

## **LSA 2025: Continuities and Discontinuities in African Studies**

### **Panel Proposal**

#### **Living at the Margins:**

#### **Survival, Belief, Care, and Belonging among Stigmatised Groups in Africa**

##### **Chairs and Organisers:**

Janet Ogundairo (IFRA-Nigeria)  
Barbara Morovich (IFRA-Nigeria)  
Delphine Manetta (IFRA-Nigeria)

This panel examines the lives, strategies and inner worlds of people navigating the margins of African societies- people who use drugs, sex workers, street children, beggars, and others living under social exclusion from institutional care and protection. While public health and social policies often view these marginalised populations through the lenses of risk, deficiency, or intervention, this panel shifts focus by asking deeper questions about their agency, beliefs, mobilisation, care, survival and pursuit of belonging. Importantly, the panel does not centre questions of morality or immorality—nor does it pathologise the individuals it focuses on. Instead, it explores how excluded persons actively respond to the circumstances of their exclusion, not only in seeking access to healthcare services but also in mobilising resources, asserting their agency, creating systems of meaning, survival, belief, and the need for belonging, as well as by taking care of themselves and one another.

How do these individuals and their communities innovate strategies to sustain themselves, even when they are often pushed to the physical and moral edges of society? How do they access healthcare facilities or establish care practices in situations where formal healthcare fails them? What spiritual, social, or bodily rituals emerge from their lived experiences? How do they organise collectively, either informally or through structured initiatives, to demand inclusion or build internal systems of care and identity? We aim to comprehend how these individuals, in spite of their tremendous precarity, actively create meaning in their lives and mobilise, whether through establishing informal networks, embodying new forms of religiosity, or crafting innovative survival and self-healing techniques.

The panel also considers how marginalised individuals relate to the societies that exclude them. Do they make effort(s) to reintegrate into the society? Do they create alternative communities of care, support and inclusion? For example, street children, who often bear the dual burden of family estrangement and social rejection, may seek to recreate familial bonds among themselves. Sex workers may bargain for support, identity, and safety within their own communities. Beggars, drug addicts, and others may create unique ethical universes in which they are not just merely surviving but acting with intent and agency, actively navigating their living conditions.

This panel explores how those at the margins challenge dominant understandings of health, religion, morality, and belongings. We seek contributions from ethnographic, historical, and interdisciplinary perspectives that centre on the knowledge, strategies, collective action and embodied experiences of those living on the margins. We are interested in how these individuals and groups mobilise, assert agency and embody alternative modes of belonging, healing, and being human in contemporary African contexts.

**Submission Guidelines:**

- Abstracts should be approximately 500 words (exclusive of bibliography), clearly reflecting **in-depth empirical work**. It should also include a short bio; maximum of five lines.
- They should be sent to [janet.ogundairo@ifra-nigeria.org](mailto:janet.ogundairo@ifra-nigeria.org) and [o.edafe@ifra-nigeria.org](mailto:o.edafe@ifra-nigeria.org)
- Submission Deadline: May 21, 2025
- The selected researchers will participate to a dedicated panel in the 2025 Lagos Studies Association Conference, between 17 and 21 June 2025.
- A more developed communication will be sent 1 week before the conference

**Note:** The organisers will cover registration fees, accommodation and transportation for selected participants.