



Society, Work and Development Institute (SWOP)

# International Colloquium

## 4 - 6 September 2012



**'Politics of Precarious Society:**  
A comparative perspective on the Global South'

**VENUE:**

Graduate Seminar Room, South West Engineering  
Building, East Campus, University of Witwatersrand

**WEBSITE**

Detailed programme and papers being presented can  
be accessed on SWOP's website:

[www.swopinstitute.org.za](http://www.swopinstitute.org.za)

# Introduction

The central problem posed by this colloquium is the precarious nature of social order in some societies of the global South. The nature of social order - particularly how hegemony is secured and reproduced, negotiated, resisted or challenged - is a founding question at the heart of social science. Yet the way we understand this question remains dominated by concepts and theory forged in the history of the West. To what extent does such theory speak to the unsettled, precarious nature of order in a country like South Africa? Or does the project of understanding our southern world enable - and demand - the remaking of theory?

The transition from apartheid to democracy inaugurated the dissolution of apartheid orders and the formation of new post-apartheid orders in South Africa. Transition entailed a series of contestations over the preservation and dismantling of various elements of the old order, as well as over the shape of the emerging democratic order. In the second decade after the democratic elections of 1994, it is clear that slow-burning contestations over dissolution of the old and the formation of the new reach more deeply and widely than imagined.

The Marikana massacre demonstrates this more starkly than we imagined possible.

Much literature has been devoted to the precariousness of life of those subjected to the increasing precariousness of work, but such dynamics invite the question whether society itself has become distinctively precarious.

There are contradictory processes of fragmentation and solidarity across different sites in society. The country's democratic constitution is regarded as one of the most progressive in the world, and is taken to be the framing document for the forging of a new South African nation. However, the processes of fragmentation and precariousness described above

provide fertile ground for the formation of “local moral orders” - such as patriarchy, xenophobia, the use of



[http://msnbcmedia.msn.com//MSNBC/Components/Video/2012/08\\_August/120815/pb-120823-south-africa-02.jpg](http://msnbcmedia.msn.com//MSNBC/Components/Video/2012/08_August/120815/pb-120823-south-africa-02.jpg)

violence, tenuous allegiance to the rule of law, cultures of patronage, and so on - that fundamentally challenge the values of the constitution. Looked

at differently, South African society is constituted by a patchwork of differential citizenships, giving rise to multiple insurgent citizenships (Holston 2008) that in part seek to expand access to constitutional and socio-economic rights, but in part also reproduce local power relations and prejudices, as well as carving out zones of activity beyond the control of the state.

Much literature has been devoted to the precariousness of life of those subjected to the increasing precariousness of work, but such dynamics invite the question whether society itself has become distinctively precarious. Such questions are not unique to South Africa, as many countries of the global South experience similar social dynamics in a context of inequality and poverty. To what extent is there a pattern of fragmentation in the postcolonial world or the global South more broadly?

**The colloquium convenes local and international scholars to explore these themes.**

# Presenters

Peter Alexander, Franco Barchiesi, Claire Benit-Gbaffou, Ruy Braga,  
Keith Breckenridge, Michael Burawoy, Crispin Chinguno, Jacklyn Cock,  
Klaus Doerre, Bernard Dubbeld, Khayaat Fakier, Kelly Gillespie, Sari Hanafi,  
Elizabeth Jelin, Katherine Joynt, Obvious Katsaura, Bridget Kenny,  
Loren Landau, Malose Langa, Jacob Mati, Sepetla Molapo, Dunbar Moodie,  
Prishani Naidoo, Trevor Ngwane, Cesar Rodriguez Garavito, Carin Runciman,  
Nandini Sundar, Karl von Holdt, Edward Webster.

## From

- Beirut,
- Berkeley
- Bogota
- Buenos Aires
- Cape Town
- Delhi
- Jena
- Johannesburg
- New York
- Sao Paulo
- Stellenbosch

# Programme

## DAY 1

4 SEPTEMBER

16H30

Public Talk

Introduction

Tawana Kupe, Dean of Humanities

Sari Hanafi

**The Arab spring:** The impact of Arab youth movements and the emergence of a Reflexive Individualism

## DAY 2

5 SEPTEMBER

09H00 - 09H15

Welcome:

Yunus Ballim, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

09H15 - 09H30

Introduction:

Karl von Holdt, Director: SWOP

09H30 - 11H15

**Precarity in Theory:**

Franco Barchiesi, Ohio State University

'Precarity as Capture: An Exercise in Conceptual Genealogy'

Karl von Holdt, SWOP

'Precarious Society: The Making and Unmaking of Social Orders'

Cesar Rodriguez Garavito, University of los Andes

'Social Minefields, or Social Theory for a Volatile World'

11H15 - 11H30

Tea Break

11H30 - 13H15

**Mining and violence in the global South**

Crispen Chinguno, SWOP

'Mineworkers, fragmentation and violence in Rustenburg/Marikana'

Dunbar Moodie, Hobart &amp; Wm. Colleges/ SWOP

'The Precariousness of Prediction'

Michael Burawoy, University of California Berkeley

'The Colour of Class Revisited: 40 years of Turbulence on the Zambian Copperbelt'

13h15 - 14H00

Lunch

14H00 -16H00

**Territory and land**

Nandini Sundar, Delhi University

'Precarious Citizenship: Shattered Sovereignties'

Sari Hanafi, American University of Beirut

'Social exclusion of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon: Reflections on the Mechanisms that cement their persistent poverty'

Loren Landau, University of the Witwatersrand

'Fluidity, Rights and Boundaries: Precarity &amp; Solidarity in Africa's Urban Estuaries'

Jacklyn Cock, SWOP

'The ecological dimension of 'precarity': The impact of 'slow violence' on Steel Valley'

16H00 - 16H15

Tea

16H15 - 18H15

**Work**

Ruy Braga, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil

'The Politics of the precariat in Brazil: From Populism to Lulist Hegemony'

Edward Webster and Katherine Joynt, SWOP

'Precarious Workers, Different Voices: Johannesburg's inner city clothing workers'

Bridget Kenny, University of the Witwatersrand

'The Morality of Contract: Contract Labour, Employment Law and Subjectivation'

Klaus Doerre, FSU Jena

'Discriminatory Precarity. Extent, subjective coping practices and social consequences of insecure working and living conditions'

18H30

**Welcome:**

Tawana Kupe, Dean of Humanities

**Cocktail Supper**

# Day 3

6 SEPTEMBER

09H00 - 10H45

## State & citizenship

Keith Breckinridge, University of the Witwatersrand

'A strange alliance: The development of biometric welfare grants in the South African Bantustans'

Kelly Gillespie, University of the Witwatersrand

'Planning and Other Symptoms of 'Surplus': Atlantis and Malmesbury New Prison'

Malose Langa, University of the Witwatersrand/SWOP

'Beacon of hope for the state and community partnership: A case study of Community Work Programme (CWP) in Bokfontein, South Africa'

10H45 - 11H00

## Tea Break

11H00 -12H45

## Popular responses (1)

Carin Runciman, Trevor Ngwane and Peter Alexander, University of Johannesburg

'A protest event analysis of South Africa's rebellion of the poor: Some initial results'

Bernard Dubbeld, Stellenbosch University

'Envisioning Governance: Expectations of transformed rule in Glendale, South Africa'

Jacob Mati, SWOP

'The political economy of neoliberalism in shaping Kenyan and South African civil society'

12H45 - 13H45

## Lunch Break



13H45 - 15H00

**Popular Response (2)**

Prishani Naidoo, University of the Witwatersrand

‘Precarious Politics? Post-apartheid struggles of ‘The Pooors’: A Contemporary Assessment’

Claire Benit-Gbaffou and Obvious Katsaura,  
University of the Witwatersrand

‘Local leadership and the construction of political legitimacy in South African urban societies’

15:00 - 15:15

Tea Break

15H15 - 17H00

**Households and Care**

Khayaat Fakier, SWOP

‘Mobile Care: Subverting Traditional Notions of Motherhood in a Precarious Society’

Sepetla Molapo, University of Pretoria/SWOP

‘Distances between: Reflections on Community Killings in a South African Informal Settlement’

Elizabeth Jelin, CONICET-Ides, Buenos Aires

‘The Logics of Care and Gender Inequalities in Argentina’

17H00 -18H00

**Closing panel**

Michael Burawoy, Cesar Rodriguez Garavito, Nandini Sundar

**Closing thanks**

Karl von Holdt, Director: SWOP