

Whose Africa? Whose Culture? Reflections on Agency, Travelling Theory and Cultural Studies in Africa

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Who defines Africa? Who provides the theoretical templates for knowledge production in Africa? This paper seeks to answer these questions and to argue for a neopragmatic approach to the concept of agency, particularly in relation to knowledge production on the continent. The paper seeks to argue that an understanding of multiple varieties of individual and collective agency available to the African subjects will help cultural researchers and scholars to develop an emancipatory model of the continent that is neither imprisoned by inward conceptions of Africa nor fueled purely by Euro-centric discourses on Africa. Drawing on Edward Said's idea of 'travelling theory', the paper seeks to interrogate the totalizing discourses of globalization and related theories, and indeed, the mobility with which received theories move in and out of the continent, while local perspectives and voices remain repressed.