

## **Beyond the apocalypse: Rethinking capitalism, democracy and crisis in South Africa**

9 – 11 October 2024

Thirty years since the end of apartheid the public mood in South Africa is pessimistic. While the national elections pushed the country into uncharted waters, crime and corruption continue to dominate headlines, while opinion makers wring their hands about opportunities lost and paths not taken. But bemoaning the current state of the country does little to explain the complexities of South Africa and holds even less explanatory power for understanding how we got where we are today. While there has been much in the past thirty years that have been fraught, South Africa's democracy has also been characterized by contradictory pulls and pressures, booms and busts across society. Does South Africa still symbolize a hopeful resolution to racial conflict or is South Africa simply a byword for corruption? Does South Africa mean inequality or is it the poster child for 'African Development'? How should we understand the complexities and seeming contradictions that South Africa represents? This workshop brings together people from a range of different backgrounds – academics, activists, public intellectuals, practitioners – to take stock of thirty years of South African democracy and consider how to move beyond the apocalyptic narratives of South Africa's imminent collapse

### **9 October 2024**

RSVP for in-person attendance to [laura.phillips@wits.ac.za](mailto:laura.phillips@wits.ac.za) (no online option for keynote)

6:00 – 7.30: Keynote Address: Achille Mbembe

“Is South Africa Possible? Reflections on Thirty Years of Democracy”

### **10 October 2024**

RSVP for in-person attendance to [laura.phillips@wits.ac.za](mailto:laura.phillips@wits.ac.za) or join us online [here](#)

9.00 – 10.30: **Panel 1 – Continuity and Change: From Apartheid to the Post-Apartheid**

In recent years many younger political commentators have argued that 'Rainbownation-ism' masked the harsh realities of post-apartheid South Africa. Is this the case? Are there significant changes to South African life in the post-apartheid period or has apartheid continued under a new name?

- Claire Anne Lester (discussant)
- Samukelo Ndlovu
- Andile Cele
- Joshua Budlender

10.30 – 11.00: Tea and Coffee

11.00 – 12.30: **Panel 2 – Race, ethnicity and the National Question**

Democratic South Africa promised a resolution to the racial and ethnic tensions baked into apartheid South Africa. Some may argue that this has been achieved while others may point to the potency of phrases such as 'white monopoly capital' and 100% Zulu to suggest otherwise. From racial populism, to racialized inequality, to ethnic nationalism, this panel considers the significance – and meaning - of race and ethnicity in post-apartheid South Africa, paying attention both to formal politics and the broader socio-political environment shaping public discourse.

- Alex Hotz (discussant)
- Lindokuhle Patiwe
- Khwezi Mabasa
- Malaika Mahlatsi

12.30 – 2.00: Lunch

2.00 – 3.30: **Panel 3 – Development or de-development? Pathways for South African Capitalism**

South African was long seen as ground zero for a rapacious racial capitalism. In the post-apartheid period many hoped this would be dismantled and the economy would be driven instead by a more inclusive form of economic growth, but instead new patterns of accumulation have emerged, often built on the back of social and political crises. Is this a distinctive South African phenomenon or does it follow global patterns with South Africa just another node in international flows of capital? What is new about the South African economy and how have apartheid's economic legacies played out in this sphere?

- Kamal Ramburuth-Hurt (discussant)
- Ayabonga Cawe
- Basani Baloyi
- Dominic Brown

3.30 – 4.00: Tea and coffee

4.00 – 5.30: **Panel 4: South Africa's Public Sphere**

Despite all the problems and tensions that plague day to day life in South Africa, the public sphere is a dynamic space, culturally, socially, and intellectually. How has this developed in the past three decades and what does it tell us about the construction of the nation? As South Africa continues to produce internationally recognized public figures, what does this mean for the country's reputation on the world stage?

- Khanya Mtshali (discussant)

- Tsogo Kupa
- Wamuwi Mbaob
- Efemia Chela

## 11 October 2024

RSVP for in-person attendance to [laura.phillips@wits.ac.za](mailto:laura.phillips@wits.ac.za) or join us online [here](#)

### 9.00 – 10.30: **Panel 5: Politics from above and below**

What does the South African state deliver? In the early years of the country's democracy the answer might have been houses or social grants, and many officials inside the bureaucracy argued that the problems of capacity and distribution inherited from Apartheid were being addressed and resolved. However if service delivery protests are a yardstick for the state's capacity, the situation is much more dire. This panel explores the changing nature of the state's capacity to deliver and the pressures placed on it by social and political movements and organisations across the country.

- Andile Zulu (discussant)
- Carilee Osborne
- Luke Sinwell
- Phindile Kunene

10.30 – 11.00: Tea

### 11.00 – 12.30: **Panel 6: Courting Justice: Winning and Losing in South Africa's Legal System**

The South African Judicial system is often lauded as one of the best functioning institutions in South Africa, committed to delivering impartial justice. Is its track record unbroken across three decades? Are the remedies it offers actually available to ordinary people? And how uniform is the justice system? This panel considers what has and has not worked in South Africa's courts.

- Claire-Anne Lester (discussant)
- Dan Mafora
- Bhavna Ramji
- Sohela Surajpal

12.30 – 2.00: Lunch

### 2.00 – 3.30: **Panel 7: South Africa in a polycrisis world**

Is South Africa exceptional? Public discourse has long suggested that South Africa's history – and its future – are distinct from the rest of the continent. But the country has long been home to a cosmopolitan mix of migrants and

entrepreneurs. Shaped by regional developments and flows of people, this panel takes South Africa's regional position as a starting point to examine how thirty years of democracy have shaped South Africa.

- Alf Gunvald Nilsen (discussant)
- Fabio Luis
- Ruth Castel-Branco
- William Shoki

**4.00 – 5.30: Panel 8: Concluding Session: Post-election analysis**

The concluding session will bring together the insights of the workshop to bear on making sense of South Africa's democracy after the elections.

- Laura Phillips (chair)
- Gumani Tshimomola
- Rekgotsofetse Chikane
- Niall Reddy
- Tasneem Essop