

**Panel M: Changing urban life in post-apartheid South Africa
(chairs: Annika Teppo and Tuulikki Pietilä)**

The post-apartheid era has changed the lives of all South Africans. The end of the politics of racial discrimination with its everyday rules and restrictions was a celebrated change. However, after the initial wave of optimism, life in the post-apartheid society turned out to be rather complicated. Problems such as crime, HIV/Aids and inequality in income distribution and property ownership persisted. Racism lives on, exacerbated by xenophobia against immigrants from other African countries. In the meantime, the ANC-led government is struggling to deliver. Post-apartheid life has accommodated global flows of economy, ideas and people, which have brought about innovations and spatial changes, especially in the urban areas. In cities ideas, faiths and cultural influences flow more freely between different population groups or, as South Africans still call them, race groups. There are some spaces where racial boundaries are increasingly transcended, while in other spheres they are adhered to more intensively than ever. In everyday life in the cities, the ideas and practices of class are also partly replacing the old ideas of race. This panel studies different aspects of cultural changes in the post-apartheid urban life. All the papers are based on ethnographic material collected in South Africa during the past years.

First session papers:

1) Why should we take a fresh look at the post-apartheid cities?

Annika Teppo (Academy of Finland/University of Helsinki)

The apartheid era was a time of certainties. City boundaries were believed to be clear, as the inflow of the people to the city was strictly controlled. A draconian body of rules and regulations prescribed the correct way of using urban space. Although the apartheid city was full of paradoxes, such as the poor white areas where the practice of “passing” from one racial category to another flourished, the transgression of social and spatial boundaries was always an act of subversion, often punishable by law.

Since the end of apartheid, matters have become more complicated. The post-apartheid era has created new opportunities and challenges, while new ambiguities have become commonplace. This change not only calls for new research, but also requires reviewing and revising the terminology applied to (South) African cities. As the changes happen all over the city, it comes across as rather peculiar, that the present literature is mainly discussing the changes in the formerly white areas. However, what happens in the African townships is not only important but should also be looked at and understood as part and parcel of this whole metropolitan dynamic.

This paper is largely based on the joint work of Annika Teppo and her research partner Myriam Houssay-Holzschuch on the townships of Cape Town. It will call for more ethnographic research as well as reflect on the conceptual discussions regarding the post-apartheid city.

2) The embodied politics of *kwaito* and house music in South Africa

Tuulikki Pietilä (Academy of Finland/University of Helsinki)

The most popular youth music styles in the post-apartheid South Africa, *kwaito* and house music, have aroused concern and criticism in many academic and non-academic commentators. These musical genres are seen to signal increasingly hedonistic and consumption-oriented lifestyles, and

hence a socio-moral crisis, among the black youth especially. The youth's apparent focus on stylising the self and the body is regarded as a backlash to the politically cognisant ethos of the past decades.

I will problematise these views by exploring the connections that the present styles create with the local histories, on the one hand, and the global styles, on the other. It is the embeddedness of the youth music genres in the historically older township styles of dancing and embodiment that makes them unintelligible to the critics.

3) The township (*ikasi*) in the Black Youth Imaginary: A Critical Exploration

Thembela Vokwana (Wesleyan University, USA and University of South Africa UNISA)

This paper seeks to analyse the representations of the 'township' or '*ikasi*' in the South African youth imaginary during the post apartheid years. Previously marginalised and somewhat functioning as reserves or even wastelands for 'Blacks in the city' throughout the apartheid era, South African townships faced further negative publicity as throngs of upwardly mobile Blacks migrated to the formerly white suburbia at the fall of apartheid. The townships (*ikasi*) continued to be imaged/imagined as untenable spaces for the aspirations of the upwardly mobile Blacks aiming for integration into the political economy of the 'new South Africa'.

Yet, a set of complex counter narratives also emerged, channelled through a variety of artistic forms by South African Black youths. These narratives projected the township as 'home', a space for reclaiming a sense of African identity in the face of a political history that sought to silence such, and resistance against emergent globalization and neo-colonialism largely associated with American culture. Celebrating the township equally probed the government's failed promises to alleviate the plight of many township dwellers against grinding poverty sustained from the apartheid past. Through an analysis of movies, novels, youth magazines and especially hip-hop and *kwaito* I argue that Black youths performatively succeeded to place the township at the center of South African socio-political imagination as a space for growth and regeneration and therefore central to the process of building a democratic, post-apartheid nation state.

4) Walking down Khumalo Street

Melissa Levin (University of Toronto, Canada)

The biography of Khumalo Street in South Africa's Thokoza township mirrors the story of the country's contemporary political history. This four kilometer stretch of road has played a major role in modern South Africa's political imaginary--from an institution of Apartheid social control, to the notorious borderline demarcating warring sides in the political violence of the 1990s, to a symbol of the current project of "nation-building." Arterial streets in South Africa's black townships were designed to restrict the movement of residents while facilitating military incursions: there was only one way into and out of the township.

The street's logic, as a sign of modernity, travel, and communication, was inverted by the imperatives of the Apartheid State for control of the black urban population. Yet these same streets became centers of African life and politics. Khumalo Street, the arterial node of Thokoza, was not unique in this regard, but it also gained notoriety in the early 1990s as the site of one of the bloodiest battles of contemporary South African history. Then, it served as the boundary that signified the fracture of the Thokoza community. One side of the street housed the migrant workers'

hostels, which were recruitment grounds for the Zulu-chauvinist Inkatha fighters armed by what became known as the “Third Force,” seeking to destabilize political negotiations between the ANC and Nationalist regime. The other side was the domain of community Self-Defense Units. By 1994, thousands had died across the East Rand and Johannesburg, most of the casualties from Thokoza.

While the new dispensation has left Apartheid spatial geography intact (Khumalo Street remains Thokoza’s artery), it has also sought to transform Khumalo Street into a symbol of a reconciled nation. A monument, with the names of the dead inscribed on its granite, now simultaneously memorializes and sublimates this conflict into the narrative of nation building. Mshayazafe hostel on Khumalo Street is today a tourist center marketing an exoticized and nostalgic vision of Zulu culture. This paper will critically examine the politics of memory and the commodification of the past in a reflection on the limits of contemporary South African nationalism.

Second session papers:

5) Sacred Spaces of Muslim Communities in Durban

Franz Kogelmann (Bayreuth University, Germany)

The aim of this presentation is to discuss a recent research project on sacred spaces of Durban’s Muslim communities. Muslims in South Africa are a tiny minority but their political and economic influence is disproportionate to their sheer numerical figure. However, research on Muslims in South Africa is to a large extent limited to the so called “Malays” from the Cape. The second largest group – Muslims of Indian origin – remained largely in the shadow of scholarly attention. Studies on the Muslim community of Durban do not refer to “space” as category of research on Muslims of Durban. Apartheid meant control over space. The Group Areas Act forced Muslim communities to relocate to specifically designated areas. After Apartheid the city administration of Durban started integrated area development projects.

Recent research is lacking the religious aspect. This is surprising because the Apartheid regime dislodged the persons and destroyed their houses but left religious buildings untouched. Even in the case of the restitution of parts of Bluff – there had been the “Mohammedan Trust” established by the Muslim Indian community and devoted to the Zanzibari community at the end of the 19th century in a nowadays much sought-after district of Durban facing the Indian Ocean – the religious dimension is absent. The fate of this “Mohammedan Trust” of King’s Rest on the Bluff shows that the Apartheid regime paid in a certain way respect to visible sacred buildings like mosques. In Muslim understanding a trust or *waqf* is an endowed real estate with a clear religious connotation which cannot be sold or its initial assignment cannot be changed. King’s Rest was such an endowed real estate. Nevertheless the Apartheid regime cleared its inhabitants from it, bulldozed it with the exception of the mosque and used the disappropriated land for its own purposes.

6) I don't know but that's what they say - a folklore approach to the urban Aids legends in South Africa

Jonas Sivelä (University of Helsinki)

In my paper, I will discuss the South African Aids myth from a folklore studies perspective based on my ongoing Doctoral research. Both the obtrusive statements made by different political leaders and a plain high prevalence of so-called aids myths have attracted attention of scholars from

different fields. The Aids myths and the political statements in SA are expressions of views on HIV/Aids that radically differ from views that are ruling in Western medicine. In many of the studies touching the subject, the Aids myths and the political statements are linked together suggesting that the statements made by politicians have given birth and caused the prevalence of the myths.

I do not contest the idea of political statements having an effect on the existence of different culturally conditioned phenomena. I do, however, propose that the background and the reasons behind their existence are much more complex. I believe that any cultural phenomena is probably too versatile for a simple reasoning and definitely too interesting to bypass or just ignore. With this paper, I want to establish the significance of examining the SA Aids myths as complex narratives, highly adaptable to a given context. I offer an approach where the focus is on the aids myth itself, by focusing on the mechanisms and the meanings of the cultural phenomenon. I believe it is possible to increase understanding how it functions and why they are so strongly present in South Africa and its townships.