TRAVELING THEORIES OF THE SOCIAL
On Form and Informality

A proposal for the Mellon-LASA Seminar Grant 2012-2013

Principal organizers:

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Latin American conversations with the
Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism (JWTC)

Latin American social scientists have had a tremendous impact on our understanding of the production of informality, from dependency and under-development theorists, through Hernando de Soto's highly influential and controversial work on the legal incorporation of informal “capital” into formal markets. Whether dualistic, structuralist or legalistic, Latin American analyses have provided important ways of understanding the still growing relevance of informality and its complex connections to formal regulations, institutions and economies. Yet partly because of the deepening regionalism and social relevance of a politically committed intellectual tradition, Latin American theorists have overlooked conceptual innovations on informality forged in other parts of the global south and in disciplines outside of the social sciences. The proposed exchanges aim to further integrate Latin American perspectives into ongoing interdisciplinary conversations on informality the global south, as well as introduce African and South Asian conceptual innovations into Latin American analyses of informalities and inequalities.

The proposed series of exchanges emerge from the participation of a small number Latin American scholars in the important theoretical work being carried out at the Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism (JWTC). For over four years, the JWTC has brought together leading thinkers in their respective fields, internationally renowned scholars and younger academics to participate in ten intensive days of lectures, seminars, public events, exhibitions and performances. The goal of the annual workshops is to facilitate the emergence of fresh connections, linkages and insights that might help to overcome the fractures within the world of global scholarship. The 2013 interdisciplinary conversations organized around the theme “The Life of Form” will critically explore and theorize questions of form and informality.

The JWTC describes its work as follows:

The Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism is an experiment in global conversation based in the South. Located in Johannesburg, we seek to be a critical node in the re-territorializing of global intellectual production. We are a centre for theoretical work that takes seriously a position in the South while addressing international conversations and problématiques. We take the labour of theory and criticism to be significant political work that is crucial to the experimenttion in social forms.

Past annual themes for theoretical debate have included “Techniques of Capital: Property, Self-Creation and Politics in Precarious Times”, “Ordinary States | States of Ordinariness” and “Futures of Nature”.

New analytics of forms and informalities

The 2013 annual theme on the relationships between material form and social content opens up important possibilities for invigorating Latin American analyses of informality with innovative African theorizing. In both regions, activities defined as informal are a continually growing phenomenon exacerbated by structural adjustment policies. Such post-neoliberal activities are now woven into complex social patterns that have helped to define emerging political and economic configurations of contemporary capitalism in each region.
Particularly innovative in this understanding the implications of contemporary informality is theorizing that pays close attention to the construction of new forms of sociality. As such, work by theorists such as Asaf Bayat (1997), Nezar AlSayyad and Ananya Roy (2003) are innovative in their approach to the informalization that has increased dramatically worldwide. Rather than define informality – whether in employment, housing or political action – in opposition to the formal sphere, these works analyze informality on its own terms. That is, they seek to understand the dominant or alternative social, economic or political configurations that are generated by varied forms of informality. Timothy Mitchell (2004), in a conceptually innovative approach to informality, describes the separation between the formal and informal spheres as a “frontier,” in which the distinction between formal and informal property is actually a “terrain of warfare” over which configurations of capitalism are battled.

Other altogether new analytics for understanding informality and cities are found in AbdouMaliq Simone’s (2004) powerful analysis of African cities. Central to his work is the recognition that structural adjustment has meant more than the restructuring of national economic policies. It constitutes, in fact, a restructuring of the very experiences of city life – of the most basic dimensions of time and space and sociality – that ground African lives. Thus the responses to new economic regimes grow out of those shifted definitions. Simone writes: “African cities [represent] a wide range of diffuse experimentation with the reconfiguration of bodies, territories and social arrangements necessary to recalibrate technologies of social control...” (2) Such an approach recognizes the reconfigurable creativity of Africans’ informal activity while critiquing the crushing conditions that compel it.

Such contemporary work on informality seek to move beyond conceptual dichotomies (such as formal/informal), towards an emphasis on the new horizons of possibility, the regimes of subjectivity and the systems of intelligibility created by the “lived hegemony” of contemporary international conditions. The JWTC 2013 conversations around the theme “The Life of Form” seek to further understand the function of informality, subjectivity and power through incorporating insights from architecture, aesthetics and design and technology into a consideration of the ways that material forms shape social forms.

**Traveling Theories of the Social**

Particularly rich in the intellectual exploration that has emerged around JWTC's conversations has been interdisciplinary dialogue between the humanities, the social sciences and critical legal and science studies. These conversations take theorizing seriously, focusing on the analysis and identification of the forms and emergent boundaries of “the social”, as these are being redrawn, extended or abandoned through the deeply heterogeneous flows, fractures and frictions of the contemporary conditions of global capitalism.

Latin American studies stands to benefit greatly from participating in the intellectual interrogation that seek to meet the analytic challenges that contemporary paradoxes mobility and closure, of continuities and discontinuities between the inside and the outside, the local and the global, or of temporariness and permanence pose. This is particularly the case as these challenges are nowhere as acute as in the global South, where site of unfolding global developments that are contradictory, uneven, contested, and for the most part experimental.
Focused interdisciplinary discussions and debates between Latin American and African theories on forms and informalities will open the possibilities for a renewal of Latin American studies on informality that has been too long limited to quantitative, descriptive and policy-driven social sciences, yet whose relevance is salient more than ever. The informal urban sector is the fastest growing and most unprecedented social class in the world (UN-Habitat 2003). Another UN report (Punyaratabandhu et al 2006) collected evidence from developing countries that shows that the majority of new employment - both self-employment and wage employment - is generated within the informal economies of developing nations. The same report estimates that the informal economy now accounts for over 50% of the urban workforce in the developing world.

By bringing together Latin American and African scholars into dialogue, the proposed series of exchanges, further detailed below, seeks to “incorporate into Latin American Studies researchers whose primary geographic focus is on other regions of the world, thus adding comparative or connective dimensions to Latin America-related work. Given the important theoretical exploration that has begun to consolidate around the node of the JWTC, this will introduce analytical perspectives typically applied by scholars who work on areas where JWTC has established networks, Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East and South Asia. The ability of JWTC to attract leading intellectuals to its dialogues will also help the proposed conversations contribute to the LASA-Mellon objective of “integrating into Latin American Studies theoretical... perspectives drawn from state-of-the-art research in core disciplines of the social sciences and humanities.”

Finally, Latin American participation in JWTC’s clear aims of re-drawing global intellectual maps will help to “challenge conventional geographical boundaries of Latin American studies,” in the context of the redrawing of the global intellectual map. With the decentralization of traditional Northern and Western institutions, the established custodians of knowledge production, global interdisciplinary networks have in many ways destabilized the centrality of the traditional university ‘department’. And with the reconfiguration of intellectual life and intellectual landscapes, theory itself has been de-territorialized. Theory travels, and with it, many key concepts are de-nationalized, displaced and reconstructed sometimes with surprising and highly productive effects. Bringing Latin American and African theories on forms and informality into productive conversation, then, is part of a broader concern of transforming the boundaries of regionally-based studies and their theories.

With this in mind, the specific objectives of the Traveling Theories of the Social discussions on Form and Informality contain both short-term concrete elements working towards longer-term visions. In the short term, the series will provide new perspectives to invigorate Latin American debates on the importance of forms and informality, allowing for a reassessment of the terms in which these debates have developed. It will also disseminate the ongoing JWTC dialogues to a Spanish-speaking audience, through translations of the online platform already developed by in English. In the long term, the series will deepen dialogue begin with Latin American intellectuals, expand and consolidate networks of global intellectual critical theory and intellectual inquiry, working in tandem with the JWTC towards the shared goal of producing new analytics and theories through intellectual exchange within the global south.
Proposed activities and participants

The process to work towards these ambitious goals has concrete activities contextualized in a longer term vision for global theoretical production described above. It will leverage and expand on the critical work that JWTC has accomplished and the networks it has established to date. Besides stimulating new directions and theoretical explorations for Latin American seminars, funding for these Traveling Theories of the Social seminars could do the same for JWTC's work, defamiliarizing the notion of what it means to think from the south by providing contrasts and comparisons with countries and regions with very different entanglements in global economies, of capital as much as of intellectual and cultural production.

Speakers at the JWTC and its preparatory conversations have included Abdoumaliq Simone, Ariella Azoulay, Jean and John Comaroff, Michael Hardt, Arjun Appadurai, Wendy Brown, Ann Stoler, David Goldberg, Anna Tsing, Ackbar Abbas, Judith Butler, Maano Ramutsindela, Mandla Langa, Clapperton Mavhunga, Achal Prabhala, Premesh Lalu, and Srinivas Aravamudan. At each of the annual ten-day workshops, fifteen to twenty junior scholars, largely from and/or working on the African region, South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East have participated in extended conversations with these and other important intellectuals in each of the annual ten-day workshops. Far too rare in these discussions have been critical perspectives from Latin America, limited by transportation and language restrictions, as well as regionalized professional and intellectual networks.

Seeking to overcome these barriers and broaden their networks, in 2009 JWTC organizers proposed and obtained a Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar grant to fund a series of exchanges to take place over an 18-month period. The theme of the resulting Sawyer Seminar series based at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg was “Property, Race and Poverty: Paradoxes of the Law and the Possibility of Justice in Contemporary South Africa.” The seminars brought together two doctoral scholars working on Brazil and Bolivia, respectively, and a postdoctoral scholar from the Caribbean region into conversation with an interdisciplinary range of scholars collaborating with the JWTC.

These first forays into exchanges between Latin American and African scholars – including Teresa Caldeira through the University of California's Humanities Research Institute's partnership with the JWTC – and the 2013 annual theme mark important possibilities for bringing innovative African theorizing on form and formality into dialogue with Latin American scholarly debates on informality.

These discussions will include the following main component of the proposal, a seminar on “Theorizing Form and Informality,” to be hosted by the History, Anthropology and Arts Department of the Facultad Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales in Quito, Ecuador, as well as three further complementary components. The planned activities are thus:

1. Seminar at FLACSO sede Ecuador, bringing together 12 junior and senior scholar (five working from and on Africa and seven working from and on Latin America on the themes of theorizing form and informality).

2. Support for travel and accommodation for two scholars working from Africa and one from Latin America to the 2013 LASA meeting, for a panel convened on “Theorizing
Form and Informality: Transregional Perspectives from the Global South”.

3. Support for participation of one Latin American speaker and one Latin American junior scholar in the 2013 JWTC Workshop in Johannesburg “The Life of Form”.

4. Translation, development and dissemination of current JWTC website (www.jwtc.org.za) to reach Latin American audiences and stimulate Latin America-Africa dialogue, and the publication of a special issue of the JWTC journal Salon.

Participants to be invited to the seminar hosted at FLACSO in Quito include:

**Scholars working on and in Africa**
Edgar Pietersen, Director, African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town  
Research themes: infrastructure and popular culture of cities in Africa.
Claire Benit-Gabbou, Coordinator and Associate Professor, Centre for Urban & Built Environment Studies, Johannesburg  
Research themes: on urban regeneration, squatting and urban politics.
Detlev Krige, Professor of Anthropology and Human Economy, University of Pretoria  
Research themes: gambling and informal economies.
Juan Orrantia, Post-doc Fellow in Photography & Anthropology, Univ of Witwatersrand  
Research themes: visual archives of violence in South Africa and Colombia.
Pamila Gupta, Researcher, Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, Johannesburg  
Research themes: visual anthropology, relics, expositions and colonialism.

**Senior Latin American scholars**
Teresa Caldeira, Professor of City and Regional Planning, University of California Berkeley  
Research themes: comparative urban studies, urban form and political transformation.
Mark Healey, Professor of History, University of Connecticut  
Research themes: Modern Latin America, architecture, urbanism and state-formation.
Gloria Naranja Giraldo, Professor of Political Studies, Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín.  
Research themes: Forced displacement and urban reconfigurations.
Xavier Andrade, Professor-Researcher of Visual Anthropology, FLACSO sede Ecuador  
Research themes: political pornography, popular visuality and contemporary art.

**Junior Latin American scholars**
Helena Chávez Mac Gregor, Curator and Professor, Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México  
Research themes: political subjectivities in art forms, aesthetics and power.
Amonah Achi, Global Urban Advisor, OXFAM, Mexico City  
Research themes: urban land management in Bolivia and Ivory Coast.
Jorge Daniel Vásquez, Master's student in Sociology, FLACSO sede Ecuador  
Research themes: informal youth practices, race and identities, migration.
Lisset Coba, Professor of Anthropology, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Ecuador  
Research themes: gender and violence in informal labor.
Jorge Blanco, PhD student, FLACSO sede Ecuador  
Research themes: economic elite and public sphere in South America.
PROPOSED BUDGET

Traveling Theories of the Social Seminar in Quito, Ecuador in Mar 2013
   4 Africa-based JWTC collaborators USD $ 8000
   1 Mexico-based JWTC collaborator $ 1000
   1 US-based African scholar or scholar on seminar theme $ 1000
   3 from other parts of Ecuador or South America $ 2400
   2-3 others from Ecuador $ 100
   Accomodations and meals for 3 nights (2 ½ day seminar) $1000

LASA Congress in Washington DC on May 29-June 1 2013
   3 panelists to congress (2 from Africa, 1 from Latin America) $ 3000

JWTC Workshop “The Life of Form” in Johannesburg in July 2013 $ 4000
   Support for 2 Latin American scholars to attend JWTC

Translations and development of online publications* $ 1500
   (throughout funding period, includes website development and a special issue of the publication Salon)

TOTAL $ 22,000

* Note on publication budget item:
As noted in the activities listed above, instead of publication funds for printed material, given the transnational nature of the exchanges, these funds will be used to extend, broaden and translate the current JWTC site (www.jwtc.org.za) as a basis for a new virtual and trans-regional platform. As part of this effort, a special issue of the JWTC’s online publication Salon will be published, with articles by seminar participants and other related articles, interviews, etc. As an important component of efforts to increase south-south dialogue, the Salon aims to provide an accessible public space dedicated to the discussion of ideas across the global South. Its translation in Spanish and inclusion of Latin American perspectives is an important step in working towards this goal.

References
Julia Hornberger, PhD
University of the Witwatersrand, African Centre for Migration & Society
julia.hornberger@access.uzh.ch/julia.hornberger@wits.ac.za

**CURRENT POSITIONS**
Senior Researcher and Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Zurich
Research Affiliate, African Centre for Migration and Society, University of the Witwatersrand.
Principle Investigator and Project Leader of the research projects:
“The Anthropology of Transnational Crime Control in Africa” funded by the German Research Foundation
“International Policing, Mobility and Crime in South Africa” funded by the Open Society Foundation
Co-convenor of The Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism

**PREVIOUS ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS**
09/2008 - 01/2010 Senior Lecturer (Oberassistentin), Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Zurich, Switzerland
08/2004- 08/2008 Researcher at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER), University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

**ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS**
2007 PhD, Faculty of Law, Netherlands Centre of Human Rights (SIM) University Utrecht.
1999 Advanced Masters in Cultural Anthropology. Centre for Non-Western Studies (CNWS), University of Leiden, The Netherlands.
1998 Masters in Cultural Anthropology (with distinctions). Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

**List of Five exemplary PUBLICATIONS:**

**FUNDING**
2011 - 2013 The Anthropology of Transnational Crime Control in Africa: The War on Drugs, the Fight against Human Trafficking and the Combat against Counterfeit Medicines. Deutsche Forschungs Gemeinschaft, Priority Program (Julia Hornberger [project leader]), (USD 250 000) [together with Prof S. Randeria, University of Zurich, Switzerland & Prof. T. Kirsch, University of Konstanz, Germany]
2010-2011 International Policing, Mobility and Crime in South Africa, Phase II, Open Society Grant (USD 75 000) (with Dr. Darshan Vigneswaran, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany)
2009-2010 International Policing, Mobility and Crime in South Africa, Phase I Open Society Foundation South Africa Grant, (USD 90 000) (with Dr. Darshan Vigneswaran, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany)
2008-2009 Police Corruption In Gauteng, Open Society Foundation South Africa Grant, (USD 76 000) (with Dr. Darshan Vigneswaran Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany)
MARÍA CRISTINA CIELO
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EDUCATION

**PhD Sociology, University of California Berkeley**
Dissertation: *The City Effect: Urban Institutions, Peripheries & Political Participations in Bolivia*
Awarded Latin American Studies Association Martin Diskin Dissertation Award and Pacific Coast Council of Latin American Studies Hubert Herring Award

**MA Sociology, University of California Berkeley**
MA Paper: *Property Practices: National and Spatial Reform in 19th Century Mexico*

ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH POSITIONS

Professor-Researcher, Sociology Program,
Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales sede Ecuador, Quito, Ecuador 2011-present
Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 2010-2011
Researcher, Programa de Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia, Cochabamba, Bolivia 2008-2009
Research Program Coordinator, Centro Vicente Cañas Poder Local, Cochabamba 2007-2008
Graduate Fellow, Institute for the Study of Social Change, Oakland, CA 2004-2005
Research Assistant, UC Berkeley Department of Sociology, Berkeley, CA 2003-2004
Instructor, Univ of the Philippines Dept of Comparative Literature, Manila, Philippines 1994-1997
Coordinator, Univ of Philippines Office of Cultural Research, Davao, Philippines 1996-1997

SELECT AWARDS

Grant for two research projects from the Funds for Academic Development, FLACSO 2012-2013
Sawyer Seminar Series – Mellon Foundation Fellowship, Univ of Witwatersrand 2010-2011
University of California Office of the President Dissertation Writing Fellowship 2009-2010
Mellon Foundation for Latin American Sociology Research Fellowship 2006-2009
University of California Berkeley Dean’s Fellowship 2006-2007
Institute for the Study of Social Change Graduate Research Fellowship 2004-2006
Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship Award for focus on Southeast Asia 2003-2004

SAMPLE PUBLICATIONS


"Informalidades e legitimidades das periferias bolivianas (Cochabamba)". *Tempo Social* (Universidad de São Paolo) vol.22 no.2, p.101-121, 2010.


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9a 1st Ave, Melville, Johannesburg, 2092  
South Africa  
Tel (home): + 2711 4829945  
email: Kelly.Gillespie@wits.ac.za

**Academic Positions**

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<tr>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Anthropology</td>
<td>2011-present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Anthropology</td>
<td>2008-2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-founder and co-convener</td>
<td>Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism</td>
<td>2008-present</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Research and teaching interests and classes taught include criminal justice, legal anthropology, South African history, race, sexuality, and social theory.

**Education and Selected Academic Awards**

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<th>Degree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Post-doc</td>
<td>University of Pretoria, Department of Anthropology</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>University of Chicago</td>
<td>1997-2007</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Full scholarship in Department of Anthropology
- Dissertation Title: *Criminal Abstractions and the Post-apartheid Prison*
- Mellon Mentorsip Programme award, University of the Witwatersrand 2011-2014
- Friedel Sellschop award for top young researchers at University of the Witwatersrand 2011-2014
- Awarded early confirmation (tenure) at the University of the Witwatersrand 2010
- Co-authorship Sawyer Seminar Series proposal, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation 2010-2011
- SPARC Young Researchers Grant, University of the Witwatersrand December 2008
- Watkins writing fellowship (University of Chicago, Anthropology department) 2006
- Wenner-Gren Scholarship for dissertation research 2004
- SSRC Fellow, Project on Global Security and Cooperation 2002-2004

**Selected Publications**


**Other Relevant Experience**


*Organiser.* Academic study group ‘Future Tense: Rethinking Radical Politics and Time in a Neo-Liberal Age’, Wits School of Social Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand. 2007


*Series Presenter.* For international documentary programme *Chat the Planet* facilitating global conversations between youth from South Africa, United States, Australia and Jordan. Directed by Liz Fish, gold medal award at the South African television awards, 2003.

Achille MBEMBE  
Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa  
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PRESENT POSITIONS
since 2008 Co-Convenor, The Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism, South Africa
since 2008 Visiting Professor, Department of Romance Studies, Duke University, Durham, NC
since 2003 Research Professor in History and Politics, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

EDUCATION

1989 Ph.D. History, Université de Paris I-Panthéon Sorbonne, France
1986 D.E.A. Political Science, Institut d'études politiques de Paris, France
1983 D.E.A. History, Université de Paris I-Panthéon Sorbonne, France
1981 M.A. History, University of Yaounde, Cameroon

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

2006-2007 Visiting Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, University of California - Irvine
2003 Visiting Professor, Department of African-American Studies, Yale University, New Haven, CT
2001 Visiting Professor, Department of African-American Studies, University of California - Berkeley
1996-2000 Executive Director, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, Dakar
1992-1996 Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
1988-1991 Assistant Professor, Department of History, Columbia University, New York

RESEARCH GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

2008 Andrew Mellon Foundation. Sawyer Seminar on “Property, Race and Poverty”
2004 (in collaboration with Deborah Posel) European Programme for Reconstruction and Development. A CWCI grant on “The promise of freedom and its practice: Perspectives on South Africa’s decade of democracy”.
2001 AIRE-Développement. Grant for research on property & citizenship among new black elite in South Africa.
1994 Université de Paris VII. Grant for archival research on taxation in colonial Cameroon.
1993 Center for Non Western Studies (University of Leiden, The Netherlands). Grant for study on taxation, consumption and coercion: aspects of the public sphere in colonial Cameroon.
1992 The Brookings Institution. Grant for a study on civil society and market-oriented reforms in Africa

MOST RECENT BOOKS


OTHER SELECTED PUBLICATIONS