

# ELISA GAMBINO

Hallsworth Research Fellow in Political Economy  
Global Development Institute, The University of Manchester, UK

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## CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

Global Development Institute 2023-present  
The University of Manchester  
*Hallsworth Research Fellow in Political Economy*

## EDUCATION

School of Social and Political Sciences 2021  
The University of Edinburgh  
*PhD in African Studies*  
Thesis title: The political economy of Sino-African Infrastructural Engagement: The Internationalisation of Chinese State-Owned Companies in Kenya

School of Literatures, Languages, and Cultures 2017  
The University of Edinburgh  
*MSc in Chinese Studies*

Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures 2014  
The University of Turin  
*BA in Applied Languages (Chinese and English)*

## PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT

Global Development Institute 2023  
The University of Manchester  
*Lecturer in Global Development - Global Political Economy*

Department of International Relations 2021-2022  
London School of Economics and Political Science  
*LSE Fellow in the International Politics of China (China-Global South specialisation)*

Africa Matters Ltd 2021  
*Research Consultant (infrastructure and mining focus)*

## PUBLICATIONS

### Under Review

(*Journal article, minor revisions*) Gambino, E. and Franceschini, C. “South-South economic engagement: the centrality of embeddedness to the internationalisation of Chinese state-owned contractors in Africa”, *Review of International Political Economy*

(*Journal article*) Gambino, E. “Infrastructural lineages and profiteering: The political economy of Kenya’s 21<sup>st</sup> century ‘infrastructure turn’”, *Political Geography*

(*Handbook chapter*) Schaefer, K. J. and Gambino, E. “Chinese Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in Western and African labour markets”, in Eriksson, R. and Hansen, H. K. (eds.) *Handbook of Labour Mobility: Regional, national and global perspectives*. Edward Elgar.

#### Peer-reviewed journal articles

Gambino, E. and Reboredo, R. (2024) “Infrastructure, time, and labour: movement and suspension along the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor”, *Territory, Politics, and Governance*, pp. 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2024.2357574>

Reboredo, R. and Gambino, E. (2023) “Connectivity and competition: The emerging geographies of Africa’s ‘Ports Race’”, *Area, Development and Policy*, 8(2), pp. 142-161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23792949.2022.2115933>

Chiyemura, F., Gambino, E. and Zajontz, T. (2022). “Infrastructure and the politics of African state agency: Shaping the Belt and Road Initiative in East Africa”, *Chinese Political Science Review*, 8, pp. 105-131. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-022-00214-8>

Gambino, E. (2020). “La participation chinoise dans le développement des infrastructures de transport au Kenya: une transformation des géométries du pouvoir?” [Chinese Participation in Kenyan Transport Infrastructure: Reshaping Power-geometries?], *Critique Internationale*, 89(4), pp. 95-114. <https://doi.org/10.3917/cii.089.0098>

#### Editor-reviewed book chapter

Gambino, E. and Bagwande, M. (2024) “A global sense of workplace: Labour relations in Sino-African construction sites”, in Hönke, J., Cezne, E. and Yang, Y. (eds.) *South-South Infrastructure Globalities*. International African Institute-Hurst African Arguments Series, pp. 157-182. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197775363.003.0007>

Gambino, E. (2022). “Corridors of opportunity? African infrastructure and the market expansion of Chinese companies”, in Lamarque, H. and Nugent, P. (eds.) *Transport Corridors in Africa*. Melton: James Currey, pp. 286-316. <https://bit.ly/3CpX8F2>

#### Other publications (selected)

Gambino, E. (2023) “Does the private sector matter to Xi’s foreign economic policy?”, *China-Global South Project*, 10<sup>th</sup> March.

Gambino, E. (2023) “Africa: nuove sfide per Pechino” [Africa: New challenges for Beijing], *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI)*, 27<sup>th</sup> January.

Gambino, E. (2022) “Verso obiettivi comuni: l’evoluzione delle relazioni Cina-Africa nel XXI secolo” [Towards common objectives: The evolution of China-Africa relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century], *Italianieuropei*, I, pp. 87-96.

Reboredo, R. and Gambino, E. (2022) “Africa’s Port Race is hyped as ‘development’ but also creates pathways for plunder”, *The Conversation*, 13<sup>th</sup> December.

Gambino, E. (2020) “Job insecurity, labour contestation, and everyday resistance at the Chinese-built Lamu port site in Kenya”, *The Asia Dialogue*, 26<sup>th</sup> February.

#### **WORK IN PROGRESS**

(*Journal article*) Gambino, E. “Chinese private capital localisation under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)”, Target journal: *International Affairs (Policy Series)* [Submission: December 2025]

(*Journal article*) Gambino, E. and Ebia, F. B., “Everyday South-South encounters: Exploring the implications of growing China trade in Togo”, Target journal: *Development & Change*. [Submission: early 2025]

(*Journal article*) Franceschini, C. and Gambino, E. “Follow things, people, and controversies: Researching infrastructural entanglements”, Target Journal: *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. [Submission: early 2025]

(*Editor-reviewed book chapter*) Gambino, E. and Alden, C. “Projects and polls: Chinese engagement and African political cycles”, in Amoah, L. G. (ed.), *Africa-China relations: Partnership, peonage or pawnage?* Palgrave. [Submission: November 2024].

## **POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

### Reports

(2024) “Stratégies d’expansion des commerçants chinois au Ghana” [The expansion strategies of Chinese traders in Ghana], *Centre Africain pour le Commerce, l’Intégration et le Développement* [African Centre for Trade, Integration, and Development], Dakar, Senegal.

(2024) “Study on the increasing presence of Chinese traders in Ghana: Challenges and implications”, *University of Manchester*, Manchester, UK.

(2020, with Moze, F.) African Continental Free Trade Area: Prospects and Challenges”, *Foreign Commonwealth Office (now FCDO)*, London, UK.

### Workshops

(2024, with Ebia, F. B.) “Résultats préliminaires du projet de recherche sur le commerce chinoise en Afrique de l’Ouest” [Preliminary results of the research project on China trade in West Africa], held in Lomé, Togo.

*Participants:* 12 West African traders engaged in the trade of Chinese goods; 6 Togolese government officials; 2 civil society organisation representatives.

(2024, with Ebia, F. B.) “Le commerce des produits chinois en Afrique de l’Ouest: Défis et Opportunités” [The trade of Chinese products in West Africa], held in Lomé, Togo.

*Participants:* 15 West African traders engaged in the trade of Chinese goods.

### Talks

(2024) “The expansion strategies of Chinese traders in Ghana”, *Regional consultation for the establishment of a civil society organisation network of West Africans for monitoring Africa-China cooperation*, Centre Africain pour le Commerce, l’Intégration et le Développement [African Centre for Trade, Integration, and Development], Dakar, Senegal.

(2023) “China-Global South Engagement”, *China Development Forum Public Lecture*, LSE, London, UK.

(2023) “The increasing Chinese presence in African construction markets”, *Infrastructure in Africa*, Gatehouse Advisory Partners, London, UK.

## **GRANTS AND AWARDS**

- 2024: Awarded funding from the Learning Through Research Internship funded by the Student Experience Internship Programme, University of Manchester for the project “Chinese private companies in Africa: emerging patterns of South-South trade?”;

- 2023: Awarded £12,000 for the project “African hubs, Chinese trade, and Global Circulation” by the International Science Partnership Fund for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) Activities;
- 2023: Awarded a three-year Hallsworth Research Fellowship in Political Economy;
- 2023: Awarded €4000 to organise the Early Career Workshop at the European International Studies Association (EISA)-PEC 2023 titled “The Second Cold War: US-China rivalry for global network hegemony” (co-organised);
- 2022: LSE Class Teacher Award, Department of International Relations, LSE;
- 2022: Awarded \$5000 as part of the Local Network Chapter Scheme of the Chinese in Africa/Africans in China Network to establish the Italian Association for the Study of Africa-China (co-founded);
- 2022: Awarded funding from LSE student experience Undergraduate Research Assistantships for the project “Chinese private companies in Ghana”;
- 2017: Awarded a full PhD scholarship as part of the European Research Council-funded project “African Governance and Space” ([AFRIGOS](#); ADG-2014–67085) led by Prof. Paul Nugent.

## PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND MEMEBERSHIPS

- Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCertHE), LSE Eden Centre, July 2023
- Regional Studies Association
- Italian Association for Africa-China Studies (Co-founder and Secretary)

## AFFILIATIONS AND VISITING FELLOWSHIPS

Adjunct Researcher <i>Centre for Asian Studies, University of Ghana, Ghana</i>	2023-present
Visiting Research Fellow <i>Guanghua School of Management, Peking University, China</i>	2018

## FIELDWORK RESEARCH

- Accra and Tema, Ghana, June-September 2024
- Lomé, Togo, July 2024
- Accra, Ghana and Lomé, Togo, March 2024
- Accra and Kumasi, Ghana, July 2023
- Accra and Kumasi, Ghana, June-July 2022
- Accra and Kumasi, Ghana, May 2022
- Accra, Ghana, February 2022
- Nairobi, Mombasa, and Lamu, Kenya, July-August 2019
- Beijing and Hong Kong, China, May-June 2019
- Nairobi, Mombasa, and Lamu, Kenya, January-April 2019
- Nairobi, Mombasa, and Lamu, Kenya, October-December 2018
- Beijing, China, June-July 2018

## ACADEMIC TALKS, CONFERENCES, AND WORKSHOPS (selected)

### Invited talks

(2024) Chinese capital internationalisation in West Africa: Implications for manufacturing under the AfCFTA, *Toyota Wessels Institute of Manufacturing Studies (TWIMS) Global Programme*, University of Manchester, UK, 7<sup>th</sup> October.

(2024) Transnational networks and the internationalisation of Chinese private capital”, *Early Career Researcher Seminar Series*, Manchester China Institute, University of Manchester, UK, 7<sup>th</sup> March.

(2024) Beyond state-backed funding: The multiple embeddedness of Chinese contractors in Africa, *International Business Camp*, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, UK, 9<sup>th</sup> May.

(2024) Refashioning Patterns of Profiteering: The “Infrastructure Turn” in Kenya’s Political Economy, *China and the World: A critical discussion on state capacity in the developing countries*, LSE-Fudan Global Policy Hub, UK, 29<sup>th</sup> January.

(2022) Locating Chinese transnational networks in the Ghanaian construction-mining nexus, *African Politics Research Group*, University of Edinburgh, UK, 14<sup>th</sup> March.

### Conference presentations

(2024) Beyond state-backed funding: The multiple embeddedness of Chinese contractors in Africa, *CGF-ODI-AERC Conference 2024*, SOAS, UK, 30<sup>th</sup> November-1<sup>st</sup> December.

(2024) The making of a ‘meeting place’: Chinese networks and capital in Kumasi, Ghana, *Regional Studies Association Conference*, Firenze, Italy, 11-14<sup>th</sup> June.

(2023) The rise of the private sector? Evolving state-business relations in China’s foreign economic policy”, *European International Studies Association Conference*, Potsdam, Germany, 5-9<sup>th</sup> September.

(2023) Refashioning patterns of political and economic profiteering: the “infrastructure turn” in Kenya’s political economy”, *European International Studies Association Conference*, Potsdam, Germany, 5-9<sup>th</sup> September.

(2023) Infrastructure, Time, and Labour: Movement and Suspension along the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor, *European Conference of African Studies*, Cologne, Germany, 31<sup>st</sup> May-3<sup>rd</sup> June.

(2023) Beyond state-backed funding: Multiple embeddedness and the internationalisation of Chinese state-owned contractors in Africa, *Europe and China in Africa*, Sant’Anna di Pisa, Pisa, Italy, 30<sup>th</sup> November-1<sup>st</sup> December.

(2022) Locating transnational networks in the internationalisation processes of Chinese companies in Africa”, *African Studies Association Conference*, Philadelphia, PA, USA, 17-19<sup>th</sup> November.

(2022) A global sense of workplace: labour relations in Sino-African construction sites, *European International Studies Association*, Athens, Greece, 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> September.

(2021) Chinese participation in Kenya’s transport infrastructure projects: reshaping power-geometries?”, *African Studies Association Conference*, online, 16-20<sup>th</sup> November.

(2019) Catching Pace with Sino-African engagement: the issues of language, trust, and access in fieldwork methodology”, *European Conference of African Studies*, Edinburgh, UK, 11-14<sup>th</sup> June.

## Workshops

(2023, *co-convenor*) The Second Cold War: US-China rivalry for global network hegemony, Early Career Workshop at the *European International Studies Association Conference*, Potsdam, Germany, 4<sup>th</sup> September.

(2022) One Pandemic, Two Systems, *Unpacking Chinese Health Diplomacy During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Sharing Heritages, Narratives and Visuality Along the Health Silk Road*, European International Studies Association, Athens, Greece, 31<sup>st</sup> August.

(2020) Chinese participation in Kenya's transport infrastructure projects, *Democratising Infrastructures Workshop*, University of Durham, UK, 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> January.

(2019) East African port infrastructure and Chinese participation, *Blue Seas Thinking*, University of Lancaster, UK, 17-18<sup>th</sup> September.

## **TEACHING AND SUPERVISION**

Global Development Institute  
University of Manchester

2023-present

*Course convenor* for the MSc modules:

Work and employment in the Global Economy (25 students)

Global Political Economy (90 students)

Development Fieldwork (Globalisation, Trade, and Industry pathway lead, 20 students)

*Supervision*

MSc in Global Development, 18 dissertations

Department of International Relations  
London School of Economics and Political Science

2021-2022

*Seminar leader* for the BSc and MSc modules

IR373/473: China and the Global South

IR202: Foreign Policy Analysis

*Guest lecturer* for the BSc and MSc module

IR373/473: China and the Global South (15 students, 45 students)

*Academic mentor* for 15 MSc students and 15 BSc students

Individual and group meetings, cover letters

*Supervision*

BSc and MSc in IPE and IR, 14 dissertations

School of Social and Political Sciences  
University of Edinburgh

2019-2021

*Seminar leader* for the BSc and MSc modules:

International Political Economy (BSc)

International Development: Research Design and Practice (MSc)

Comparative Politics in a Globalised World (BSc)

Analysing Development (MSc)

### Guest Lectures (selected)

(2024) China's Infrastructure and Debt Diplomacy, *LSE-UEM China Programme*, LSE, UK.

(2023) Transnational networks and the internationalisation of Chinese companies in Africa, *MSc in Local Development*, University of Bologna, Italy.

(2023) China and the Global South, *MSc International Development*, University of Bath, UK.

(2023) China's Infrastructure and Debt Diplomacy, *LSE-UEM China Programme*, LSE, UK.

(2022) The political economy of development in Africa, *MSc International Development*, University College London, UK.

### **SERVICE**

#### Research Cluster Convenor

Global Production Networks, Trade, and Labour (GPNTL) Group, Global Development Institute, University of Manchester.

#### Participating faculty

Cumberland Lodge weekend, Department of International Relations, LSE, November 2022.

#### Conference and session convenor (selected)

Re-centring place in China-Global South engagements, *Regional Studies Association Conference*, Firenze, Italy, 11-14<sup>th</sup> June 2024. (*session co-convenor*)

Africa and China: methods, actors, and geopolitics in the everyday, *Associazione Italiana Studi Africa-Cina (AISAC)*, Padua, Italy, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024. (*conference co-convenor*)

Challenging the Liberal International Order (LIO): The implications of China's rise on global governance, *European International Studies Association Conference*, Potsdam, Germany, 5-9<sup>th</sup> September 2023. (*session convenor*)

The Second Cold War: US-China rivalry for global network hegemony workshop, Early Career Workshop at the *European International Studies Association Conference*, Potsdam, Germany, 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023. (*workshop co-convenor*)

#### Reviewer (selected)

Journal of International Development; Political Geography; Area, Development and Policy; African Affairs; The China Quarterly; Journal of Current Chinese Affairs; Africa Spectrum; Hurst Publishing; Routledge.

### **LANGUAGE SKILLS**

*English*: bilingual proficiency (speaking, reading, writing)

*Mandarin Chinese*: professional proficiency (speaking, reading), intermediate proficiency (writing)

*Italian*: native proficiency (speaking, reading, writing)

*French*: intermediate proficiency (speaking, reading), limited proficiency (writing)