Kai Kresse (Columbia University), “Reflections on discursive space in Swahili Muslim publics”

I shall be looking at the dynamic constitution and potential transformation of Swahili Muslim publics, through the specific and inter-related roles that language, sociality and discursive space play for the shaping or forming of community. Drawing from ethnographic observations, primary readings, and examples of (one or more) Islamic media projects based in Mombasa, at specific historical trajectories, I shall discuss concrete performances and interactions shaping these processes. Thus I will conceptualize the constitution of Swahili Muslim publics here paying close attention to local contexts and processual features, the facilitating role of infrastructures, and the conceptual significance of dynamic process of ‘mediation’ and ‘formation’. Overall, I seek to keep in view possible conceptual alternatives to an overarching ‘Islamic public sphere’ that may emerge from the discussion of regional cases here.