the study of the United States, University of the Witwatersrand
Panel Discussion Moderator: Mr Steven Gruzd, Head of the African Governance and Diplomacy Programme, SAIIA		
15:35 – 15:45	Speaker Presentation	Ms. Cayley Clifford, Deputy Chief Editor of AfricaCheck (joining virtually)
15:45 – 15:55	Speaker Presentation	Mr. Barend Lutz, CEO and co-founder of VoxCroft Analytics
15:55 – 16:15	Speaker Presentation	Ms Matebe Chisiza, Country Manager: Public and Private Partnerships-Southern Africa Region, International Committee of the Red Cross
16:15 – 16:55	Question and Answer Session for Speakers	Mr. Steven Gruzd, Moderator
16:55 – 17:00	Closing and Thanks	Mr. Steven Gruzd, Moderator