



## Program Point Sud 2016

# Political Subjectivity in Times of Transformation: Classification and Belonging in Postcolonial Africa 1-6 October 2016 Stellenbosch Report



## **1. Conveners**

Prof Katharina Schramm, Anthropology, FU Berlin

Dr Lindsey Reynolds, Anthropology, Brown University / Stellenbosch University

## **2. Themes and Objectives**

Our workshop explored the dynamics of classification, identification and belonging in South Africa and more broadly. By inviting scholars who offered reflections across disciplines on processes of subjectification, we shed light on the legal and formal dimensions of classificatory practices as well as their emotional and imaginary implications. We asked: How do formal categorizations intersect with practices of belonging? How do they impact on both affective and lived experiences of individuals in the everyday and broader political debates and problematics related to citizenship and other forms of entitlement? By engaging the concept of political subjectivity, the workshop bridged these two registers and interrogated both historical remainders and contemporary forms of "making up people" and their formative effects on possibilities of personhood. We were particularly interested in the articulations of new forms of political subjectivity in times of social and political transformation, asking how they are informed (and perhaps constrained) by genealogies of knowledge of the past, but also how they open up a creative space to venture into the future.

To draw out these questions, the workshop was organized along two thematic axes: (1) Classifying Humans: Inclusions/Exclusions and (2) Belonging and Entitlement: Articulations of Political Subjectivity in Times of Transformation. The first axis took up the enabling and disabling dynamics of classification and explored how classificatory practices produce and confront divergent conceptions of what it means to be human. The second drew together registers that are both emotional and governmental in order to interrogate legacies and contemporary instantiations of classificatory politics and practice. These two axes laid the theoretical foundations for more empirically grounded discussions around two focus areas: (A) Identification and Identity: Making People and Places and (B) Embodiment and Social Justice: Seeking Futures. The first focus area explored how people come to particular understandings of the past, of heritage and of history to make claims in the present. The second focus area aimed to understand how embodied experiences of deprivation and inequality shape people's aspirational projects and provoke divergent interventions into everyday life conditions.

## **3. Methodology and Results**

Given the political pertinence of our theme in contemporary South Africa, the workshop created opportunities for both high-quality academic discussion and deeper engagements with the local historical and spatial setting and current forms of political activism. Outreach events included (1) support and collaboration with Open Forum – opening event, film screening and joint discussions; (2) two city walks through Cape Town and Stellenbosch; (3) engagement with the District 6 museum and residents/community activists from Delft. This innovative format worked very well and was highly appreciated by all participants. It also helped us to

interlink the different workshop themes by creating concrete reference points – both for expressions of political subjectivity and for the difficulties of political transformation in South Africa and elsewhere.

Instead of a closed exhibition, as we had initially planned, Open Forum was conceptualized as a transdisciplinary residency program to generate artistic reflections on the issues raised by 2015 – 2016 #FeesMustFall student activism in Stellenbosch. The project was hosted by the Stellenbosch Art Gallery and the Stellenbosch University Museum. During October 2016, the Open Forum collectively curated a month-long program of film, performance art, poetry events and installations on the Stellenbosch University Campus and in surrounding spaces. The program started with a joint opening event with our workshop and ended with a presentation of work on 4 November 2016 where each participant shared their inspirations for making the work they did and their ideas about what they imagine for this project going forward. In addition to being a platform for the generation of ideas and artwork, Open Forum developed into a space where students who felt marginalized could talk openly about the struggles they experience on campus. It also developed into a space of relief from the increasingly militarized campus environment and the tensions and social polarization this is creating. The collective hopes to establish Open Forum as an annual residency program to act as a continuous and creative intervention in the formal space of the university. The final workshop program looked as follows (breaks excluded):

*Friday, Sep 30, Opening Event (at Stellenbosch Museum)*

17:00 – 19:00: Launch of the Open Forum Mini-Residencies, Panel Discussion on Art and Protest

*Saturday, Oct 1, Theme 1: "Classifying Humans: Inclusion/Exclusion"*

9:30 – 11:00: Christopher Lee: Colonial Hauntologies: Genealogies of Knowledge and the Problem of Nativism in Southern Africa

Lenore Manderson: Humans on show: The order of things and the challenge of display

11:15 – 12:45: Zine Magubane: The American Construction of The Poor White Problem in South Africa: The Carnegie Commission Report on "Poor Whiteism" in South Africa

Suren Pillay: Identity, Difference Citizenship: On the Limits of the Non-Racial

14:00 – 15:30: Joshua Kwesi Aikins: Capturing Racism in Germany – Reconceptualising Equality Data in a Categorisation-averse Context

Encarnación Gutiérrez-Rodríguez: Thinking Political Subjectivity in the Common within the dynamics of exclusion

15:45 – 16:15: Provocation on Theme 1

*Sunday, Oct 2, Focus Area A: "Identification and Identity: Making People and Remembering Places" (at District Six Museum)*

10:00 – 12:15: Zethu Matebeni: Stolen Pride: On White Gay Appropriation and Black History in Cape Town

Naluwembe Binaisa: Are you a Lagoisan?: Geographies and subjectivities of belonging in an African urban landscape

Adam Haupt: Reverse Engineering "Water": Challenging Systemic Racism in Cape Town, the Neoliberal City

13:15 – 16:15: Re-imagining the city: District Six Immersion and In-depth Conversation with Residents from Delft

16:30 – 18:30: City walk through inner Cape Town with Transcending History Tours

*Monday, Oct 3, Theme 2: "Belonging and Entitlement: Articulations of Political Subjectivity in Times of Transformation"*

9:15 – 10:45: Kristine Krause: Speaking from the blind spot: political subjectivity, infrastructures and belonging

Charlie Piot: Migration Stories: The US Visa Lottery and Global Citizenship

11:00 – 12:-30: Amade M'charek: Dutchness in Genes and Genealogy: On modes of belonging and the absent presence of race

Noah Tamarkin: DNA and Difference in Post-Apartheid Claims to Rights and belonging

13:45 – 14:30: Aminata Mbaye: Homosexuality in Senegal: Between a Re-negotiation of Gender Categories and a Struggle over People's Imagination

14:30 – 15:00: Provocation on theme 2

16:30 – 18:30: Screening of film 'Action Kommandante' and discussion with director Nadine Cloete and Kriel family

*Tuesday, Oct 4, Focus Area B: Embodiment and Social Justice: Seeking Futures*

9:15 – 10:45: Giorgio Brocco: "Even though I am an albino, I can participate in the development of my community": Social classification and new political subjectivity of people with albinism in global Tanzania

Nolwazi Mkhwanazi: How it feels to be a young, poor, black mother – reproduction and politics

11:00 – 12:30: Joanna Wheeler: Emergent citizenships: violence and the making and unmaking of citizens in Cape Town

Rob Pattman: Producing subjectivities in research with young people in racially mixed schools and universities in South Africa

13:30 – 16:00: City walk Stellenbosch/Khayamandi with Coffeebeans Routes

*Wednesday, Oct. 5*

9:15 – 12:30: Walking Seminar and Closing discussion: Voice, representation, identity, transformation in student movements – what space should the University be?

What are the key/most interesting and important outcomes/results regarding the treated questions and objectives?

Overall, the workshop surpassed our expectations, in terms of a) group dynamics and the level of participants' engagement, b) the thematic conversations and overlaps as well as c) the intensity of the interactions with the current situation in South Africa. Here, the collaboration with Open Forum proved extremely fruitful. The conversations with students and artists (and the participating South African colleagues) enhanced our understanding of the stakes of current protests as well as the creative challenges that go along with it.

At the same time, the workshop itself was of a high academic standard, with a good mix of senior and junior scholars from different disciplinary and geographical backgrounds. Historical, sociological and anthropological perspectives mixed well with the analytical focus on infrastructures.

Collectively, we sharpened our understanding of the scope and usefulness of political subjectivity as a sensitizing concept (not an analytical panacea). We explored the various intellectual roots of the concept (from Fanon and Stuart Hall to the Latin American intellectual tradition) as well as its usefulness in a variety of ethnographic settings (medicine, social movements, data infrastructures etc.).

#### **4. Sustainability of the Event**

As part of the workshop, a number of individual collaborations have already taken shape. Amade M'charek, Noah Tamarkin and Katharina Schramm are planning to collaborate on future research on race and forensic genetics, Noah Tamarkin will visit Amsterdam and Berlin early next year;

Joanna Wheeler and Lindsey Reynolds as well as Lenore Manderson and Kwesi Aikins are working on joint papers;

Kristine Krause and Giorgio Brocco are collaborating in organizing two workshops around political subjectivity at next year's conference of the DGV (German Association for Social Anthropology).

Participants have also inquired about the possibility of a follow-up workshop, preferably with Point Sud. We would be open to this suggestion.

Collectively, we are aiming at three different outputs:

(1) The Open Forum student group (led by Greer Valley) is planning to produce a magazine-style and/or online publication, perhaps collaborating with the *Chimurenga Magazine*. We are planning for about five contributions from workshop participants in that output, comprising of reflections on the work of Open Forum in relation to the workshop themes.

(2) We are currently preparing a proposal *Cultural Anthropology* to see if they would be interested in a Hotspots feature on #FeesMustFall and questions emerging from student movements more broadly. The Hotspots formats are collections of brief reflections from scholars around a particular topic area. There are usually 10-15 contributions in a collection, in the range of 1000-1500 words each. One of our participants, Charles Piot used to be editor of *Cultural Anthropology* (and started this feature), he has kindly offered to help us with this proposal.

(3) We would also like to take some of the papers forward as a special issue of an interdisciplinary journal, such as *Social Dynamics*.

## 5. Participants

1. Joshua Kwesi Aikins PhD Candidate, Political Science, University of Kassel
2. Dr Naluwembe Binaisa Anthropology, MPI Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen
3. Giorgio Brocco PhD Candidate, Anthropology, Free University Berlin
4. Prof Encarnación Gutiérrez-Rodríguez Sociology, Justus-Liebig-University, Giessen
5. Prof Adam Haupt Film and Media Studies, University of Cape Town
6. Dr Kristine Krause Anthropology, University of Amsterdam
7. Prof Christopher Lee History, Lafayette College
8. Prof Amade M'charek Anthropology, University of Amsterdam
9. Prof Zine Magubane History, Boston College
10. Prof Lenore Manderson Medical Anthropology, University of the Witwatersrand
11. Dr Zethu Matabeni Gender Studies, University of Cape Town
12. Dr Aminata Mbaye Comparative Literature, University of Bayreuth
13. Dr Nolwazi Mkhwanazi Medical Anthropology, University of the Witwatersrand
14. Prof Ledelle Moe Arts (Sculpture), Stellenbosch University
15. Prof Rob Pattman Sociology, Stellenbosch University
16. Prof Suren Pillay Anthropology, University of the Western Cape
17. Prof Charles Piot Anthropology, Duke University
18. Dr Lindsey Reynolds Anthropology, Stellenbosch University
19. Prof Katharina Schramm Anthropology, FU Berlin
20. Dr Noah Tamarkin Anthropology, Ohio State University
21. Dr Joanna Wheeler Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation
22. Greer Valley Curator, Open Forum, Stellenbosch University

One of our participants, Dr. Mbongiseni Buthelezi had to cancel his participation in the very last moment because of other urgent obligations. Sadly, another of our invited participants, Prof. Dr. Elaine Salo, died shortly before the workshop.

As part of our strategy to open up to non-academic spaces, we had a number of engagements with other people, including the student artists who contributed to Open Forum (at the Opening Event, the Cape Town City Walk and the Film Screening), Lucy Campbell and two of her colleagues from Transcending History Tours (who guided us through Cape Town), Iain Harris from Coffeebeans Routes (who guides us through Stellenbosch), Mandy Sanger from the District Six Museum as well as three participants from Joanna Wheeler's digital storytelling project in Delft who shared their experiences with us during the day we spent in Cape Town.