

Nina Sylvanus

Curriculum Vitae

Department of Sociology & Anthropology
210M Renaissance Park, 360 Huntington Avenue
Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115

n.sylvanus@northeastern.edu

Academic Appointments

- 2017- Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Northeastern University
- 2010 -2017 Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Northeastern University
- 2008-2010 Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Department of Anthropology, Reed College
- 2006-2008 Postdoctoral Fellow, International Institute, Global Fellows Postdoctoral Program, University of California, Los Angeles

Education

- 2006 Ph.D., Anthropology, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales
- 2001 M.A., Anthropology, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales
- 2000 B.A., Anthropology, Université Paris VII

Scholarship

Book

- 2016 *Patterns in Circulation: Cloth, Gender and Materiality in West Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Articles and Book Chapters

- 2025 “China for Export: Africa and the Global Maritime.” In *Critical Asian Studies*, Commentary Board, January 22; <https://doi.org/10.52698/RPLQ9235>.
- 2023 “Un port ancré dans l’histoire, une histoire ancrée: Circulations, passé et present.” In *Anthropologie et Développement* 54 (3): 183-202
- 2022 “Privatizing the Port: Harboring Neoliberalism in Lomé.” In *New African Transport Corridors*, edited by Paul Nugent and Hugh Lamarque. James Curry, pp. 155-179
- 2019 “Conspicuously Public. Histories of Sartorial and Social Success in Urban Togo.” In *Conspicuous Consumption in Africa*, edited by Deborah Posel and Ilana Van Wyk. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

- 2017 “Real/Fake: Brands, Labels, and China in West Africa.” In *African-Print Fashion Now! A Story of Taste, Globalization, and Style*, edited by Fowler Museum, UCLA, pp. 106-113.
- 2013 “Chinese Devils, the Global Market and the Declining Power of Togo’s Nana-Benzenes.” *African Studies Review* 56 (1): 65-80. Special Issue: China in Africa.
- 2013 “Fashionability in Colonial and Postcolonial Togo.” In *African Dress: Fashion, Agency, Performance*, edited by Karen Tranberg Hansen and Soyini Madison, pp. 30-44. London: Bloomsbury.
- 2012 “Fakes: Crisis in Conceptions of Value in Neoliberal Togo.” *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines* 205(1): 237-258.
- 2011 “Snapshot: African Print Textiles from China.” In *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*, edited by Joanne Eicher. London: Bloomsbury.
- 2010 “Counterfeited Fashions: The Politics of Dress and Style in Togo.” *Africa e Mediterraneo* 69-70 (1): 26-32.
- 2010 “Navigating Chinese Textile Networks: Women Traders in Accra and Lomé” (co-authored with Linn Axelsson). In *The Rise of China and India in Africa. Challenges, Opportunities and Critical Interventions*, edited by Fantu Cheru and Chris Obi, pp. 132-141. London: Zed Books.
- 2009 “Commerçantes togolaises et diables chinois. Une approche par la rumeur.” *Politique Africaine* 113 (1): 55-70. Special Issue: Afrique, la globalisation par les Suds.
- 2008 “Rethinking Free-trade Practices in Contemporary Togo : Women Entrepreneurs in the Global Textile Trade.” In *Globalization and Transformations of Local socio-economic Practices*, edited by Ulrike Schuerkens, pp. 174-191. London: Routledge.
- 2007 “The Fabric of Africanity. Tracing the Global Threads of Authenticity.” *Anthropological Theory* 7 (2): 201-216.
- 2007 “L’habilité entrepreneuriale des Nana-Benz au Togo,” *Africultures* 69 (2): 179-185
- 2007 “Chinese devils? Perceptions of the Chinese in Lomé’s Central Market. Rethinking Africa’s ‘China Factor’ “Working Paper No. 3, UCLA, April 27.
- 2002 “L’étoffe de l’africanité.” *Les Temps Modernes* 620-621: 128-145.

Under review

- n.d. “The Port at the Edge: Corporate Logistics and the Recalibration of Sovereignty in West Africa,” *African Studies Review*
- n.d. “When African Labor is Cheaper than Robots”

Invited Book Reviews

- 2015 Review of *African Fashion, Global Style: Histories, Innovations, and Ideas You Can Wear* by Victoria Rovine. **African Studies Review** 58: 244-246.
- 2007 Review of *Shea Butter Republic: State Power, Global Markets, and the Making of an Indigenous Commodity* by Brenda Chalfin. **Politique Africaine** 106: 178-179.
- 2004 Review of *Objects as Envoys. Cloth, Imagery and Diplomacy in Madagascar*, edited by Christine Kreamer and Sarah Fee. **Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines** 176: 962-965.

Conferences and Invited Talks

National

- 2025 "The Port at the Edge: Corporate Logistics and the Afterlives of Sovereignty in West Africa." **Yale University**. CAS Lecture Series, October 29.
- 2025 "China for exPort: Africa and the Global Maritime." **Duke University**. New Directions in China-Africa Studies Workshop, January 31.
- 2018 "Harboring the Future." Harvard African Studies Workshop. **Harvard University**, November 12.
- 2018 "The Labor of Maritime Logistics." **AAA** Double Panel: "From Port to Port," San Jose, November 14-18.
- 2018 Discussant. **AAA** Panel "Beyond Narratives of Crisis," San Jose, November 14-18.
- 2017 Keynote. "South South: Materiality and Embodiment in Greater Africa and Asia". **Columbia University**. October 27.
- 2017 Discussant. Harvard African Studies Workshop. **Harvard University**, February 23.
- 2016 "Sensuous Materiality." **AAA** Retrospective Session "Paul Stoller's Sensuous Scholarship," Minneapolis, November 16-20.
- 2014 "Crisis in Conceptions of Value." **AES** panel on "In/Visibilities of Value," Boston, April 10-12.
- 2013 "Citizen-Consumers and Market Entrepreneurs in Neoliberal West Africa." **Anthropology of Markets and Consumption Conference, UC Irvine**, March 7-9.
- 2012 "New Directions in the study of West African Market Women." **ASA** panel in Honor of the Retirement of Claire Robertson, Philadelphia, November 29-December 1.
- 2011 "Disjunctive Global Orders in a West African Marketplace." Transnational Studies Initiative Workshop, **Harvard University**, March 7.
- 2010 "The Copy and Its Counterfeit. Anxieties over Product Authenticity in a West African Marketplace." **AAA** panel on "Brands, Counterfeiting, Authenticity, and Authority Panel," New Orleans, November 16-20.
- 2009 "New Hegemons on an Old Continent: Chinese Competition in the Lomé Market." **ASA** panel on "Africa-China: Through the Looking Glass," New Orleans, November 19-22.
- 2009 "Branding Counterfeits: Pagne Fashion in Togo." Program of African Studies Conference on "African Dress and Fashion," **Northwestern University**, March 13-14.
- 2008 "Contesting Heritage: The Struggle Over Authenticity in the Global Fabric Trade." **ASA** panel on "Branding the Nation: Performance, Identity, and the Politics of Authenticity Panel," Chicago, November 13-16.
- 2007 "Death in the Market: Rumors of the Chinese Devil in Togo." **AAA** panel on "Zombies, Witches and Others. Representations of Labor, Memory and Modernity in Africa and the African Diaspora," Washington, DC, November 28 – December 2.

- 2007 “Global Mimicry: Fashion Change and the Danger of Dressing ‘Chinese’ in Togo.” **ASA** panel on “In and out of Fashion? Politics of Dress and Style in Africa Panel, New York, NY, October 18-22.
- 2007 “Chinese Devils, the Global Market and the Declining Power of Togo’s Commodity Queens.” Culture, Power and Social Change Speaker Series, Department of Anthropology, **UCLA** June 7.
- 2007 Chair, Organizer, Presenter. “Perceptions of the Chinese in Lomé’s Central Market.” Conference on “Rethinking Africa’s ‘China Factor,’” Globalization Research Center Africa, **UCLA** April 27.

International

- 2024 Keynote Lecture. “Who is Making the Cut?” China, Africa and the Multiple Souths Workshop, **University of Nairobi/University of Amsterdam**, Nairobi, September 26
- 2024 “Chinese Cranes and Togolese Port Labor in the Age of Hyper-Logistics,” Transnational Trade in a Post-Pandemic World Workshop, **University of Basel**, May 31
- 2023 Discussant. Ports-Meets-Containership Workshop. Gdansk, **European Solidarity Center Gdansk**, 13-15 December.
- 2021 Keynote. “Harboring History. Historic Harbor. Circulation Past and Present.” **Association for the Anthropology of Social Change and Development (APAD)** Annual Conference, Lomé, November 29-December 3
- 2021 Invited Lecture “From Togo to the World: Labor, Infrastructure and New Technologies in the Global Maritime Economy.” **University of Basel**, September 30 (in-person)
- 2014 “The Pagne Politics of Style.” Style and Substance Panel. Crisis in Conceptions of Value. Conspicuous Consumption in Africa Symposium, **Institute for Humanities in Africa (HUMA), University of Cape Town (UCT)**, December 3-6.
- 2012 “Fashionable Subjects and Global Regimes of Commerce: Piracy and Fashion in Colonial and Postcolonial West Africa.” **World Economic History Congress** panel on “Fashion and Economic Development,” University of Stellenbosch, July 9-13.
- 2011 “Fakes: Crisis in Conceptions of Value.” Monday Seminar Series on “Emergent Ethnographies,” Department of Anthropology, **University of Cape Town**, October 11.
- 2011 “Counterfeit Modernities.” Tuesday Seminar Series, South African History and Humanities Seminar, **University of the Western Cape**, September 20.
- 2008 “The Role of Women Entrepreneurs in Togo’s China Trade: Perspectives from the Lomé Textile Market.” Conference on “China and India in Africa: New Strategic Encounters,” **The Nordic Africa Institute**, Uppsala, September 22-23.
- 2008 “Heritage à la Mode: China’s Influence on Contemporary Pagne Fashion in Togo.” International Symposium on “Global Fashion and Local Identities,” **University of Recife**, Recife (Brazil), May 19-21.

2006 “Interstitial Spaces and International Development Agencies: Female Entrepreneurial Strategies in West Africa.” Graduate Student Symposium, **School of Oriental and African Studies**, March 14.

Fellowships and Awards

2018 (summer) Sai Wai-Kin Junior Fellowship, University of Hong Kong
2017-2018 Northeastern University, Research Development Grant
2012-2013 NSF/Advance Mentorship Grant, Northeastern University
2011-2012 Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship, Center for the Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape
2009 Summer Research Grant, Dean of Faculty, Reed College
2006-2008 Global Fellow (Postdoctoral Fellowship), International Institute, University of California, Los Angeles
2002 Visiting Fellow, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago

Courses

Foundations of Anthropological Theory
Introduction to Anthropology
Ethnographic Methods

Anthropology of Africa
The African Crisis
Urban Africa

Anthropology of Globalization
Anthropology of Global Flows
Introduction to Global Studies
Global Markets, Local Cultures
Gender and Globalization
Sex and Gender
Consumer Cultures
Fashion, Power and Sex

Life, Death and Labor in the Global Economy
Globalization, Development, and Social Justice
Gender & Globalization: Postcolonial Feminisms

Service to the Discipline

Editorial Board Member *Politique Africaine* (2018-20)
Scientific Committee Member for APAD/ University of Lomé.
Mentor for “Emerging Scholars Program” of the African Studies Association (2019)

Occasional Reviewer

American Ethnologist, Economic Anthropology, Africa Today, Journal of African Cultural Studies, Focaal, Politique Africaine, Sociology of Development, City and Society, Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History

Memberships

Association for African Studies

Association of American Anthropology