Gender Justice and Body Politics
4-6 February 2009

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A conference Report:

Gender Justice and Body Politics
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Environmental and Geographical Sciences (EGS)
University of Cape Town

Compiled & Edited by Hauwa Mahdi and Margaret Gårding

Conference Organising Committee

AGI: Sophie Oldfield
Elaine Salo
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GADNET: Ann Schlyter
Hauwa Mahdi
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Conference opening and Introduction

The Gender Justice and Body Politics conference started with an introduction by Sophie Oldfield, one of the organizers on 4 February at 9.00 am. The Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town (UCT) and invited guest speaker, Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo, launched the conference by drawing on the significant location of this university at the tip of the African continent. With a keen sense of history and the place of politics on matters of gender, Professor Nhlapo highlighted the interrelatedness between the theme of the conference and the state of the South African citizenship struggles today. The theme of the conference he argued, sits well with the need for such a discourse in SA and the continent. In spite of the struggle for recognition that has spanned many generations; he cited with disbelief that a new political party had the audacity only recently, to allude to women’s inferiority to men by demanding them to dress in a particular way when they wished to address men. Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo wished the conference successful deliberations with encouraging comments on the needs for gender discourse amid the struggles at hand.

Sophie Oldfield took the floor to explain the theme of the conference tying it to their 3 year project on gender justice at UCT’s Department of Environmental and Geographical Science and the African Gender Institute (AGI). She expounded on the challenges of such a theme in a conference context of having to accommodate diverse sub-themes. In their specific research at UCT they have focused on space and community as sites of contestation of citizenship as a symbol of equity. Their study allows them to deal with the nitty-gritty issues of marginalisation in urban settings. Thus, citizenship is viewed in its substantiation in the daily activities of people at the
micro level. The research team therefore sees the conference as an opportunity to open a broader conversation with colleagues on a more diverse scale.

Since the conference is organised in cooperation with GADNET, Sweden, the head of that network, Associate Professor Ann Schlyter explained the role and interests of the Swedish network in organizing the conference. During its entire five year existence GADNET has had gender justice as its philosophical foundation and the focal theme anchoring all its activities both academic and activist. Part of these activities are to encourage Swedish researchers to engage gender researchers from the South in discourses around justice. Cooperation with UCT in organizing this conference is in line with these priorities. Gadnet researchers also help some Swedish organizations which are active in the South.

Keynote Presentation
This session was chaired by Elaine Salo the head of the Institute of Women’s and Gender Studies, University of Pretoria. The keynote presentation of the conference was delivered by Richa Nagar from the Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies unit, University of Minnesota. Commencing with a question, From Feminist Fieldwork to Collaborative praxis: Can Analytical Frameworks Travel Across North/South Borders?, Professor Nigar engages the paradigms of gender knowledge production and the North/South problematic. She argues that when the content of formal knowledge is evaluated in isolation from the making of that knowledge and from its deployment and dissemination in multiple locations, a hierarchy of theory, method and outreach crystallizes in which issues of relevance and accountability are sidelined. In academia, this general problem becomes pronounced in the contested realm of ethnographic and field-work based research, especially when the producers of academic knowledge are located in the global North and their research subjects are located in the global South. The task of imagining new possibilities for knowledge across North/South divides must begin by grappling with a series of difficult questions, including: Who controls the production and distribution of the knowledges? Who forms the intended and actual audience of intellectual production? How do these production processes intersect with the politics and economics of publishing, literacy, access to and distribution of literature? What can be done to reconstitute the systems of knowledge production and dissemination?

This presentation considers how feminist engagements with these issues can be advanced through multi-institutional alliances across geographical and sociocultural borders. Professor Nagar’s discussion was based primarily on an ongoing transnational collaboration with members of a rural women’s collective called Sangtin in Sitapur District of Uttar Pradesh (India). They initially came together in 2002 to critically reflect on how caste, class, religion, gender and geography shape the lives of the poorest rural women in Sitapur, as well as the internal processes, structures, effectiveness, and limitations of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in which village-level workers undertake the main labor of translating donor-funded projects of empowerment on the ground. The presentation highlights the key moments in this collective journey, focusing on the analytical frameworks and forms of knowledge that have emerged, as well as the dialogues triggered by their collaboration in multiple institutional sites – academic presses, NGOs, activist collectives, and donor agencies. Academic theories,
critical pedagogy get interwoven and extended as members of the collective work in multiple sites to democratize hierarchical structures of knowledge production through collaborative praxis.

The thrust of her presentation is the politics and agencies that affect academic production of knowledge. She maintains that to extricate the interwoven influences of power in the production of such knowledge, the North and the South cannot be perceived simply as geographical entities, but also class entities. The question is therefore she argues, how academic knowledge can cross geographical, socio-political and institutional borders and yet remains engaged with the question of power, privilege and its own reproduction on both sides of the border. To amplify this point, she delves into the politics of identity and social spaces in the case of Asian communities in Tanzania where she conducted some interviews from 1990 to 2000, as a case in point. The class position of the Asian commercial bourgeoisie in an African context from 1963-1993 has played a significant role in blurring what it means to be “Hindu”, “Muslim” or “Sikh”, while buoying up a common identity vis-à-vis the natives. As an academic, an underlying question and concern in the interviews she conducted, was why did they share their stories and analysis with her and why did they trust her. In other words, knowledge production involves a degree of risk, such as the exposition of the most vulnerable members of society. She draws lessons from this research such as: what value the research could have in the North; could the material be dangerous or unusable and could it be irrelevant to non-academics.

She concluded with a narrative of the life drama that followed the attempt to translate and publish in English the Sangtin Yatra Collective journey of the 7 women of that Indian women’s network.

**Panel 1 A: Negotiating the Politics of Citizenship**

**Session Chair:** Margaret Munalula  
**Discussant:** Amanda Gouws  
**Presenters:** Patricia McFadden, Yeliwe Clark, Koni Benson, Ann Schlyter & Amanda Lock Swarr

Chaired by Margaret Munalula the panel had 5 presentations on different aspects of the citizenship discourse spectrum, but all centred on field areas in southern Africa. The first presentation, *Resisting Nationalism, Crafting New Citizenship Identities as African women*, was made by Professor Patricia McFadden. Professor McFadden opened her submission from a personal anxiety caused by a resurging neoliberalism and her search to contextualise this resurgence as “part of a transition to postcoloniality”. In crafting citizenship McFadden takes on board the changes and context of flux evidenced by the type of knowledge being produced in the South and her radical feminist activist engagement. Writing as women is an important act of survival and a step in the reclamation and re-conceptualisation against the current political revisionism, she argues.

Across the African continent there is clear evidence of a major socio-political and
economic shift in the processes through which class and gendered relations of power and exclusion are being re-constituted and played out. The neocolonial state has become the central terrain through which class re-construction and realignments are negotiated and/or contested. In the midst of this apparent turmoil, which in reality reflects the movement of these societies from the ‘moment of independence’ to a new phase in the transition to post-colonial societies, women and their movements/political structures, have become ‘eclipsed’. The resultant consequence is that we see a dramatic decline in the visibility and ability of women – as political and policy agents – to impact upon the State and/or to defend or advance their gendered agendas. Across the continent, the reversal of assumed gains and the re-emergence of revanchist proto-nationalist tendencies and neo-feudal practices (most blatantly articulated and performed in the cultural/private spheres of our social realities) speaks dramatically to this ‘moment of political and ideological eclipse’ for women’s politics and entitlements.

There are several reasons why women’s movements have gone into political decline and or have been ‘silenced’ (as in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia and increasingly in South Africa), she argues. The paper analyses the reasons why this has occurred, focusing on the impact of Nationalist ideology and resistance (as backlash within women’s movements) on radical feminist politics as key elements in this scenario. She argues that the re-imagining of women’s politics through the re-centring of radical ideas and practices would enable women’s movements to transform themselves into feminist movements, and thus present an effective response to the rapidly consolidating new class and state power relations in the various societies of the continent. Re-imagining citizenship as a radical identity (embedded in radical feminist discourses of entitlement, rights, bodily and sexual integrity, dignity and freedom) will provide women with the most powerful resource in terms of crafting their political identities and practices, and in re-positioning their relationships (of contestations and negotiation) with the transitional neo-colonial state and its ancilliary patriarchal institutions.

Thus, confronting revisionism head-on, at the centre of which is black nationalists and other privileged classes in continent, is unavoidable in perceiving how citizenship is being constructed. Revisionism is palpable in the full bookshop shelves where books glorifying the virtues of Rhodesia take a disproportionate space. Women who have been the engine of citizenship reclamation are no longer being addressed by the radical left as agents. What we witness today as citizenship struggles by the political elite is nothing more than a reflection of the struggles within capitalism.

Black nationalists are rather in the act of institutionalising masculinities, which among other things, seeks to disenfranchise women as citizens and illegitimate their struggles for justice. The question is who needs the kind of liberal citizenship demands in Zimbabwe for example, where the focus of the definition is property-based. How citizenship is imagined, crafted and positioned will determine whether ordinary workers can be full citizens. We need to appropriate history in our writings to counter the revisionist claims, since the “hegemony of the text” is real to women. This is an essential trajectory since current revisionist writings seem to have re-appropriated gender discourses.
Women’s demands should for the radical feminists be the platform for action against revisionism. At the time of independence, radical women did not theorise enough to synthesise their claim on the state. The revisionist predominance of the present require us to develop a concept of the state in Africa that is distinct from the Western definitions of it as a broken and corrupt project. We must seek to answer the question: how do we as women establish a relationship with the state when we enter the public space? Asking this question will enable us re-position ourselves as well as enable us to deal with the issues of privileges in the contemporary neo-liberal conceptions of citizenship.

Yeliwe Clark’s paper is titled, “Security Sector Reform in Africa: a lost opportunity to deconstruct militarised masculinities”. The paper grapples with the re-imagining of the military in a new state system in Africa. Focussing on post-conflict reconstruction, the question is whether the security sector reform (SSR) takes into account women’s interests in the peace-building efforts to enable them access the public space. Under the guise of peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, countries that have been through years of civil war (Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC, Southern Sudan, Mozambique, Angola, etc), have committed to reforming the security sector. Will this be another forgone opportunity for Africa, and African women in particular, to deconstruct militarised masculinities and open the possibility for an alternative society?

The presentation centred on the extent to which SSR can be seen as an opportunity to think through alternatives to militarised masculinities in the context of post conflict reconstruction processes in Africa. Countries that are described as being in ‘post conflict’ are those that have undergone a formal peace process in which conflicting parties have made a commitment to work together to redress fundamental inequalities that are perceived to be the root cause of the conflict. Whereas unequal access to political power and wealth are often posited as the main ‘cause’ of the conflict, there is hardly any (if at all) interrogation of current constructions of masculinities and how these are in fact a key aspect of oppressive institutions and perhaps at the heart of a society’s tendency to revert to widespread violence and aggression.

Although security sector reform entails a reconstitution of a wide range of institutions including the army, militia groups, intelligence services/networks, private security firms, police, the judiciary, and prisons, the most contested institution is the army (both formal and informal militia groups). Governmental commitments and women’s rights activism in post conflict countries has largely focussed on international instruments such as United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security as their trajectory of action. Seldom can one observe interventions by either governments and/or NGO activists that have gone beyond a technocratic inclusion of women in militaries. Her presentation concludes with a rhetorical question as to the extent to which peace activists have offered substantive critiques of militarised masculinities as sources of the conflicts as well as gender-based violence.

Koni Benson’s central question is how the urbanization of poverty has been experienced by women squatters on the ground. Based on a field study of a shack/
township settlement of Crossroads in Cape Town, at a defining moment in its history, she explores the struggles of the women of this township. The paper documents the life history of African/Black women involved in movements for urban survival, in particular housing, over the last forty years in South Africa. Benson methodically links and compares two moments of collective organizing in the shack/township of Crossroads, the longest surviving squatter camp in South Africa. As one of many strategies for resisting forced removals, the first generation of squatter women leaders created and performed *Imfuduso* (Exodus)- a theatrical production about their struggle to remain in Cape Town in the 1970s. Refusing to leave their shacks in town and returning illegally after multiple violent “removals” to State prescribed Bantustans, they spearheaded a struggle for urban tenure rights which continues up to today. The second example of collective organizing is the Women’s Power Group where 300 women squatters who came together in the late 1990s to demand government accountability for shelter. In both cases, there were serious repercussions for women including restrictions on their freedom of movement and difficult squatter camp conditions. The undocumented 1970s production and 1990s mass sit-in are important windows into the gendered and generational dynamics of migration, displacement, poverty, and housing over time and the central role women played in resisting apartheid and the squatter struggles today. The testimonies of Crossroads activists open up questions about multiple displacements: of people but also about the displacement of histories and the gendered nature of the struggle to justify in/exclusion of the marginalized majority under neoliberal post-Apartheid capitalist South Africa. With the dispersal of the older women actors from Crossroads the history of the Apartheid resistance at Crossroads is assuming a gendered appropriation. What we see in the post-Apartheid resistance narrative she concludes is the invention of male heroes, as the bravery of the women of Crossroads is generalised and subsumed in male-dominated political organs.

The fourth presentation of this panel was made by Professor Ann Schlyter in, *The body politics of gendered citizenship in peri-urban Lusaka*. Centring her discussion on citizenship, Ann zeroed-in on the practical appropriation of the concept in housing by women. She argues that although in theory citizenship is supposed to be a gender-neutral concept; in practice, it is highly gendered. The paper is based on a study covering over forty years of the ways women’s citizenship has been articulated in Zambia, and how women in a peri-urban area in Lusaka had crafted their citizenship. It has been a period of rapid urban growth and rapidly changing gender relations. Governmental body politics and neighbourhood organisations create conditions within which women must participate in decision-making and the control of their own bodies. In such contexts, the home and the neighbourhood are sites in which the everyday meanings and practices of gendered citizenship are experienced, contested and recreated. Over the decades, women had to adapt their rights of home and security of tenure as they constructed and appropriated their citizenship.

The last presentation on this panel was Amanda Lock Swarr’s *Transition Matters: sex reassignment and race in South Africa*, where she explored the conflicting policy positions and living as trans-gender actors. She demonstrates that under apartheid, many South African transsexuals had access to free sex reassignment surgeries and were able to alter the sex listed on their birth certificates legally. Transsexuals’ “tran-
sitions” from male to female or female to male were, in some racialized contexts, sanctioned by the state. But as South Africa shifted to democracy, public sex reassignment programs have largely ceased. And while the post-apartheid constitution, one of the most progressive in the world, promises freedom from discrimination based on sex and gender, during the first ten years of South Africa’s democracy, it was legally impossible to change one’s sex. She investigates the circumstances leading to this and similar paradoxes of gendered “transitions” in the national “transition” stage? How have race and class shaped access to sex reassignment technologies and legal freedoms? And what do such juxtapositions tell us about contradictions of gender and race more broadly? Based on research and activism conducted from 1997-2007, Swarr explores interstices of race and gender liminality in apartheid and transitional South Africa. She shows how and why some South Africans at the borders of gender have been subjected to forced and botched sex reassignment procedures, legalized discrimination, and community ostracism, while others have received state-funded medical treatment and legal support. The paper demonstrates how racialised patterns of these medical and legal interventions concurrently give us new ways of thinking about the scope and contradictions of apartheid and democratic South Africa.

Thus, as a status, citizenship is conferred when people have constitutional rights unlike the practice. In the creation of the postcolonial state, it is important to identify who is included and who is not. The arguments made by liberal citizenship theorists seem to limit the attainment of rights to the removal of obstacles in the path of groups or individuals. Because we have bought into the liberal, rights-oriented position, we have tended to ignore the radical position. The radical position is that it is all about the body as the centred figure. Further it is difficult to deal with violence within the liberal paradigm because of the rights discourse.

While all the papers in this panel have in different degrees touched on the essence of the body in citizenship discourses, the discussion that followed points at the need for them to be improved by asking what the making of the gendered political body is. In Koni Benson’s paper which had its trajectory with the violence visited upon the women of Crossroad, it is important to enquire about the impact of that violence on Crossroad residents. What is the consequence of the violent massacre and dispersal of the women protestors at Crossroads for citizenship, for example? It is particularly pertinent to ask those questions since as Benson has pointed out, the failure of the attempted eviction of the women in this settlement in 1975 and its relative success a decade later, is only one in a series of attacks directed at women specifically during the late apartheid era. Further questions that explore the relationship between race and gender during the height of Apartheid must also be asked.

Swarr’s paper deals with the politics of transgender persons in SA and in the life stories of her subjects, we encounter the diverse policies applied on transgender persons in SA. How do the persons she has encountered and their diverse situations in relation to the Apartheid state challenge the constitution of citizenship?

Women must contest their citizenship by re-grounding it in political theory and arena. Such an engagement in the arena should not necessarily mean an acceptance of institutionalizing women even when they thwart women’s interests. As we have
seen from all the papers, the neo-liberalist situation seems to have gained a foothold in our societies in the post colonial era. How did we allow that to happen?

**Discussant’s Comment:**
Prof Amanda Gouws
Department of Political Science
University of Stellenbosch

All four papers are fascinating and contribute to our understanding of the lived reality of citizenship.

The main themes that run through all the papers are:

The positionality or subject position of the body – ie how the female body is positioned in different contexts of citizenship and how bodily integrity and gender relations become destabilized (Schlyter). The papers also show how politics is enacted on the bodies of women.

The consequences of violence and militarization for women. The traditional notions of security are replaced with new definitions that show us why security reform is so difficult, partly as a consequence of the colonial project (Clarke) and partly because of the essentialized roles of women in peace keeping.

A historical focus that shows us that the citizenship in the present is very difficult to understand without the connection to the past. (Swarr and Benson).

It is however, important that these papers be put in the framework of feminist theories of citizenship. All the papers assume a feminist understanding of citizenship without making the underlying assumptions explicit.

Citizenship is both a status and a practice that is lived in relation to the state. Drawing on the work of Linzi Manicom, the argument is not only about the exclusion of women from citizenship and how to include them, but also about the way women are a priori constituted as citizens. (How does Amanda Swarr’s paper challenge this notion through her arguments about sex reassignment?) The papers interrogate the gender constructions of citizenship e.g. how are women included in the military? – by becoming like men.

Citizenship is an important site where the racialized and gendered subjects are produced and the gendered nature of citizenship is normalized. The liberal project of citizenship ignores the body and depoliticizes the feminist project.

But when we include the body as in the case of these papers citizenship takes on a radical edge that allows us to say that liberalism cannot deal with violence and the sexualized nature of body politics. The papers challenge heteronormativity and the reinvention of nationalism that undermines the gains made by women’s inclusion into citizenship.

The papers make an important contribution to show the link between citizenship as a
status versus citizenship as a practice that deals with the reality of body politics.

**Panel 1 B: Ascetics and Politics of the Body**

**Session Chair:** Elaine Salo, Institute for Women’s and Gender Studies, Uni. Pretoria.  
**Discussant:** Shari Daya  
**Presenters:** Danai Mupotsa, Maria Malmström, Lisa Brown, Lisen Dellenborg

The first presenter Danai Mupotsa, in her paper *The Crafting of Citizenship*, took the metaphorical ‘bull by the horn’ so to speak, by confronting the constructed and natural body, head on. Deciphering the language and politics of the female body is an essential journey palpable in one’s own life if one cares to see, she argues. Growing up in Zimbabwe, the contentious issues surrounding being a woman; dressing for and, occupying public space; maintaining “respectability and social reproduction became fairly clear, policed and controlled into the appropriate modes of conduct as young women were. The constant (and consistent) reminders of appropriate management strategies of and for women’s bodies and sexuality in Harare, drew her to the search of the historical underpinnings of what her peers described as “our culture”. Interrogating this national culture, it became curiously clear that at the crux of constructs of “tradition” and “modernity” in these discussions were women’s bodies. Indeed, the success or failure of the project of “national culture” (if we are to call it that) appears to be placed at the “national family’s” ability to manage and control the mobility and sexuality of women’s bodies, be it through fathers and brothers, or on the streets of Harare through the security forces.

The “body” has emerged as a useful site for the examination of socio-historical life, as proponents note that the body is both performative, and socially and politically inscribed. The meanings, treatments and managements of the “body” offer important signs in regard to the performances through which modernity and history have been conceived, constructed, and challenged in Africa, and the body has been a potent space on which colonial relations have been enacted and contested.

The conflation of “respectable” femininity with social and biological “mothering” or “motherhood” has been central to the constitution of the nation, making an examination of the discourses concerning the “nation” crucial. In this light, the “nation” itself cannot be considered as a stable and closed entity. Zimbabweans now occupy several diasporic communities world wide and the idea of “home” occupies great power in the social imaginary as people construct identities and discourses on “our culture” in relationship to being both “home” and in the Diaspora. The “Crafting of Citizenship” is central to the process of that search.

Maria Malmström addresses the specifics of embodying politics in the female body in, *Bearing the Pain: changing view of the meaning and morality of pain and suffering*. She delves into the significance attached to enduring pain and suffering as the epitome of the female gender identity among Egyptians in Cairo; and the ways in which the meaning and morality of these experiences are changing among the younger generation. Suffering in one’s daily encounters is not a question of being unfortunate among the older generation of women; rather, it is to be endured like a trademark of
femininity. It is an affliction, a crucial part of a woman’s life, deeply embedded in female identity and femininity. Hardships are perceived as ‘natural’ and inevitable parts of life. Although bearing the pain is weighty, the enduring of suffering is meritorious in the moral discourse borne in the gender ideology. A woman does not only receive cultural merits if she has suffered in life, in addition she is perceived as a highly moral person and as a woman. Painful experiences are included in a greater category of women’s life experiences, where three bodily pains are central: female circumcision, defloration and childbirth. In contrast to other hardships of life, these ‘pains’ have a “go without saying” status, making them sublime in the local community discourse. Maria substantiates her point by discussing the connection between the local practices with the international and national discourses of female genital mutilation (FGM), and the wider dynamics of social change in Egypt. The impact of these discourses is a relative relegation of the central position of FGM in the feminine identity.

In, *Comparison of Mass virginity testing in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa and Salvador, Brazil*, Lisa Brown took on the transcendence of national boundaries on the embodiment of female bodies in citizenships. Mass virginity testing of Isizulu girls from as young as six occurs in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Heralded as the solution to social deterioration, particularly the increase of HIV/AIDS and child-abuse, up to 300 girls are examined at any one time in regular rallies across the region. Girls who fail at the mass inspections are viewed as dangerous and ostracized from their peers. In Salvador, Northeast Brazil, girls who fail mass virginity inspection experience devastating social sanctions as well. Despite the obvious historical and political differences between the two contexts, there is a similar concern with the intactness of the vagina not only as a symbol of female worth, but also as a reflection of national well-being or decline. Yet at least in Brazil, in a context of poverty and avid soap opera consumption, women are involved in a daily process of converting negative valuations of their bodies into pleasurable forms of subjectivity.

Lisen Dellenborg followed with a similar theme in, *Moulding Girls into Moral Women - Clitoridectomy and Other Ordeals in Jola society*, Senegal. She began with a clarification of the gendered nature of the violence ordeals that are common in West African initiations into both male and female “secret societies”. Yet, the female ordeals are rarely described in social science literature as deliberate ways of achieving maturity and of testing bravery the way that male initiation ordeals are. In southern Senegal, which is where her anthropological fieldwork was conducted between 1997 and 1999, self-mastery, endurance and vigour are highly held moral values and equally cultivated in both men and women. Genital cutting, which implies clitoridectomy for girls and circumcision of the penile prepuce for boys, is the prerequisite for the initiation, and is one among many ordeals that both male and female initiates have to go through. Through pain and trauma, children and youths are infused with “proper” gendered dispositions that become inscribed in their bodies physically, cognitively and emotionally. This cultivation begins in early childhood, but nowhere is this moral and educative cultivation more intense, severe and explicit than during the initiation ritual.

The specific concern of this paper is however, the creation of female identity, and the
painful ritual acts that become meaningful to both the initiates and the initiated females through everyday metaphors and associations that merge the identity of initiated women with that of moral women. Although the same values of self-mastery and endurance are cultivated in both male and female initiates through various ordeals, male and female initiations have different meanings and separate goals. In the case of females, the ordeals are intended to transform women into humble, courageous, cooperative wives and self-sacrificing mothers. Men’s ordeals on the other hand are meant to turn them into brave cultivators, fearless hunters and potent fathers and, formerly, dauntless warriors. In these respects, female initiation reaffirms the prevailing gender order according to which females should become self-sacrificing mothers and obedient wives who work for the harmony of local patri-groups and who submit to their husbands’, brothers’ and fathers’ authority. At the same time, women gain power and influence both inside and outside the family realm through their position as mothers and members of these initiation associations. Contemporary Jola society is marked by gender disjunction, which is reflected in the female initiation ritual. Thus, although unequal gender relations are enforced by initiation, the stress on compliance and submission is crucial to the constitution of a girl’s maturity and moral personhood. Once she has achieved this, she will be entitled in her old age, as a grandmother and mother-in-law in her son’s compound, to enjoy a high degree of independence.

Understood in the context of a woman’s full life span, the initiation ritual communicates the fact that women will be rewarded later in life for the hardships they undergo when they are young. The respect for authorities induced in initiates, the experience of *communitas* with the co-initiates, and the alternation of ordeals and enjoyment during initiation parallel the experiences of everyday life. On a meta-level initiation communicates what life is like and how it should be lived.

**Discussant’s Comment:**

Shari Daya  
Environmental and Geographical Sciences  
University of Cape Town

According to the discussant Shari Daya the common themes in the papers presented included a focus on bodies. They deal with issues of suffering and abjection and in some, the celebration of female suffering; the tensions between the imposition of meaning onto a supposedly generic female body on the one hand, and close attention to individual bodies on the other; and the construction of femininities and masculinities through embodied practices and enactments upon the bodies of others. She outlined the following tensions rising out of the presentations:

*The place of theory* – These papers highlighted the wealth of theoretical writing on questions of bodies and embodiment - questions about what the body is, what the body does, and whether the body is more usefully thought of as a substance or a process or ‘becoming’. Daya noted the absence of major theorists addressing these questions, such as Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Judith Butler, and Elizabeth Grosz have done for other social themes. In the literature on embodiment, there is a
significant tension between the material or natural body, and the abstract, constructed or cultural body.

*Agency vs. victimhood* – The question of what was thought of as agency and what was thought of as victimhood seemed important in all the papers. This involved constructing and interpreting concepts of agency and victimhood, enabling a re-thinking of the ways in which the two categories interlink and of the categories themselves. When does agency induce oppression and when is it a source of liberation? When does the perception of agency collapse into cultural relativism?

*Representation and the non-representational* – The general focus of the papers on bodies in pain raises a methodological question. The pain experienced by the body or the invasion of the body, is not reducible to something else. Daya explored our difficulties as academics in speaking about bodily pain and especially in articulating the pain and embodied stories of others. The tension between what cannot be represented on the one hand, and attempts to represent or mediate the body in pain on the other opens for a deeper understanding of our own practices and the subjects of our research.

*Tradition vs. modernity* – The ideological category of tradition, and/or ‘culture’, were significant in all the papers. The issues raised prompt a deeper conversation about the ways in which both are challenged, dismantled and re-worked in and through the research.

*Male bodies* – Reaching beyond the content of the four papers the discussant stated that the question of men’s bodies and their place (or absence) in our research is important. Although we as feminist researchers tend to focus more strongly on women’s bodies, it is important that we do not neglect questions of men’s bodies and the ways in which each ‘side’ constructs and brings meaning to the other. Daya posed the question whether our work implicitly reproduces a Cartesian dualism associating men with mind, rationality and order and women with body, emotion and passion?

*The ensuing discussion* addressed these issues and more, including questions of pleasure and beauty, ‘re-orientalist’ tendencies in our own work and reflexive research practices.

Several strands emerge in the general discussion:

1) *The role of women in perpetrating the suffering*: the chairperson, Elaine Salo, opened the discussion by drawing attention to the fact that women appear to perpetrate the suffering in these contexts and wondered how men react to this suffering. This aspect has not been researched. What goals are we trying to achieve when it is actually women who are perpetrating the patriarchy? Should we be studying the perpetrators and the transference of social norms?
Should there be projects in place focussing on the women carrying out the rituals rather than the rituals themselves?
2) Mary John emphasised the role of women in reproducing the nation. It would appear that modernity for women would be unafrican. A central issue is then how do we make gender work?
3). The use of theory: Patricia McFadden opened up the discussion on this aspect expressing concerns about over theorising the politics of the body, preferring a more complex picture. This would involve an understanding of how subjectivities are formed and what the women themselves are getting out of these practices. There are generally massive protests against attempts to ban these practices. Perhaps we need a more complex approach that challenges feminist ideals and places the phenomenon in a broader context. Another participant was not convinced by the theory of female homelessness in one’s body due to virginity testing arguing that these procedures were perhaps a way of claiming one’s body.
4) Another area discussed was the lack of clarity on the linkages between the body and subjectivity indicating a dualism between the body and the mind – with the mind standing for subjectivity.
5). Contextual factors: A further criticism of the presentation on abject bodies: Testing virginity in Brazil and South Africa was the failure to include the role of class and consumerism when talking about the body thus assuming the same context in different social realities. Mary John pointed out that the presentation on virginity testing did not say much about the context and the political climate for these phenomena.
5). The weaknesses in the approach used: Mary John challenged the approach used in some of the papers where the anthropological gaze bordering on Orientals felt uncomfortable. It was clear that what was happening needed further clarification, placing it in its context and searching for some of the underlying factors behind these practices. Another participant posed the question whether using the gender lens actually leads up to women coming up against themselves. Is the answer for us as researchers to state our stance – but open up for a dialogue? Was the present day testing of virginity actually a way of protecting women against HIV/AIDS? Margaret Gärding questioned the selectivity in what aspects of the cultures under study where being presented. She cautioned that this can lead to simplistic conclusions as a deeper and more holistic analysis was lacking - inadvertently resulting in the strengthening of racist standpoints.
6). Pain: The issue of the pain inflicted during circumcision was discussed. Which kind of pain does the individual have to suffer and who must inflict it? What is the meaning of transferring pain from one generation to another? What project is this of the national memory?

General question arising during the discussions: What are the alternatives for those who are socially deviant? Agency and voluntarism are structured - what are the threats and what are the gains? Can the ridicule of girls’ fear of pain be recuperation rather than punitive? Can the answer to participating in these traditions be the next generation’s desire for social approval? Why do the rituals continue – are they a source of power and self confidence with their own secret societies – a role played by some of the rituals for men? How do we get away from victimhood? Why are we more accepting of the mutilation of men than that of women?
Panel 2 A: Re-reading the State and Neoliberalism

Session Chair: Professor Mary John, CWDS, New Delhi, India.
Discussant: Sophie Oldfield
Presenters: Anne-Maria Makhulu, Paula Mählck, Sian Butcher, Patience Musasa, Antonadia Borges

Anne-Maria Makhulu started off the panel discussion based on her paper, *The search for Economic Sovereignty*. The crisis of social reproduction has come to typify the current global conjuncture—throwing into bold relief general struggles over wealth and welfare, life and lifestyle, accumulation and dispossession—in South Africa, as elsewhere. In this situation, the conditions of bare life set the terms for any possible perpetuation of life itself, including, that of the constitution of family (in whatever form), or the “domestic domain” as both a physical and affective space in which subjects are produced and nurtured. The consolidation of bourgeois political power, the emphasis on property rights and enclosure, the devolution of state welfare functions onto individuals, as many have noted, fall squarely within a Foucauldian vision. This new regime of Governmentality contingent on “techniques of domination and techniques of the self” demands that individual subject-citizens shoulder responsibility for what were previously assumed to be public goods. At the grassroots, these trends have resulted in the commodification of basic needs—water, electricity, sewage—and efforts at anti-privatization, anti-eviction, and more generally de-commodification as a primary strategy of counter-power. These conflicts over rights in substantive or full citizenship and attempts to address widening inequalities are the basis of Anne-Maria’s presentation, which looks to the margins of the South African city as one site of struggle over neoliberal globalization.

In order to better conceptualize this new conjuncture in historical terms in both the South African and broader global context, it is pertinent to explore an intellectual genealogy, which presupposes a connection between material and affective labour in the creation of kin. Specifically, the relationship between the power of the patriarch (the site of masculine subject formation), the concept of patria potestas, and a number of theoretical claims that follow from it are a central part of this exercise. These include, the indissociable link between family and economy. *Yet, as the unfolding of neoliberalism—understood as the extension of private property relations into the social—worldwide generates new forms of labour redundancy and the creation of a class of working poor in which women predominate, what kinds of reconstructions of family are essential to either preserving or dispensing with the idea of the power of patriarchy. The thrift and financial survivalism amongst the black metropolitan poor in South Africa, attending to the varied practices of austerity and economic manipulation necessary to the perpetuation of domestic life, are important points of departure. These occur against the backdrop of spiraling debt, exorbitant interest rates, and land speculation and constitute a systematic imperative of making do.*

Paula Mählck followed with a comparative study of the effects of globalisation, *From Globalization from above to globalization from below: bodies at the work in Volvo plants in Sweden and South Africa*. The process of globalization necessitates intercontinental inquiry, generating political geographic discourses between the North and the South;
East and the West. In her presentation, Paula focussed on exploring the nature of micro-level practices of workers in heavy motor industries in Sweden and South Africa, forged as they are, through globalizing forces. This localised labour in the two locations must however be perceived within the global changes in working conditions in a multinational corporation. Yet it is the bodily experiences and embodied practices in the different workplaces as well as how forms of oppression and resistance are experienced through bodily practices that illuminates the gendered character of the labour. Drawing from a case study involving 24 workers in Durban and in Umeå – 19 men and 5 women and 3 at management rank in South Africa one can construct the logic of globalising production i.e. why production is moved to middle-income countries. Comparing the income and working conditions of the labour force in Sweden and South Africa, it becomes apparent that the workers of the same company are better remunerated in Sweden than those in SA. Thus, from the point of view of a profit driven company, it makes perfect sense to move production to SA than to remain in Sweden. In addition, while in Sweden the workers’ trade union develops good working relations with management, the same cannot be said of the union/management relations in SA. Indeed, in SA only workers who would not protest are wanted in the factory. She gives similar examples of the men/women and white/black conditions of labour. The presenter concludes therefore, that global work relations are structured along gender and racial lines.

Sian Butcher’s paper is on the Lived experiences of privatisation in Capetown and in Lusaka: Women’s negotiations of state rental. Her comparative project unpacks women’s experiences of housing privatisation in Zambia & South Africa – two young developing ‘neoliberal’ democracies in Southern Africa. She explores the specific mechanism of state housing privatization as a means of reflecting on some of the everyday experiences and negotiation of this neoliberalism(s) in these different, but conversant, contexts. Qualitative empirical fieldwork in two peripheral neighbourhoods in Lusaka and Cape Town, moves us beyond the often limiting, economistic meta-narratives about neoliberal processes in materially deprived contexts. Women’s narratives from these particular contexts, she argues, speak to the various challenges of, and individual responses to, owning/renting a home; negotiating with state bodies and processes, as well as family and community politics; accessing services and generating income in increasingly commodified cities. Privatisation, and the effects of neoliberalism on ‘the poor’, becomes complicated through these women’s situated, contextual stories of the everyday. A critical reflection of these narratives highlights the implications of the relationship between citizenship and ownership; participation and payment in these settings. Conceptually, this allows us to begin challenging the narrow arguments ‘for’ and ‘against’ privatisation that are often based on macro-level data far removed from people’s lives. These comparative narratives also serve to problematise popular public policy ideas around home-ownership and ‘good citizen’ practice regarding service delivery in development discourse.

Patience Musasa’s paper Contesting Illegality: women and the informal copper business on the Zambian copperbelt addresses the perception and practice of entitlement and/or ownership of resources on the Zambian Copperbelt after privatization of the mines and the housing market. She explored the petty commodity building production on the Zambian Copperbelt and focussed on the flux stone—a ‘waste’
product of copper mining production that makes up the hill-like dumps that characterize the landscape of copper producing towns. Local communities see the mine dumps as waste produced during the state ownership of the copper mining conglomerate the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines and as such view it as theirs. It is now profitable for mining companies to extract copper from the mine dumps because of better processing technology and increased global copper prices. The claims of private ownership of the mine dumps by new mine investors is contested at a local level and is talked about in terms of the ‘greed’ of the new investors. The use of flux stone in building construction on the Zambian Copperbelt has increased since the privatization of the mines and housing after 1997. Flux stone when mixed in proportion with cement and water makes concrete blocks, slabs and lintels in building. For this valuable product, women, and even children, consciously contest the ownership right of the private companies by working the tips themselves. Against the efforts of the private companies who seek to put a stop to the illegal working of the tips, the women defend their activity in terms of their right to earn a living. These activities and negotiations brings to the fore the question of legality and determinants of the claims to legality and illegality. Exploring this valuable building material at a local community level brings us into the micro-political economy discourse in ordinary people’s daily lives and the discourses i.e. the appropriative discourses of citizenship. In other words, the presenter highlighted a nuanced understanding of entitlement by looking at a commodity contested by both communities on the margins and global multinational corporations.

Antonadia Borges presented her paper, Women, political agency and the creation of a public domain, a theme that sits firmly in the feminist discourses of citizenship appropriation. The paper is based on a case study of peripheral women and their agency in the politics of housing in Brazil and in South Africa. In such contexts women, in weaving social networks, challenge the main theoretical approaches on political engagement and governmental policies. An anthropological school dealing with politics and the presence of the State in daily life, propounds that that the margins of the State help to constitute along with its central parts a unique and entire body. It means that where and when the State “touches” the persons and the objects surrounding them (especially their houses), it makes itself present as reality. The presentification of the State is the condition for its own existence. Another perspective employs a different kind of metaphor to render meaning to the relation between the State and the people. It says that the State is apart from its citizens. It doesn’t “touch” them. The individuals and their communities are constantly following the State movements and ordeals. The relationship is not one of contact but of mimicry. Using language artifices as shadows or ghosts such perspective understand the relationship as one of similarity/simulacrum.

Anatonadia however believes that the anthropological positions have limitations significance because of their focus on public stages and performances. The inner domain of the house and its surroundings challenges our analysis insofar as it deals with dimensions of reality that our language is not able to grasp. The models opposing contact to similarity don’t leave any space for creativity, or social and cosmological changes. Discussing the local language on “occupation” (of lands and other spaces) she experiments with another theoretical approach in order to understand the presence of the State in ordinary life as creative and at the same time as a created agent. In perspective, the house is important both as dwelling and as a
condition for the existence of the outside world, i.e. without the agency of women on this issue the concepts of State or of surrounding society would be innocuous. Women bring to life the perspective she argues, through their agency, adapting their actions as they do, according to the prevailing circumstances and what they need to confront. In other words, it is in the positions of women as agents and expertise and not their bodies or children that they confront the reality of the state. This postulation is particularly true for Brasil than it is for SA. In the latter location for example, SA’s lengthy history of struggle for rights imbues society with a sense of collectivity. What both share though is the consciousness women have of what is expected of them.

**Discussant comments:**
Sophie Oldfield
Environmental and Geographical Sciences
University of Cape Town

The discussant Sophie Oldfield addressed each paper individually but also highlighted three rich points of connection in this session: the use of comparison, the relationships between narrative and theoretical project, and the critical ways in which these papers collectively and individually speak to the panel thematic: re-reading the state and neoliberalisms. Sophie’s comments were organised thematically and reference the paper discussions within this framework:

1) The multiple purposes of comparison:

Some element of comparison is central to all the papers presented. In Antonadia Borges’s work comparison of Brazilian experiences of the gendering of citizenship and relationships with the state with parallel South African experiences allows her to reflect critically on commonsense and powerful theoretical ways of understanding Brazilian social relations and politics. Likewise, her work offers a Southern African audience a fruitful opportunity to think carefully about their categories, the norms in which they think through state-society relations.

Paula Mählck’s comparative analysis of Volvo plants and their labour relations in Sweden and South Africa constructs the comparative project differently – analyzing two similar objects, explicitly linked together through corporate structures, in order to analyze and critically question unequal working conditions. Reflecting research in process, the paper hints at the ways in which this inequality is constituted in worker’s bodies, which are raced and gendered in their particularly local, national and global placement.

Sian Butcher’s contribution to the discussion also takes two comparatively similar objects – women’s experiences of the privatisation of housing in two somewhat parallel neighbourhoods in Lusaka, Zambia and Cape Town, South Africa – to think critically and specifically about privatisation. In doing so the debate on privatisation as empowerment or dispossession is placed in question in its gendered and lived specificity.

Anne-Maria Makhulu’s paper takes a different comparative turn in her drawing together narratives and explanations of family livelihoods and savings strategies in a Cape Town township with global stories about capital, risk and tools that precariously sustain the global capitalist economy. Objects not commonly compared,
in this discussion her motivation lies in using ethnographies of local, informal family economic strategies to ‘excavate the symptoms of our global condition’; in other words, local stories and narratives, and the theoretical ethnographic tools we use to explain them, can be turned on the global and thus render a different reading of global structure and constructions of power.

Patience Mususa’s re-reading of neoliberalism considers illegal mining sites on the Zambian Copperbelt as its focus, a site which we have conventionally read as constructed, then devastated, and now resurrected through the booms and busts of global copper markets and the shifts in corporate capital (from the (British) colonial to the state-run Zambian, to the recent entry of Chinese capital). In her focus on women and children’s construction of livelihoods, their living strategies and their construction of livelihoods she challenges us to think carefully about dichotomies of benefits/losses through the base line experiences of women and children, drawing on their voices and bodies to articulate the experience of economic life in these particular places in the neoliberal condition. Like Anne-Maria, Patience reflects on the neoliberal global condition through the specificities (the difficulties and struggles) of women’s and children’s lived experience.

While these papers reflect on the global – the neoliberal, and powerful and state and corporate actors in these contexts - they do so not to better elaborate and clarify, to challenge the binary analyses and stories that dominate our analysis of the state, neo-liberalism and globalisation. In doing so they understand agency in its contextual, contingent, and relational complexity. This is not solely an academic project – not solely about precise and rigorous theoretical work. Research that challenges binary notions helps politically and pragmatically to identify and claim sites of struggle, to precisely analyse impacts of policies and national and global processes, and through this analysis to be strategic. In doing so, we engage with real concrete processes, politics, rather than abstractions. Within this work, rich and provocative narratives about the state in particular, challenge us conceptually to theorise the state in its complex, contingent, relational and contextual characterisation.

The state acts differently in different places, moments, and in its differential engagement in power-strewn highly unequal contexts; clearly theorising the state singularly as an ‘it’, a monolith, an institution with pre-given agency, is insufficient! Collectively, this demonstrates the rich possibilities that emerge when we construct our work comparatively and its particular relevance to literature and critical thinking on the state and neoliberalism. In other words, to move from global stories -- from meta-narratives that narrowly depict the world through spatial imaginaries of core, periphery and margin, of north, and south, of victim and agent, or global structural forces that supposedly impact on the local – to contextually rich, precise and rigorous work that thinks carefully about global-local relations, about the ways in which neoliberalism is lived and realised in its specificity. At the same time, the work raises critical issues about our narratives – in some cases ethnographies, in others, the qualitative research that substantiates and sustains our analyses – and the ways in which we use them theoretically. While this question is a theoretical challenge it is central to thinking critically about the north and south agenda that drive our work – are we doing ethnography to illuminate the global condition and to theorise critically from there; are we researching to ground analyses – to think of the global as porous,
in its scale and grandness as weak as Gibson-Graham (1996) suggest in a Feminist Political Economy?

**Panel 2 B: Contesting Identities and Public Discourse**

**Session Chair:** Monica Lindberg-Falk of, Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University, Sweden.

**Discussant:** Melissa Steyn

**Presenters:** Mulela Margaret Munalula, Hauwa Mahdi, Sarah Matshaka, Nolwazi Mkhanwanazi

Mulela Margaret Munalula, opened the panel presentation with her paper, *Essential Motherhood – Deconstructing the ‘African woman’*. The paper is based on desk research consisting of a literature review and a Customary/General law review. She presents a situation whereby motherhood is forcibly imposed on women, driven by social expectations, customary laws and body politics. The idea is really to prepare a research proposal looking at the dynamics of change from legal incentives through to the perceived need for large families. Are women driven by a need to prove fertility or an inability to plan? The background to the research is the continued high fertility rate among Zambian women despite the scourge of poverty and HIV/AIDS leading to unsustainable numbers of children and young people. So this paper focuses on a small part of the larger population issue by centering the questions on who controls the Zambian woman’s body, particularly her reproductive capacity. The two main questions are therefore: Do Zambian women enjoy ‘reproductive autonomy’ – a concept which because of ICPD and the Cairo Declaration has become a global instrument? To what extent do socio-economic factors intervene?

Munalula argues that this definition of autonomy is hard to implement in a Zambian context as individualism is not a strong value. Women do not decide over their own life and body. Men and society and the state have great interest in women’s bodies. The state is divided between on the one hand accepting the HR-standards, and on the other promoting women to give birth to many children. The idea of “Promoting Health” is seen as nonprovocative and accepted by everyone. In Zambia, reproductive health is included under “Right to Health”. However, the struggle for the resources concerning health is fierce, in which allocation to women’s reproductive health is negligible.

Munalula describes the Zambian context in which child-bearing is a prerequisite for marriage legitimacy, and children ‘belonging’ to the father’s family, which makes women’s reproductive capacity a matter of great male interest. In addition, powerful institutions such as the Catholic Church act against family planning and women are not even allowed to buy condoms without the husband’s permission. The HIV/AIDS endemic has further made people –women and men- focus on having more children to take care of them if they fell sick, and also in a way to assure that husbands will take care of them – because without children you don’t belong to your marital community. All these factors are significant challenges for the implementation of women’s “reproductive autonomy”.

Munalula’s suggestion is that in this context, where group interest is seen as more important than the individual, the need for a state regulation is strong. In Zambia the
state withdraws from proclaiming women’s rights in reproductive issues, for instance, it does not act against women not being allowed to buy condoms. Munalula aunched a slogan: “Regulate to Liberate”.

Hauwa Mahdi made an oral presentation on, Early Marriage or Child Marriage, (without a hard copy paper) approaching the issue of the female body from the childhood/adulthood perspective. “Who is a child?” she asks. Marrying off girls at the age of 12 years onward, and some times younger, is a common practice in many African societies. The practice is often defended as tradition. In some parts of Nigeria it is justified as religious right and/or obligation, practiced to protect girls’ morality and family honour. Side by side with early marriage is the sexual molestation of female children by adult males outside of marriage. Yet, in deference to certain interests, the laws of the land do not define who is a child and who is an adult. Attempts by feminists and others to address the matter have led to heated debates about religious freedom. Consequently, the Child’s Right Act passed into law in 2003 and amended in 2006 does not define who is a child, and hardly any other law does that. Thus in legal terms paedophilia is non-existent even as the sexual molestation and infection of female children, including toddlers, with STDs have hit the newsstands. Different NGOs and feminists refer to the marriage of girls under the age of 18 years either as early marriage or child marriage. In conceptual terms, the sexual practices and debates reflect the varying and subliminal core values from which the ownership of the female body is perceived. Mahdi’s presentation addresses aspects of patriarchal conceptions of owning the body and its role in enabling the sexual molestation of females in Nigeria. It is also a foray into how traditional cultures can take on board contemporary knowledge into the definition of childhood. The paper is built on intensive interviews with two victims of early marriage. Their stories are pitched against the conceptions of sexual violence in the Sharia law of Zamfara State and the Child’s Right Act.

Sarah Matshaka’s presentation was on Immigration Experiences and the Gendered Identities (she did not submit a hard copy paper). Sarah is studying ideas of masculinity and the negotiation of space in a Zimbabwean immigrant community in Cape Town. The xenophobic attitudes, abuses and murders in South Africa which targeted Zimbabweans influenced these men’s negotiation of space. The groups of Zimbabweans she interviewed are challenging the stereotypic images of them by being innovative, creative in learning new ways to make a living, by underscoring their masculinity and ability to and success in taking care of women, and portraying themselves as more educated, modern and in tune than the South African men. They primarily positioned themselves against the South African men also living in the town-ships. They compete with both each other and the South African men. At the same time as they underscored their self-sufficiency, they talked of their male networks and the strong collectivism and solidarity between members.

Bianca Davies presented a paper titled: Mothers of the community? Embodied experiences of infertility on the Cape Flats. In the communities of the Cape Flats, it is expected that all women will bear children and become mothers. Motherhood serves as a social and cultural indicator of femininity and enables women to access social and economic networks that knit them into community. The social and cultural valorization of motherhood in these communities has informed the powerful stigmatization of infer-
tility (or the involuntary nonconformance to motherhood). The stigma associated with infertility affects women in particular, because the inability to bear children is commonly perceived to be a woman’s problem. This paper explores the cultural constructions of infertility. It examines in particular, the diverse cultural meanings and the stigma associated with infertility. The examination of these cultural meanings challenges the notion that infertility should only be examined in the biomedical realm. The paper indicates that on the Cape Flats, infertility is constructed as a major cultural and social problem for women. The stigma attached to infertility draws its power from the social and cultural meanings associated with inability of infertile women to live up to the expectation that every adult woman will become a mother. The effects of the social stigma of infertility are especially profound. The results indicate that bio-medicine does offer some solution, but only to the few who can afford it.

Nolwazi Mkhanwanazi’s presentation was on Understanding teenage pregnancy in a post-Apartheid South African township, based on five years of research. The paper addressed three issues: 1) Ethnographic research 2) Social aspects - who is to blame (for the pregnancies) and 3. Mother-daughter, father-sons relations.

South African studies on teenage pregnancies often present this as a failure. New studies challenge this point of view by presenting teenage girls’ motives for becoming pregnant and how they relate to themselves as mothers. Teenage pregnancies are deeply embedded social problems. Ethnographic research gives access to people’s experiences and understandings and to the context which quantitative research cannot give. The research is based on narratives. These suggest that: Mothers are responsible for the behaviour of their children – they are blamed for the daughter’s early pregnancy. By letting the daughter stay and letting the pregnancy, childbirth and child become a lesson to the daughter, the mother restores her reputation as a good mother. Young girls learn that abortion is wrong, and that her mother will not throw her out on the street but will give her a second chance if she gives birth to the child. The narratives also pointed to contradictions: the pregnant girls often said they did not know about prevention before pregnancy yet one of them learnt of her pregnancy as she was at the clinic to get contraceptives. This is a recurrent theme: ignorance of prevention – but this is also a contradiction in normative ideals and practices.

Discussion:
Following Sarah’s presentation, the discussion mainly concerned questions of security and how she as a young woman was perceived by these young men, and how she conducted her study. Sarah said that on the one hand her identity as Zimbabwean gave her access, but that her gender identity necessitated much negotiation between her and the men she studied concerning gender relations and her identity as a researcher.

Nolwezi received a question on the role of men answering that ideas on masculinity and manhood have changed. In former times, boys were initiated in the bush and were not allowed sexual relations – as uninitiated. Today, initiation is rare. Another question was why she had not mention Hiv/AIDS? Karin commented that that Nolwezi’s study shows that we cannot, should not, polarize Human Rights and culture.
The last commentary was on the responsibility of teachers and the state. The state has changed its attitude toward teenage pregnancies during the last century - now it is conceived as a drain on resources, and girls are kicked out of school. And teachers have sex with teenagers leading to pregnancies and school drop outs. It became clear during the discussion that civil rights are not enough to protect women when social and cultural norms and values are stronger. Another question posed to Munalula concerned men’s role: what would make them want to diminish the number of pregnancies. She responded that men as well as women are caught in the ideals of having many children. Assitan reacted to Mahdi’s presentation maintaining that we must adhere to the frame of Human Rights and women’s and girls’ rights as proclaimed. Hauwa agreed and clarified: let us look for the cultural arguments against child marriage and for the age of 18 as the limit for childhood. Mahdi sees the Hausa elite as a great hindrance to the implementation of the children’s convention. According to the elite it is against Islam and foreign - however this is their interpretation. Elaine reacted to what she found to be an abstract way of talking about culture “as a black box” – how do women relate to the economy, the state, labour? Women are rational beings that make choices. Mahdi pointed to the ineffectiveness of the Nigerian state, a state tittering on the verge of collapse, and thus of the need to engage in discourse by engaging and questioning norms claimed to be traditions. Lisen makes a comment that it is important in talks of culture to remember that culture often is politicised: “culture is an argument, not a fact”.

Discussant comment:
Melissa Steyn
Intercultural and Diversity Studies
University of Cape Town

Steyn raised some issues:
1. The complexity of the gendering – how is gendering happening in this globalized world? How is it changing? And not changing?

2. The question of human rights (HR) and the human self – do we have adequate language to address these in different contexts?

Different knowledges – the rich ethnographic work on teenage pregnancies shows that people make their choices and how gendered these choices are. How do we create persuasion?

The ensuing discussion addressed different strands. Sporre commented that we need to link different types of knowledge in order to promote the rights of women and change the discourses in a Foucauldian sense. Is having many children considered a problem by many women? Mahdi responded that reproduction is key historically and contemporarily –women do not defy this. Mulela underscored that yes, so many factors intervene that a woman’s choice cannot be seen to be a free will.

Lisen presents an example from Senegal where yes, reproduction is held as a core value but individual women negotiate to be able to stop the pregnancies, either by taking contraceptives secretly, or by taking them with the husband’s knowledge but with the latter ‘washing his hands’, or women negotiating on the grounds that they
are too old to have more children. Nolwazi’s paper was commended for contesting victimhood, showing agency and the communities’ responsibility.

A question was posed to Munalula on the value of state regulation as women still follow the norms. Her response was that the laws provided a framework - not adequate but good enough to be used, referred to. Not all women returned the land they had inherited to their husbands, for instance. But the need to have children is so strong that they defy the risks of HIV/AIDS. Elaine criticised the Love Campaigns: it gives a false message to youth that life is a highway to success if you don’t have sex or use drugs… by focusing what you can do with your life if you don’t get infected.

Another comment in the plenary session was that a problem is that we deny that teenagers have sexual relations. Dare we talk of “responsible sexuality” in school?

**Panel 3 A: Networks and Livelihoods**

**Session Chair:** Theresa Barnes, History and Gender/Women’s Studies Program, University of Illinois.

**Discussant:** Fiona Ross

**Presenters:** Monica Monica Lindberg Falk, Margareta Espling and Linn Axelsson

*Monica Lindberg Falk’s paper on* Gender, Religion and Body Politics in Times of Crises in Rural Thailand addresses the interplay between gender, body politics, Buddhist practice and local agency in times of crises. It is based on research findings from projects on gender, Buddhism and hiv/aids in Thailand and on Buddhism and the recovery after the 2004 tsunami in the South of Thailand. Gender relations represent cultural ideals and values that assign authority and executive power. In Thailand the Buddhist monks constitute the Buddhist congregation, sangha, and are at the top of the Thai status hierarchy. The nuns’ exclusion from the sangha has expelled them from Thai society’s most prestigious arena. There are Buddhist nuns who address the gender inequality in Thai Buddhism by establishing ‘female temples’ and creating space outside the sangha’s control. Most of them are socially engaged Buddhist nuns. In Asian countries there are moves within religions to be socially engaged and to directly address various kinds of crises. Socially engaged monks have played an important role locally in crises such as HIV and AIDS pandemic and in the 2004 tsunami catastrophe. However, the nuns’ subordinated position at the temples and lack of religious role in relation to the lay people have hampered them in providing refuge in times of crises and few Buddhist nuns have been directly engaged in critical situations. Religious explanations and the daily and other religious practices are of utmost significance in the process of recovery after crises. This paper uses a gender perspective to analyse informants’ experiences and narratives in relation to the sangha’s firm position against women in the sangha.

Margareta Espling’s paper was on Gendered Agency and Body Politics Trajectories of urban women’s livelihoods in Northern Mozambique. This paper takes its point of departure in fieldwork made in the mid-1990s on how women with limited access to resources in some urban communities in Mozambique had transformed their livelihood strategies in order to cope with dramatically changing circumstances in their society, mainly the war of destabilisation as well as the economic liberalisation and structural adjustment policies. With the previous study as a background, this paper aims at illustrating how the trajectories of individual women’s livelihoods
have evolved over the years, as processes of change are continuously ongoing. The focus is on the women living in one neighbourhood in the town of Montepuez in the peripheral Northern Mozambique.

The theoretical standpoint is that transformations of women’s (and men’s) everyday activities and livelihood strategies in particular places, must be related to the wider contexts of social and economic transformations. For this study a livelihoods framework is used within a theoretical perspective of critical political geography combined with an actor-oriented gender approach, in that gendered agency informs and shapes the individual strategies, i.e. body politics, in particular places as well as spaces. The empirical material is based on one urban neighbourhood in Montepuez. So far initial tracking of the 21 women has been carried out along with semi-structured interviews, complemented with observations within the homesteads as well as in the neighbourhood. Further fieldwork is planned for October this year. Preliminary findings suggest that there are two major aspects influencing how different women act in order to cope with ongoing social and economic transformations; changes in household composition and the lack of financial resources within the households. The general trend in these households is that there are fewer adult men, at the same time as the children gradually have left to marry and build their own households. The reduction in men means a diminishing labour supply within the households, both in numbers as well as in body strength due to old age and sickness, which is vital in a livelihood situation still depending on an agriculturally based economy.

There seem to be a decrease in the number of activities carried out as well as in the production output, leading to a weakening household economy in terms of access to various kinds of resources. One response to this trend, as well as to the lack of access to financial resources, seems to be an increase in organisation among women in order to act collectively to mobilise various kinds of resources. Particularly there is a strong increase in locally constructed savings systems and reciprocity networks. Thus, what strategies the different women use for their livelihoods depend on their gendered agency, their level of access to various kinds of resources, as well as the composition of their households at different times.

The topic of Linn Axelsson’s paper was Women traders’ responses to the entry of Chinese products on the market. The case of wax trade in Accra, Ghana. In November 2006 Ghanaian traders’ associations called for a boycott of cheap textiles from Asia, predominantly China. The traders appealed to the government to stop imports of wax prints as they saw their businesses as being on the verge of collapse. China’s interests in African resources as well as intensified trade, aid and investment links have been widely noted. Emerging Chinese competition in Africa’s informal sectors, such as urban trading economies, is however more unexpected and less accounted for. In Ghana the historical role of women in society, together with the colonial past and structural adjustment have served to concentrate women to trade, particularly in light consumer items. Trade has subsequently become an important component of Ghanaian female identities. The position of women in trade has however always been contested and traders have continuously had to negotiate their identities as traders and their right to earn a living in response to economic and political decisions at various scales. Based on case studies, the paper examines how livelihoods in Accra
are negotiated under increasing global competition. The paper argues that the entry of Chinese products into the informal trading economy has created multiple contestations over market space, between various economic actors and across geographical scales. It also argues that Ghanaian traders actively strategize to make the most of the new circumstances in their sector. In this paper the wax trade is explored, a market segment where Chinese influences have been on the increase in the past few years. Ghanaian women’s involvement with European wax producers and with local textile companies has positioned them at the top of the trading hierarchy. Traders in wax produced in China now challenge that position. The paper suggests that the influx of Chinese wax provides new opportunities for some traders to circumvent the hierarchal organisation of trade in Ghanaian wax, whereas others struggle to sustain their position within the trading hierarchy. In this process it appears as if national identity plays a significant role. Those negatively affected mobilise around a national discourse to legitimize their control over the market segment, while at the same time engaging in trade in Chinese wax. The paper presents preliminary findings from ongoing fieldwork in trade areas in central Accra. Data includes interviews with traders, textile workers unions, an employers association and a review of newspaper articles (2003-2007).

**The discussant:** Fiona Ross

Fiona pointed out that it was an impossible task to find sets of themes that unite such disparate papers. She commended Monica’s paper for its link to cosmology, the sense of contingency in Margareta’s presentation and Lin’s attention to contradiction in foregrounding women as traders. Her comments focused on two challenges that these papers present to modes of theorizing - **temporalities** and **questions of scale**. Questions of transformations are linked to both temporality and scale. She drew attention to the fact that time had been mobilised in different ways in the papers. Time had been related to processes and events, taking advantage of the possibilities of contingency and incorporating perspectives on temporality. The issues raised implicate time in different ways posing interesting challenges to our theoretical abilities to link time and space in the unfolding of everyday lives. Moving from the present tense one tapped into the cyclical idea of time.

The papers had also exhibited an understanding of different scales and contexts - asking us to address questions of scale in more nuanced ways. They address situations at village level, parts of a city and on the larger scale impacted upon by global interactions. The issues around scale arising in the papers include thinking about the effects of macro-economic growth on micro-level relations, theorizing the relations between metropole and periphery/former colony and colonial and theorizing relations between local and global. To address the vexing question of scale Fiona advances some of the anthropological literature on **assemblages** (e.g. Paul Rabinow). Tracing assemblages offers a clearer and more specific description of the forms, institutions and processes at stake in events/products/relationships. The discussant presented two areas that she would have liked more information. In Monica’s paper, she would have liked to have heard much more about specific families/households, and ritual processes for particular households so as to give a more nuanced picture of how small collectivities deal with death on massive scale.
In Margareta’s paper, Ross would have liked to have heard more about their household relations, networks of support and local conceptions of obligation - give us a sense of the extent to which social relations in the area have changed in the intervening period.

**General discussion**

A discussion arose around the use of pictures in research (these had been used in one of the presentations). Both Paula and Relebohile questioned the use of pictures of individuals in the academic presentations – debating the methodological implications of pictures in a wider frame. Paula argued that we must be careful in the use of pictures of individuals, that consent alone was not enough and that ethical considerations must be given precedence. Relebohile also emphasised the ethics of using pictures of individuals in academic presentations. While there are different ways of using pictures e.g. if the presentation involved a textual analysis of the picture, ethical considerations must be given priority. There were reactions to the linear aggregation in Margareta’s paper linking gender to geography. Monica clarified that in Buddhism religion is part of life. The monks are the links between the living and the dead where dreams and gifts are given special significance. On the issue of karma and childbirth Margaret Gärding pointed out that similar phenomena and models of explanation existed in other religions e.g. Christianity. Hauwa posed several questions around the livelihoods of women in Mozambique: How could the presenter be sure that women had not increased production? How could she exclude that women had deliberately chosen not to expand their production rate? What was the comparison in labour input between the pre 1993 period and that after that under more neo-liberal conditions? On the paper on the wax trade in Accra, Hauwa recommended a clarification which would also include a historical perspective presenting specific aspects tracing the trade from the 16th century to date and making a distinction between design and status.

**Panel 3 B: Disciplining Spaces**

**Session Chair:** Ann Schlyter, Gothenburg University.

**Discussant:** Anne-Maria Makhulu

**Presenters:** Lucy Chipeta, Netsayi Mudege; Hanspeter Reihling and Jessica Thorn

Lucy Kondwani Chipeta’s paper was on: *Hidden Agenda. An Examination of the inequality in sharing of resources from housing investment in polygamous Families in Malawi.* Accessing justice in sharing of resources in polygamous families has been contentious in Malawi. Both men and women have fallen victims of injustice in sharing of resources. The problem has been more for the first wife who has been illiterate and who has resided in the village especially in a patrilineal society. Women who had taken a role in investing in housing in urban areas have ended up losing access to the fruits of their investment upon the husband marrying the second wife, similarly the children from the first wife have also fallen victims of the situation.

...
second wife. It also examines other scenarios where men have adopted protective strategies while depriving the first wife of property in cases where she is still alive. The paper also examines the case where men have manipulated the second wife who is a rich widow in trying to access the deceased’s property. The paper finally suggest ways in which property can be guarded against manipulation to the benefit of all the beneficiaries upon divorce or upon death in urban areas.

Netsayi Noris Mudege’s paper addresses *Aging, gender, migration and use of urban space in Nairobi*. Using qualitative data collected from a sample of rural-urban migrants over the age of 50 in two Nairobi slums interviewed in 2003, the paper discussed gender-based causes and consequences of migration. It explored the various levels of success for both men and women when they migrate and the impact of these on their wellbeing. The data used are largely based on narratives derived from interviews with respondents (all of whom migrated to Nairobi from the late 1950s), centering on their recollections of why they had migrated to Nairobi and whether their migration-related expectations had been met. The paper also makes use of some descriptive statistics collected under the Nairobi Urban Health and Demographic Surveillance System (NUHDSS) in the two slums. The migration literature from the 70s often related men’s rationale for migrating to indicate that men migrated mostly for economic reasons, whilst women were portrayed simply as followers of migrant men, who were usually following their husbands. Men were viewed as the ‘real’ migrants, with women being passive objects in the migration process, and therefore were not “real” migrants. Although research in Asia and Latin America has begun to focus on women making rational migration decisions, in Africa, research has not particularly focused on women migrants. This paper further explores the concept of urban space in relation to the use of urban space by the migrants. Urban space can be regarded as gendered and ageist. The ability of various categories of migrants to negotiate urban space and carve out niches for themselves can have an impact on their quality of life. Men have more control over urban space and access to employment opportunities, whilst women suffer discrimination and exclusion, sometimes because of fear of harassment and violence. Research in Nairobi slums shows that men and women may carve out niches in different spaces and a high percentage of women who are active migrants sometimes successfully negotiate the highly gendered urban spaces to meet their own needs. The findings of this study corroborate earlier research, suggesting that older women in Nairobi’s slums mostly viewed the urban environment as emancipatory as well as offering chances for personal advancement.

The topic of Hanspeter Riehling’s paper was *Men in Thirdspace: Localising stages for Masculinity in Cape Town*. Within critical studies about men and masculinities there has been a marked interest in hegemonic discourses about what it means to be a man. In recent years it has been argued that this approach must be complemented by a closer look at social practice and the actual behaviour of men in context. The paper looks at gender politics as being embodied through corporeal movement and framed by physical and imagined space. In order to analyse the everyday politics of gender and masculinity beyond the assumptions of conventional gender justice approaches the author used ground scripts for movement and meanings of gendered space. In the Postapartheid city “thirdspaces” seem to have become meaningful sites for the construction of men’s gendered subjectivities. They are stages on which men can
imagine themselves as men temporarily both within and beyond patriarchy when their role as economic provider becomes obsolete or impossible. In this context shacks, garages or cars become venues for gendered self-fashioning rather than public spheres in which political participation is enacted through rational discourse. The paper touches on the issues of substance abuse and results indicate that the construction of place through bodily movements is counterproductive for the health and wellbeing. The author maintains that there is a need to take into account homosocial networks produced through gendered and racialized spatial relations within the city in gender justice work.

Jessica Thorn’s paper *Challenging Evictions: Everyday Practices of Land Occupation in Zille Raine Heights, Cape Town* examines the everyday realities of land occupations and the city’s attempts to forcibly remove residents from their homes. The case of Zille-Raine Heights (ZRH) shows the ways citizens negotiate land occupation, build homes and protect their community. Through these processes, residents articulate their claims to ownership of homes and of their right to be in the city. Yet these claims are tenuous, contested by the City of Cape Town physically in attempts to evict them, legally through the courts and symbolically in the way the City labels land occupiers. Residents perceive these experiences as exacerbating their insecurities and lack of trust in the various stakeholders involved in eviction processes. It is in the tension between the security of building homes and a community and the insecurity generated in city’s attempts to remove them, that ZRH residents experience of living in informality is situated. Nonetheless, through collective mobilization and drawing on social networks, they have built homes and community, and have actively shaped their personhoods, as city dwellers and as citizens.

**Discussant Comment:**
Anne-Maria Makhulu  
Anthropology and African and African American Studies  
Duke University

The discussant Anne-Maria Makhulu organised the papers around: Domestic/household space, urban space, male oppositional space and evicted and occupied space. She opened with the remark that she had read in these papers, to varying degrees, nostalgia for a moment before the present when the world was ostensibly constructed through certainties—about employment, about family, about “morality.” The family, for example, is surprisingly (or not) characterized as a site of transactional relations, violence, avarice, and one has the suspicion this comes as something of a surprise to some of the authors; that the family ought rather to be the site of affective structures of intimacy, affection, and care. The urban environment is a place of absent jobs, which presumably assumes a past in which jobs were present; further varied criminal activities, whether theft, drug use, and even sexual assault have come to stand in their place as productive practices, generating forms of value in the absence of other things.

The question to Lucy is concerned with the conditions of narration in which a purported past, albeit often merely implicit in the papers presented here, comes to stand in a relationship with a difficult, possibly even disappointing present? So for
example, could one say that the active articulation and expression of patriarchy in polygamous practices, and the affective structures it produces, represents a shift, possibly of historical dimensions? In other words is the persistence of patriarchy undeniable or have its qualities, content, and dynamism changed over time. Further questions were: To what degree is polygamy a fantasy or a realizable cultural practice (for that matter is polygamy really even a matter of culture) what is the relationship between polygamy, patriarchy, modernization, and urbanization? How do we categorize polygamy as against other forms of polyamorous or serial monogamous relationships? How can we think about the temporality of relations that occur simultaneously or not? And can we begin to think about “love” and affection as aspects of relational intimacy that may not be givens?

Reflections on Hanspeter’s paper included: While the narrative of lost masculinity is of course a commonplace in the post-wage economy, Anne Maria was interested in the ways in which this largely taken for granted perception of past and present and the relation between them assumes a moment of either radical rupture or continuity. To speak of the turn to Tik use in the face of redundancy in a place like Mitchell’s Plain—and specifying third spaces as post-apartheid phenomena—is surely to invoke a much longer history of joblessness, despite the fact that we can acknowledge a deepening of this crisis since the end of apartheid. She looks for an exploration of the politics of narrative that makes it possible to speak of a present somehow disconnected from the past; that makes possible too the notion of hard-work in the search for Tik, but also the resources necessary to acquiring it—through transactional sex, illegitimate activities, and so on.

Anne Marie drew attention to the fact that in the various papers there is a place for speaking about desire, imagination, and even fantasy—drives and affective dispositions that are the impetus for varied transactions and transactional relations (which is rather different than claiming Tik use and the third space in which it is consumed as a space of counter-hegemony). They may also be the impetus for the construction of “community” as in the case of Zille Raine Heights informal settlement, where legal struggles under the new South African Constitution bring into visibility the often uneven and equivocal nature of the law and its adjudicators. A reflection directed to Jessie was that in order to speak about Zille Raine Heights or any other informal settlement one has to tackle the land and so-called “Native” question, in other words, once again, the question is about the nature of history, this time not so much in the form of questioning historical rupture, but in demanding that historical continuity informs the explanation of the emergence of so many informal settlements after apartheid. The so-called “Native question”—expressly, the question of how to manage migrant populations moving back and forth between town and country—was, in point of fact, a problem of the presence of Africans in town.

This management of populations depended on two competing processes: the one, accelerated urbanization, particularly after World War II; and two, the desire to maintain metropolitan South Africa as a white enclave, this while land policy necessarily created mass rural dispossession. Thus while urban squatters, even in the early to mid-twentieth century, appeared to be engaged in struggles for housing, what de facto underwrote such struggles was their central role as the inheritors of a system of land tenure that denied Africans the right to land ownership. Squatters
were too the inheritors of a radical gap between wages and subsistence, as were most Africans—torn from the land, denied rights of ownership or title, forcibly proletarianized in many cases, and then refused adequate pay while being asked to meet the costs of their own social wage. Clearly there has been a long history in South Africa in which conditions of indigence, beginning with the industrial revolution, assimilated greater and greater numbers into wage work while dispossessing them of land. Anne Marie expressed discomfort with the repeated use of the term “community,” which assumes a sense of cohesion, but surely also romanticizes ideas of collective collaboration, harmony, and consensus building. She suggests rethinking the historiography of the Cape Peninsula, which continues to permit us to speak of pass laws for Blacks and forced removals for Coloureds as the foundational experiences of dispossession. Yet both strategies were part of an overall project on the part of the apartheid state.

The comment to Netsayi was that her paper on the politics of space, vulnerability and opportunity, is interestingly configured through the lens of generation and gender, rather than assuming that cities are places in which young people are seen to reside because of employment opportunities and broader urbanization processes. She wondered if in part, again this is an historical question after a fashion, if this isn’t a historical phenomenon that you have captured? At a time when we are facing an epochal transition so that squarely over half of the world’s population is living in urban areas when jobs have been disarticulated from city life. Is the demography of Korogocho and Viwandi not informed on some level too by this epochal shift as much as the aspirations and imaginaries of entrepreneurialism you describe?

The final comments included that the session was entitled “disciplining spaces” and ironically, despite the variously challenging situations in which people find themselves spanning urban contexts in South Africa, Mozambique, and Kenya, she felt that these were less spaces of disciplining than spaces of hope (following David Harvey), spaces of self-determination, and imagination, in the best case (rather than the kind of disciplining spaces described in Foucault’s Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison or Adam Smith’s description of the pin factory in The Wealth of Nations). The good news here is that space remains seemingly fluid and malleable rather than the mode through which disciplining occurs. At the same time while Hanspeter’s third space offers the possibility of self-definition, we must think carefully and cautiously about the degree to which this is the case—the degree to which the third spaces described are in fact counter-hegemonic or emancipatory (with the discussant supposing that the question would be for whom). While the domestic/household domain in Lucy’s paper is not precisely emancipatory, clearly relations between men and women in polygamous marriages are not fixed but evidently fluid, and unpredictable, as much as the outcome of struggles to negotiate scarcity and contingency do not necessarily result in the triumph of patriarchy. It is implied in Netsayi’s paper that urban areas in Kenya are understood as spaces of possibility, whether this is the case in practice or not. Finally, Jessie demonstrates the ways in which land occupation and settlement in peri-urban spaces offers new opportunities for families.
Elaine Salo’s presentation began by highlighting the prominent role Women’s National Coalition (WNC) played in the South African negotiations prior to the democratic elections of 1994. That coalition of women of diverse social, economic as well as racial and religious backgrounds was possible because of their consciousness of their common interests. The consciousness and coalition in turn enabled them to appropriate the right for space at all levels of the political spectrum. Much as they were able to write their role in the South African story up to 1994, the period also marked a watershed of a new phase. The thrust of her presentation is the post-1994 phase, which marked the end of apartheid and the beginning of a feminist struggle for substantive citizenship capacity.

In the new South Africa, women’s diversity and activism which draws from the local, national as well as global enabling frameworks of appropriative citizenship, has seen the rise of femocrats. Yet the constraints to gender justice posed by neoliberal economics (lack of housing, employment, physical security, etc) and cultural forms (religions and/or patriarchy) have come to demand a new strategic positioning in feminist struggles. Non-governmental organisations that have risen to the challenge are being drawn hither-thither by the difficulty to reconcile demands of the local conditions vis-à-vis donor agendas. Either this situation has contributed to the emergence of conservatism among femocrats, usually females who do not subscribe to the idea of gender justice in the first place; or are feminists caught up in the invented world of men re-empowered by re-invented traditions and cultures.

With the rising masculinity of the state, is an increasing need to re-evaluate the opportunities and challenges the state offers as the site for reclaiming women’s constitutional rights. Equally important to feminists in South Africa is the need to appreciate the complex terrain of their struggle; a terrain of neoliberal economics and masculine nationalism, and how these impinge on women’s multiple identities and differences. Salo went on to discuss in detail the participation of femocrats in the people-centred programmes, though gender issues were poorly conceived. Firstly, the removal of white privilege in the state from 1994—996 as part of the programme improved women’s access to state institutions. Secondly, the adoption of legal conventions, both global and regional, such as CEDAW and AU’s protocols provided women with the legal framework of rights. The alliance of femocrats and women’s rights activists facilitated the formulation of gender sensitive legislations in that period. While successful in expanding women’s rights in many aspects of life, femocrats could not facilitate legislations against either the privilege traditional rulers have had over land issues or men’s privileges in traditional marriages.

Salo discussed in-depth the institutionalisation of gender issues in all spheres of life in South Africa, from governance to academia and AIDS, international aid to NGO activism. She dealt with both the contestations in each and between them, and
between groups and individuals. She concludes with the current state of struggle for the appropriation of women’s rights which has become more urban-based and professionalised. One of the main challenges feminist activists face is that of dealing with the sometimes conflicting interests of rural and that of urban women in the compounding neoliberal economic structures of South Africa. The economic challenge remains although activists are able to suture a common front on issues such as gender-based violence.

Panel 4 A: Gender and Terrains of Struggle

Session Chair: Paula Mählck, Centre for Gender studies, Stockholm University.
Discussant: Patricia McFadden
Presenters: Theresa Barnes, Mary Hames, Juan Velasquez and Desiree Lewis

Theresa Barnes paper is titled Aliens in the university. The paper investigates policy and notions of the female body in academic spaces. It is prompted by the controversy on one South African campus. In mid 2007, it came to the attention of staff at the University of the Western Cape that women students who lived on campus were being told by administrators that they had to leave the university residences if they were pregnant. Citing a need to make sure that the rights of other members of the university community were protected, pregnant students were asked to notify residence staff of the progressive stages of their pregnancy, and to leave the premises at six months. It was significant that this clearly unconstitutional policy was couched in the language of human rights: thus, the rights of the university and of its community had to be upheld. The university’s use of this policy implies strongly that there is no conceptual space on campus for bodies if they actually exhibit specifically female qualities. The paper works with notions of gender both as embodiment and status, citizenship and intellectual history to investigate the concepts of localized scholarship and knowledge production.

Mary Hames presented a paper titled: “Let us burn the house down!” violence against women in South African Higher Education environment. As a starting point Mary’s paper takes a workshop on feminist leadership in 2008 where one of the participants reported on how she and other family members were consistently abused by a family member and nobody would listen to their stories. She eventually found peace when she took justice in her own hands. She said: ‘I took matches and I burnt the house down.’ The fire metaphor in the title finds resonance in a type of rethinking of the epistemologies and pedagogies in order to eradicate the systemic violence within the ivory tower. This paper reflects on both the direct and indirect manner in which violence is perpetrated within the confines of the academy. The discussion will in particular focus on the sexism and femicide that was perpetrated at the various South African campuses over the last two to three years and the responses to the analyses of this type violence. Universities are often referred to as the microcosms of broader society - one should therefore not be surprised when the types of societal violence are mirrored within their confines. However, Mary was particularly perturbed that these institutions of higher learning are seldom proactive in using their collective intellect to stem the violent acts perpetrated against the women within. Could these acts of violence be described as random or are they reflecting the embedded violence
and misogyny in our society? The paper asks whether we need to burn the house down in order to be heard or are there other ways of ‘doing’ that go beyond the usual rhetorical policy responses. This paper also looks at various possible practical interventions to promote gender justice and equity in these patriarchal and hostile environments.

Juan Velasquez’ paper addressed *Gender Mainstreaming and Body Politics beyond Colonialism – The Role of Politics of Emotion in Decolonising Approaches*. During the last few years gender mainstreaming and body politics have proved to be an important aspect to take into account regarding democratic (sustainable) development. Feminist debates have recently been more oriented to deal with political underrepresentation of women in different fields of political activity. But little attention has been paid to the grounds for political inequalities along lines of experience of migration and body politics on the one hand, and how it expresses itself in societies with different experience of colonialism on the other hand. The paper compares body politics regarding women settled in multicultural communities in colonised and coloniser societies. In welfare societies, that have the position of colonisers societies, body politics affect women and men differentially depending on individuals experience of migration from colonies, or “third world-countries”. In third world societies the body discourse is in turn illuminated by racialised archetypes where white middle class persons are presented as models that dominate body norms. Gender equality in welfare societies although committed to class to a certain degree is less cognizant of the racialised experience of migration and the further connection between the society’s gender equality model to colonialism. In colonised societies on the other hand racialised bodies are in addition affected by the experience of internal migration interconnected with colonial projects.

The point of departure for this paper is the presentation of the main challenges faced by gender mainstreaming when it is implemented in a multicultural community at the core of a European welfare state. Women in such places, especially if they have migrated from third world countries, are sometimes seen as aliens and described as queer bodies, representing cultural traditions and patriarchal backwardness. This understanding of women’s bodies goes parallel with an invisibility of marginalised women’s bad health and their low participation in politics. The stigmatisation of marginalised women in welfare societies are in turn a prolongation of the same marginalisation already experienced by women in colonised societies. Instead of illuminating the ways in which welfare societies conduct gender equality to educate developing countries this paper aims to illuminate how gender mainstreaming conducted in colonised societies could better contribute to overcome the challenges that women face in both colonised and colonisers’ societies. The paper relates the work for gender equality approaches in a multicultural community in Stockholm, Sweden to gender mainstreaming in Medellin, Colombia. To contest machismo, anorexia and bulimia this city encourages feminist alliances, gender and social mainstreaming as well as politics of emotion to empower and ‘to pay the social debt’ to stigmatized underrepresented groups and suburbs. As stigmatisation against marginalised women is common to both societies such examples can contribute to deconstruct the dichotomy between “the north” and “the south” in order to see gender mainstreaming beyond colonialism.
Desiree Lewis presented a paper on: *Gender and Spectacle: New Terrains of Struggle in South Africa*. The display of gendered bodies in the form of, for example, military displays or team sports, has been central to the gendered constructions of collective identity in South Africa. In such spectacles, collective unity and identity are implicitly or explicitly constructed as masculine, and the symbols and meanings of spectacles are both gendered and sexualized. Focusing on the charged force of the visual and the somatic in selected spectacles in post-apartheid South Africa, this paper explores the expression of new or hitherto suppressed struggles and identities in the public sphere. Both gendered bodies and the visual display or representation of such bodies have been crucial to struggles around, for example, what it means to be a citizen, the terms of social “belonging”, and what it means to be “South African”. Gendered and sexualized bodies feature prominently in these displays and representations, and can be read as dense signifiers of new or previously neglected identities and struggles. The paper considers events that have acquired national significance in the mass media and public debate in recent years. Drawing on psychoanalytic and discursive analysis, it explores constructions of identity in relation to patterns of display and spectatorship around corporeality. Desiree questions the centrality of “social movements” or sectoral definitions of “political moments” in exploring political struggles in present-day South Africa, and argues that pivotal forms of political and cultural contestation are presently occurring around spectacles focusing on the performance, regulation or disciplining of gendered bodies.

**Discussant:** Patricia McFadden, Visiting Professor in Women’s Studies and African American Studies, Syracuse University.

The discussant observed that this had been a powerful panel – bringing up many thought-provoking issues. The main themes of the papers were the notion and practice of exclusion where power, control and exclusion were institutionalised. Some of the papers spoke of the need for mobilisation. There was a need to remove the border between history and feminism – African feminism – to find the continuities, the resistance and to craft new politics.

Theresa had linked panic as motive to institutional exclusion. It was about the black body, body integrity and the impact of exclusion of female bodies linking pregnancies to mobility, educational spaces and the Constitution and rights. She alerts us of the contradictions in the occupations of spaces and the need to explore these aspects.

Mary put violations in a much wider context in a of framework of patriarchal impunity, rather than just violence highlighting how women experienced the violations on their bodies. Pat highlighted the implications of the institutionalisation of feminism in terms such as gender based violence.

Juan has succeeded in exposing the dangerous myth of Sweden as the Shangri La for gender equality. With a stroke of genius he broadens the picture creating a bridge between otherness (of immigrants in Sweden) and feminist notions etc. connecting it to discourses around intersectionality. His paper uses the power of feminism – speaking of the black body as dynamic, resistant and sometimes as captured.
Desiree highlights the similarities shared by women across countries – putting feminisms in its context.

The papers contribute to constructing, de-constructing and re-constructing gender identities.

**Panel 4 B: Politics and Process in Knowledge Production**

**Session Chair:** Rich Nagar, University of Minnesota  
**Discussant:** Angelo Fick  
**Presenters:** Zethu Matabeni, Karin Sporre; Margaret gärding and Karen Skill

Zethu Matabeni spoke on *Feminising lesbians, de-gendering transgender men: A model for building lesbian feminist thinkers and leaders in Africa?*. The paper looks at the recent lesbian feminist leadership institute held in February 2008 in Mozambique, aimed at developing African lesbian feminist thinkers and leaders. This week-long institute was attended by over 60 participants from many African countries. Many of the attendees identified as lesbian, others not, but were in same-sex relationships; a few were transgender men as well as heterosexual women. The diversity of the participants allowed for a platform to interrogate African feminism and at the same time highlight issues around sexuality, particularly same-sex sexuality as well as the contentious issues on gender. A reading of such an institute, allows for an analysis of feminist models applicable to the diversity of African and black activists, scholars and researchers. Reflecting on this institute foregrounds many of the contentions around a model of African feminism used to negotiate sexual orientation, race, class and gender. Furthermore, this reflection aims to generate increasing sensitivity to the diversities of lesbian, feminist and transgender experiences.

Karin Sporre addressed the *Epistemology from out of a broken body?* What is the epistemology of education on sexuality and relationships in South Africa and Sweden? Can it cope with young women’s experiences of vulnerability in sexual relationships and empower them? After earlier studies in feminist epistemologies in this research project Karin studies curricula of education concerning sexuality and relationships as well as the actual education taking place in class-rooms. The purpose is to understand what kind of epistemologies motivate and guide this education. How are the epistemologies constructed? Do they take into account power in relationships between girls and boys, or young women and men? Are they sensitive to experiences, for instance of powerlessness and/or power? Another complex of questions deals with disciplinary foci. Is the education and its directing epistemology focussing sexuality and relationships as a matter of “pure” biology/health, or does it situate them in a social, sociological, psychological, and/or cultural context? If so, how? Later Karin hopes to relate the findings of this study to human rights discourses as some of its actors deal with an “incomprehensibility” of offences against women, i.e. a stance where such offences cannot be regarded as “normal” human rights offences. South African experiences from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission might prove a resource in understanding such tensions.

Margaret Gärding’s paper, *Training for Change: an intervention against the sexual abuse*
of children, grapples with two complex issues: Child Sexual abuse (CSA) and international aid cooperation. CSA exists in all countries - regardless of the level of development or relative wealth. It affects at least 20% of the children in the countries studied with serious consequences for the victims. The primary victim is the girl child and the primary perpetrator is a heterosexual male known to the child. There now exists valuable knowledge on the detection, treatment of the victims and appropriate judicial processing of this criminal offence. The challenge is greater in some countries due to the lack of resources and relevant skills and is thus a suitable area for international aid cooperation.

This paper describes training for change to help a country to address the problem of child sexual abuse. The project presented was implemented within the framework of international aid cooperation between the Swedish Volunteer Services and the government of the Seychelles. The paper covers four related areas: a summary of the problem of child sexual abuse, a presentation of the challenges in international aid cooperation, a presentation of the Action Learning and Student Centred Learning as possible strategies to address these challenges and finally a presentation of the implementation of the project against child sexual abuse in the Seychelles using these approaches. The focus is on capacity building and the significance of organisational factors in international aid cooperation. International aid cooperation involves an intricate web of relations at international, national, project and individual levels - the relationship between a recipient and a donor characterised by power inequality and cultural differences.

Evaluations over the last 20 years indicate that recipient/donor relations are problematic - impacting on the quality of international aid cooperation. The challenges include failure to respect recipient cultures and to use local knowledge and expertise. This accentuates the need for humanistic approaches to capacity building in this context. Action Learning and Student Centred Learning are two humanistic theories of learning advanced as possible strategies to meet these challenges. They focus on the learner and on equalising power relations. The solutions are emergent and negotiated. This presentation touches on organisational challenges especially in donor structures but above all it seeks to demonstrate possibilities, untapped resources and the potential of groups and individuals to make choices and create their own knowledge and solutions. The conclusion is that CSA can be addressed through international aid cooperation and that when given respect, recognition and the necessary support recipient structures take responsibility for their own development, defining their problems and contributing to the creation of appropriate solutions.

Karin Skill’s paper is titled: Responsibility and guilt concerning sustainable development. Skill delves into the relationship between agency, guilt and responsibility for the environment and sustainable development from a gender perspective. Gender equality is part of the social dimension in the global vision of sustainable development. The analysis is based on the PhD study involving 28 Swedish households, making up 58 householders. These householders were interviewed in their home twice, and most wrote a time-diary for about a week. Through the study, the traditional distinction between the private and the political sphere has been challenged. By using the structuration theory for the analysis, the focus moves tow-
ards how actors and structures (re)create each other. Even if the structuration theory usually is not considered a gender theory, the argument is that it is useful when interpreting how the responsibility for the environment becomes gendered through socialization and men and women come to be expected to care for different areas in everyday life. The responsibility for the environment tends to rely on “feminized care” which is expressed through guilt, which connects the individual body to global processes and vision such as sustainable development. The material indicates that both men and women know about environmental problems and the relation between household activities and environmental impact, but the expectations for who should perform what activities are gendered, as is the motivations for why. It is through these motivations that women largely than men express a sense of guilt for the environmental state, and for others.

The general discussion

The discussions around Zethus paper concerned a question on the relations between lesbians and transgender men and women. These relations were difficult to assess – only one transgender woman had attended the conference. Even though there is a transition process there are still the challenges of ridiculing transgender women, victimising transgender men and an exclusion of the transgender experiences.

Another question was how the lesbian women viewed transgender men and transgender women biologically. Zethu did not have a specific answer to that question, but her conclusion was that lesbian women have to be women – it is about a particular type of feminism that excludes masculine women. Karin Sporre’s presentation triggered questions around the choice of a particular framework? Karin’s response was that it was important not to mix sources and to test it. Karin opened up for suggestions and for alternative voices, and received suggestions from the floor on possible follow-up strategies which included: following the children’s education systems and doing critical and comparative research.

The first question on Margaret’s presentation was on the significance of culture in the definition of child sexual abuse. Was its definition only based on Western contexts and age limits? Is the situation for a married 12 year the same as that for an unmarried 12 year old? Margaret’s answer was that in those cases we have to be guided by the definition of child sexual abuse and an adherence to and a defence of human rights. Margaret continued that more research was needed on both the occurrence and complexity of the problem of child sexual abuse. Unfortunately there is a tabu around this subject in many countries. There was a general agreement that the two issues addressed in the margaret’s presentation i.e CSA and international development were complex with a multitude of questions around each. What do we really know about aid cooperation especially from a recipient and a feminist perspective?

The questions to Karen Skill were mostly around the methodology: The characteristics of the sample and the challenges she faced doing the research. She had chosen different households including both married and single participants, different ages and people living in both urban and rural areas. Participation was voluntary. A disadvantage was that people found the time-diary time-consuming.
Discussant: Angelo Fick, Centre for Science Access, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Fick looked at the broader issues linking the four papers starting with the illumination of donor/recipient relations in Margaret’s paper and the implications of donor funding, posing the question: What is the connection between North and South? What is the cost of sustainability in the West? How much of international aid is funded by profits from the war industry with weapons being used on populations in the South? What is the cost of profits? He maintained that we need to re-think way of living humanly. Issues of education and knowledge production are impacted upon by global and local aspects. What is the situation regarding CSA in the third world context? What is the construction of the child in the third world context and the place of sex tourism? Angelo pointed out that it was important to think about the state when thinking about culture.

Margaret pointed out that CSA must be addressed within its context – where we build on facts and not stereotypes and hear say about other cultures. She added that when it comes to development aid cooperation we must work both within and outside the structures. We must try to change the perspective where donors steer the process. We need research that highlights power inequalities and their consequences and offers alternative strategies. Why has so little research been done about sex tourism where the victims are often children in poor communities?

Zethu explained that the visibility of the donor was not as apparent at the conference she presented – but the workings of feminist ideology were apparent. You are classed as a feminist and a lesbian. Local organisations were however creating dependency on donor organisations which is not sustainable in the long run. The training was not good as it did not really provide the tools for changing notions of power. The lesbian community is not homogenous. Conferences are often in English, German, French, etc., reflecting colonial relations. Gender regimes in Western countries are creating the categories. The consequences of the identity politics and categorisation is that while being shaped as groups people are still marginalised as black/lesbian women.

Final Plenary

Final Plenary Session: Friday 6th February
Session Chair: Sophie Oldfield, AGI, Cape Town University
Panel: Relebohile Moletsane and Mary John, CWDS, New Delhi

Relebohile Moletsane
This presentation focused on three themes arising out of the papers presented: The construction of the South African identity, the issue of language in research and how we talk about ourselves and thirdly, the different silences in the discourse. The speaker highlighted the challenges in the construction of the South African identity raising issues such as that this structuring must take cognisance of the diverse ethnic cultures in the country; the role of neo-colonialism in the negative perception of African cultures and the dynamics in an idealised fantasy where the old traditional
cultures are seen as ideal and a modernisation of these cultures as a problem. There is a need to recognise the subject positionality and the agency of women to construct citizenship in different cultural contexts.

The speaker drew attention to the hegemony in the use of language in how we talk about our research and ourselves as researchers. There are generally unequal power relations between us as researchers and those we write about. It is therefore imperative that we pay attention to this power inequality and how it impacts on the language we use and how we name things.

Finally the speaker focused on the four silences in the conference papers: She questioned the silence on HIV/Aids in the papers on poor women in Africa as this is a reality impacting on every facet in their lives. Not enough had been said about innovations in feminist methodology. There had also been a persistent silence in the presentations on the positionality and power advantage of the researchers in relation to the woman they were researching. The fourth silence was the lack of a comparative element in an international conference of this nature. There was a continued exclusive gaze on the African women’s body. In conferences of this nature we expect comparative analyses and not a persistent analysis of the black African women.

Mary John
Mary John took her home country India as the point of departure for her presentation stating that India is a peculiar country. Its history of colonization by the British, and the consequent accident of having todays' global language of English as a colonising language; India's size and diversity, and its subsequent history of national development, have made for a default frame of reference –where all thinking is effectively comparative and the axis of comparison is with the West. In order to counter this, the common response is one of insular nationalism, as well as a focus on intra-national diversities of various kinds. Mary expressed her gratitude to Gadnet and to the Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town for organising this international conference -- the third in a series of such conferences, of which the second was co-hosted by her centre, the Centre for Women's Development Studies, in New Delhi in December 2006. There too, under the broad umbrella of Gender Justice, different sessions ranged from globalisation, politics, violence, sexuality and knowledge production. On that occasion it was possible to bring together scholars from different parts of India, as well as other Asian countries together with Swedish scholars.

Mary stated that listening to the presentations during the conference had strengthened her conviction about the value of bringing multiple perspectives into the worlds of gender and development that Indians are familiar with. She summarised the questions emerging in the presentations she had been able to attend as follows: Within what historical trajectory are we situating the specific issue or problem that scholars are focussing on -- be it cliterodectomy, the feminization of labour, the emergence of new sexual minorities or the deployments of masculinity? What larger pictures must be drawn even as our methodologies focus is on local case studies and the minuetae of everyday life? What kinds of comparative frames are implicitly at work, whether these be the default frames with the West (or North) she had alluded to in the beginning, and how can these be productively used.
as well as destabilised? As for the last question, two routes suggest themselves: One would be to render more explicit the normative workings of dominant, if not hegemonic frames of reference. This becomes acutely necessary in a conference devoted to gender justice. Secondly, there is also an opportunity that is too rarely grasped -- though the conference had offered some important instances -- of more radically destabilising references to the West by engendering alternate comparative frames, call them south-south if you will, comparisons with the power not just of seeing the "other" differently, but of seeing ourselves anew. There are many issues in India today, such as a declining child sex ratio and issues over son preference, for instance, that would profit from such new comparative frames. Finally Mary commented on an aspect of the overall theme of the conference "Body Politics and Gender Justice" that perhaps did not crystallise significantly enough, at least in the sessions she had attended, namely that of Gender Justice itself. In all the recent debates over women and gender, over the problems and possibilities of feminist politics and so on, questions of race/class/sexuality and multiple exclusions within and beyond gender, we may need to sharpen the question: Who qualifies for gender justice and when? She concluded by thanking everyone and extending an invitation to come to India.
Final Concluding Remarks

The conference ended on the evening of 6 February. The enriching experience of the event was unmistakeable. Still more palpable is the common experience, whether as researchers or activists, the compounding effects of the neoliberal economics they face in the struggles for gender justice.

The keynote speakers had set the stage for looking more closely at North/South collaborative practice and the coming of age of feminism. In broad and bold sweeps the conference addressed gender justice and body politics under the headings of negotiating the politics of citizenship, ascetics and politics of the body, rereading the state and neo-liberalism, contesting identities and public discourse, networks and livelihoods, disciplining space, gender and terrains of struggle and the politics and process of knowledge production. The presenters and discussants took on the challenge sharing knowledge, stimulating discussion and highlighting new issues for research.

The presenters in the final plenary session raised the issues of identity, the use of language and the power of inequalities inherent in research, the different silences in the discourse, the value of bringing multiple perspectives in the world of gender and development, the inherent challenges in North/West and South interaction characterised as it is by power asymmetries and historical factors and the existing “default” comparative frames. They also pointed to future areas for research as well as methodological challenges. These include: the lack of the comparative element in conferences of this nature resulting, in this case, in the persistent “exclusive gaze on the African woman’s body”; the need to address the inherent hegemony in how we as researchers talk about our research and ourselves as researchers; the need to address the silences in the discourse.

As researchers and activists we were challenged to make the dominant frames of reference more explicit and to dare to open up for more alternative frames. The conference was about sharing in a North/West and South perspective and a South/South perspective, a sharing across and within continents and between individuals. We end with the inspiring and empowering words by Mary John encouraging us to engender comparative approaches with the power not just of “seeing the other differently, but of seeing ourselves anew”.

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## Gender Justice and Body Politics Conference Participants

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