

WORKSHOP ABSTRACT

Political Subjectivity in Times of Transformation: Classification and Belonging in South Africa and Beyond

**Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies, South Africa
30 September to 5 October 2016**

Our workshop explores the dynamics of classification, identification and belonging in South Africa and more broadly. By inviting scholars who can offer broader reflections across disciplines on processes of subjectification, we aim to shed light on the legal and formal dimensions of classificatory practices as well as their emotional and imaginary implications. We ask: How do formal categorizations (such as citizens, research populations, refugees, ethnic or racial groups etc.) 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 aims to bridge these two registers and to interrogate both historical remainders and contemporary forms of "making up people" and their formative effects on possibilities of personhood. We are 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 will be 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 takes up the enabling and disabling dynamics of classification and explores how classificatory practices produce and confront divergent conceptions of what it means to be human. The second draws together registers that are both emotional and governmental in order to interrogate legacies and contemporary instantiations of classificatory politics and practice. These two axes will lay 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 explores how people come to particular understandings of the past, of heritage and of history to make claims in the present. The second focus area aims to understand how embodied experiences of deprivation and inequality shape people's aspirational projects and provoke divergent interventions into everyday life conditions.

Given the political pertinence of the theme in contemporary South Africa, the workshop will aim to create opportunities for both high-quality academic discussion and deeper engagements with the local historical and spatial setting and current forms of political activism. The planned events will include (1) panel discussions and break-out sessions, (2) city walks, and (3) a public roundtable. To facilitate productive conversation in the workshop panel sessions, we will ask participants to contribute original research papers that will be pre-circulated among the participants and introduced by a discussant.

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