

## **Workshop**

### **Narratives of Achievement in African and Afro-European Contexts**

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**Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS)**

#### **Organizers:**

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#### **Abstract**

Our workshop explores concepts of achievement and merit in African and Afro-European contexts and will contribute to understanding ideas of achievement both in a local and a global perspective. Achievement-orientation is a powerful global discourse that impacts on all aspects of social and individual life. Yet, the ‘achievement principle’ is often framed as a Western phenomenon in scientific discourse, based on a limited, hegemonically structured view of achievement in a setting of the so-called industrialised nations. Meritocratic principles, however, manifest themselves across the globe in multiple ways. A better understanding of the ways in which achievement and merit are defined, negotiated, represented and embedded, and of the connotations they carry in African contexts, among African social groups and strata, is necessary in order to reframe notions and narratives of achievement. Our workshop therefore pursues the question: How is achievement envisioned, narrated, scripted in African and Afro-European cultural representations, in institutional and organisational contexts?

Designed to initiate exchange and collaboration on concepts of achievement across a broad variety of disciplines, the workshop brings together young and experienced scholars from Africa and Europe. It probes into the field by assembling approaches to, and case studies on, a wide range of ‘meritocratic’ narratives and scripts. We suggest that narratives from what in the West is still wrongly seen as the ‘global periphery’ have an enormously underestimated impact on global ideas and social realities. The workshop thereby seeks to initiate a sustainable dialogue on notions of achievement across diverse fields of inquiry, disciplines and continents.