Mthobisi Maphumulo „Voices of Marikana", Durban Art Gallery
Photo: Roy Reed
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Universität
Konstanz

NOMIS
FOUNDATION
Creating the Spark

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Protest movements are not a new phenomenon. They are a means by which agents have challenged dominant orthodoxies and have often led to attitudinal transformation and even the fall of some regimes. These protests vary in nature and intensity, and assume different ideological and identity positions. Year after year, uncountable protests occur on the African continent, drawing attention to a variety of social grievances, political claims and collective affects. Performing and framing calls for socio-political change is closely tied to corporeal engagements with tangible spaces and forms. Protests are often known by the toponyms of the locations they occupy such as Tahrir square which became a globally renowned symbol of the Egyptian revolution in 2011. We are interested in how protests appropriate, re-claim, re-create and re-interprete material and virtual spaces. Given that activist forms take shape in correlation with their spatial involvement, we ask how spaces and forms of protest co-create each other and trigger creative potentialities of site-specific protest practices and environments.

We further consider which role forms and spaces play for activist identities and selfrepresentations. The spatial and formal nesting of protests enables activists to build and maintain social ties that are often times fostered through space-related practices of belonging. We believe that innovative protest forms are also created to demarcate from former or other activist „habits" that are regarded as outdated and not appropriate for contemporary purposes. How, then, are popular forms of protest constituted, legitimated and represented? Contributors are invited to deal with the ideas, values, affects, strategies, and logics involved when activists decide on a particular space and form of protest.

Travelling through space and time, protests are subject to changes. We would like to explore which vehicles facilitate these movements and how such trajectories of protest can be addressed analytically. Following this line of thought, we highlight the entanglements of spatialities and temporalities. Which histories, memories and narratives do activist forms draw on, and how do these relate to contemporary, modern, or future-oriented imaginaries? What do continuities and discontinuities of protest spatio-temporalities reveal?

This online lecture series aims to discuss the conceptual approaches to protest, forms and spaces thereof, focusing on their generational dynamics and participation.
How can we best understand contemporary forms of protest in Africa?

21.04.

Oludayo Tade, University of Ibadan

'I have been a victim of police brutality and impunity': Factors underlying participation in #ENDSARS Protest against Police Brutality in Nigeria

05.05.

Amal Abdrabo, Alexandria University

Within the Marginal; liminality out of the Bubble Society in Egypt

19.05.

Kayode Eesuola, University of Lagos

Not a 'Gentleman': Between the ideological conception and the aesthetic renditions of Fela's Afrobeat political protest

02.06.

Fiona Gedeon Achi, Queen Mary University London

What is and what is not of the state? Partnership as enmeshment in Kenya

*** 08.06. ***

Sethulego Matebesi, University of the Freestate

Community protests over perceived inadequate municipal service delivery in South Africa, 2004–2021

23.06.

Albert Sharra, University of Witwatersrand

Doing it Differently: How creative ideas are transforming online activism in Africa

07.07.

Deborah Nyangulu, University of Münster

Gandhi Must Fall Movement and Reclaiming Urban Space in Malawi

***Please note:
This talk is scheduled as a ZKF-Arbeitsgespräch and thus taking place on
Wednesday evening, 5pm ***

Oludayo Tade, University of Ibadan
'I have been a victim of police brutality and impunity': Factors underlying participation in #ENDSARS Protest against Police Brutality in Nigeria

Against the background of growing public resistance against police brutality across the globe including the Nigerian October 2020 #ENDSARS protest (online and on-the-streets), this paper investigates the underlying motivation for participating in resistance against police brutality in post-colonial Nigeria; protesters notions of Nigerian police; reasons for police brutality and anticipated reforms to encourage ethical policing. Using Google form generated 31-item structured questionnaire, data were extracted from 220 participants. Findings show that protesters construct police personnel as unprofessional, extorters, and human rights abusers. Participation was inspired by direct and indirect experiences of police victimisation and the desire to cause social change in the country. Poor condition and welfare system, dearth of professionalism and weak governance system were identified as engendering police brutality. Suggestions to engender humane policing included improved working and welfare conditions, regular and periodic training and retraining of police personnel and efficient governance from within police system and supervising agency.

Amal Abdrabo, Alexandria University
Within the Marginal; liminality out of the Bubble Society in Egypt

«Whoever has something to say in Egypt these days can write it on a wall . . . religious, political, intimate, commercial, and other messages fill the public spaces of Alexandria, Cairo and other towns and villages with continuous commentary», (Schielke and Winegar, 2012, p. 14). The level of freedom of expression in Egypt-2011 was unprecedented. Now, after two revolutionary waves in 2011 and 2013, we are still asking how Egyptians claim a space within their own cities where they can participate actively and express their opinions without having to maneuver different forms of „rituals of surveilleance and control" as coined by James Fergson and Akhil Gupta (2002). In this vein, the main goal is to provoke the theoretical premises of cultural and political anthropology to explore the emergence of new avenues and modes of self-representation within a heavily controlled context that is constantly a subject of undergoing transformations. Moreover, the research comes to explore the public behavior as resembled within the dialectic between what James Scott (1990) coined „public transcript" and „hidden transcript", in a way to reveal ‚what lies beneath the surface', and what kind of behaviour is practiced offstage the social life in post-revolution Egypt. Firstly, by investigating the sort of visual culture that is produced within certain public spaces. Secondly, studying the ways in which the revolution generation mark their urban settings and their urban space using different techniques to re-gain the public space. Finally, studying these different strategies of visibility not just as a cultural production by a certain group of people, but as an aesthetic

project that makes visible the presence of the producers within their society. Some of the final findings of the research highlights different forms of memorization and documentation that are used by the revolution generation as they live the eclipse of two revolutionary waves in 2011 and 2013. They might have ‚refused to exist' the political theater despite their ‚quiet encroachment'. They might have been enforced and pushed to live on the margin of the society inside their safe cocoons which is coined through the paper as „the bubble society".

Kayode Eesuola, University of Lagos
Not a 'Gentleman': Between the ideological conception and the aesthetic renditions of Fela's Afrobeat political protest

The discourse of socio-political activism, agitation, resistance and protest in Africa cannot be complete without the mention of Fela Anikulapo Kuti and his Afrobeat. Music is what many attribute Afrobeat to, but the phenomenon goes far beyond lyrics and sounds. It refers to the totality of attitudes, actions, inactions, dance, songs, drums, ideology, consciousness and speeches that Fela utilised in confronting the post-colonial African states and their devastating governance deficit. Bodily expression too is a critical part of Afrobeat, thus, in this paper, we discuss how Fela used his personal bodily appearances and those of his Afrobeat band members to express political grievances in the country of Nigeria and other parts of the world. There is the restriction to the 'political' here; deliberately so because every protest is, in a way, political so long as politics remains a game of power relations amongst social actors. We approach the discourse first with extensive deliberation on the 'what', 'for what', 'by who' and 'to whom' of the phenomenon called protest. This is done through interrogation of extant literature. We then proceed, through content analysis, to explore the lyrics of one of the songs of Fela Kuti: Gentleman, and how the lines and stanzas therein hermeneutically explain the public appearances of Fela and his Afrobeat band members both for the purpose of political protest as 'conceived', and to the extent of creating bodily aesthetics as 'rendered'.

Fiona Gedeon Achi, Queen Mary University London
What is and what is not of the state? Partnership as enmeshment in Kenya

This presentation explores what "globals" are at stake in the project of worldwide poverty alleviation by studying how an NGO practicing "evidence-based development" implements "at scale" a deworming initiative in partnership with the government of Kenya. Today, anti-poverty projects emerge around collaborations that cannot be easily categorized as national or global, public or private, academic or operational, field-based or digital, nor bound to one specific geographical region (Redfield 2012). It is precisely to this hybrid nature of development programs and the ambiguity of the goals at stake in distinct interventions (biopolitical aims? national plans? reaching millions?) that this presentation attends. Drawing on ethnographic material, it shows how this deworming initiative seems to straddle what are taken as two distinct axes for the management of people and things:

on the one hand, the nation-state form which supposedly should care exhaustively but only for a restricted citizen population; and on the other hand, global actors that address a global population but with circumscribed interventions, which often harbor the language of investment and calculation (Biesel 2014). How might evidence-based development be drawing ways of managing worldwide poverty that come "after the social" and the logics of provision based on social citizenship, and yet that are perhaps not so radically "decoupled from the nation-state" (Ferguson 2010: 168)? Overall, I aim to draw a specific portrayal of the global, one that neither dispenses nor hovers above the nation-state, but that mobilizes the apparatus of the state in important ways and often even depends on it.

Sethulego Matebesi, University of the Free State
Community protests over perceived inadequate municipal service delivery in South Africa, 2004-2021

Since the dramatic eruption of the first two community protests in 2004, post-apartheid South Africa has witnessed unrest of significant proportions at local government level. Using the political trust by drawing on an intricate three-dimensional theoretical framework of trust-institutions-actors, this study investigated the protest dynamics of grassroots organizations in predominantly black neighbourhoods *and* predominantly white neighbourhoods. The framework explains how political trust, a cognitive function conceptualized as an individual's confidence in state institutions (a local municipality, in this context), influences actors (citizens) to engage in protest action. While political trust functions as a linkage mechanism between citizens and the political institutions that represent them, the findings suggest that it is the structure of the different community groups (black and white communities) that motivate these group to embark on distinct protests tactics despite a fundamentally set of similar grievances. Civic groups in predominantly black communities are highly fragmented and spontaneous. They often use intimidation, destruction, and violence as protest tactics. Conversely, ratepayers' associations in predominantly white communities are highly structured and linked to a national organization with more than 300 affiliates across South Africa. These associations withhold rates and taxes from municipalities or provide services on behalf of the municipalities. It is concluded that community protests represent a ravenous political trade-off between political actors and citizens that can be resolved by trust-building.

Albert Sharra, University of Witwatersrand
Doing it Differently: How creative ideas are transforming online activism in Africa

Although research demonstrate that African democracy is maturing, the space for alternative voices continues to narrow and safety of political activists remains susceptible. In Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Uganda, activists are abducted, arrested, and killed for questioning government policies. Sadly, this has only forced many activists

in the Global South into early retirement. However, in some countries, these repressive laws against political activism seem to be enhancing creative ways of initiating popular political protests. Using *#KosweMumpoto* and *#ThisFlag* protests in Zambia and Zimbabwe respectively, this paper shows how some activists are creatively organising popular networked protests with social networks being the main organising agents and tools for mobilisation in the face of repressive government laws against protests. This reflects Africans' insistence on resisting dominant practices that seek to silence them. Building up on my interviews and ethnographic observations, this paper shows how activists are shifting their ways of thinking and creatively engage with both old and new strategies of initiating dissent such as poetry, videos, and music to initiate popular networked social movements. With modified theories of collective action, I show how and where creativity by organisers and participants meet along the chain of events and how this builds popular online movements. The presentation will further show how these strategies are challenging traditional systems of regulating protests and predict the future of online activism and regulation.

Deborah Nyangulu, University of Münster

Gandhi Must Fall Movement and Reclaiming Urban Space in Malawi
On October 5, 2018 a citizen activist collective calling itself 'The Gandhi Must Fall Movement in Malawi' launched an online petition on change.org demanding that Blantyre City Council halt erecting an Indian-government funded Mahatma Gandhi's statue at Ginnery Corner in the city. Central in their petition was the claim that the revered global icon of peace was a racist who subscribed to ideas of racial superiority and looked down on Black people as inferior hence did not deserve to be honoured with a statue in the city of Blantyre. In this talk, I am not interested in ascertaining or disproving Gandhi's racial attitudes but I am more interested in how the Gandhi Must Fall Movement unfolded in a temporal and spatial configuration that linked online and offline time-spaces as a strategy to garner support for resistance against the erecting of the statue. Adopting Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope (literally time space), I analyze how the movement's online and offline actions leveraged digital activism to transcend the restrictive borders and time zones of the nation-state and draw inspiration from similar anti-Gandhi protests at the University of Ghana, as well as more broadly from the fallist movements of Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall which ignited in South Africa before quickly taking on a global character. Situating the Malawi Gandhi Must Fall movement in such a spatial and temporal configuration allows me to trace how the activist collective used transnational trajectories and contextual ideologies to shape the character of their movement while simultaneously demanding national self-determination in the use of urban space.