

Workshop Programme Point Sud 2020

Struggles for ‘Democracy’ in Africa – Encountering Researchers and Activists from the Global North and South

20th-24th October 2020, University Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal

Conveners

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Abstract

Social movement research is still predominantly concerned with protest and activism in the Global North. While scholars based in Latin America have pushed the research on Latin American social movements as well as theory building, protests in Africa and their relationship to the theoretical debates in social movement studies have only recently come into focus. The literature on African social movements largely focuses on the so called ‘Arab Spring’ while the ‘African Uprisings’ that took place since the mid 2000s all over the continent received less attention. The existing studies often focus on so called pro-democratic movements that mobilize for regime change or against presidential term amendments. Other movements such as anti-mining movements or protests against large-scale agro-industrial projects, labour movements or organizations mobilizing for women’s rights or the rights of the LGTBQI* community or recent mobilizations for environmental justice and against the climate crisis are still largely invisible in the social movement literature. This conference therefore aims to first, bring together researchers from Africa and the Global North to gain a more nuanced picture of the existing empirical knowledge on social movements and protests in Africa and their link to democratization processes. Second, we intend to introduce theories and concepts from the Global South into international research on democratization and social movements. Third, we bring together activists and researchers in order to facilitate an open exchange on the relationship of the academic debate on social movements and the hands-on mobilization of protests.

The conference is organized in cooperation with The Research Committee 47 of the International Sociological Association, Social Movements and Social Classes (RC47), which is the largest international network of social movement scholars. It also builds upon the existing African research networks which were established at previous Point Sud Conferences.