

Call for Papers for an international conference

African Studies and land questions in Africa

27 – 29 November 2019

The National Research Foundation Chair in Land Reform and Democracy in South Africa

Centre for African Studies

University of Cape Town

The National Research Foundation (NRF) Chair in Land Reform and Democracy in South Africa at the University of Cape Town, in collaboration with the Excellence Cluster “Africa Multiple” at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth in Germany and the Institute of African Studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in South Korea invites papers for this international conference to be held in Cape Town on 27-29 November 2019. This conference is the third following two earlier conferences that were held in Bayreuth in 2017 and in Seoul in 2018.

The theme of the Bayreuth conference was “Africa multiple and relational, crossing perspectives from Centers of African Studies around the world” and one in Seoul was themed “The Different and the Similar: Africa in an Ever-Changing, Multi-faceted, multi-layered World”.

The theme of this conference is *African Studies and land questions in Africa*. This theme was endorsed at the conference that was organised by the Institute of African Studies of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in South Korea in cooperation with the Institute of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth (Germany) last year (2018). It became clear at that conference that land questions are at the heart of African Studies.

The definition of land for our purposes is broad and goes beyond restricting land solely to rural areas and agricultural issues. For years, many academics and politicians perceived labour and not land as central in understanding industrialised and industrialising countries. This has been the case with respect to South Africa. However, the adoption by the ruling African National Congress (ANC) at its conference in December 2017 of the policy of land expropriation without compensation put the land question in South Africa high on the agenda. For all the years of its democracy, the land question has been marginal in economic, political and social debates and discussions in South Africa. However, persistent struggles for housing and livelihoods of especially black Africans in urban areas demonstrated that the land question is as much of a rural and agricultural issue as it is an urban concern, and beyond.

The entanglement of various issues around land questions is also evident in many other regions on the African continent. There are, for example questions around the close relations between land, heritage, culture as well as religious practices that are linked to specific places, often giving rise to conflicts over access to land.

Complexities around land can best be understood and elucidated from if a non-disciplinary approach is adopted. African Studies, which is non-disciplinary by its nature is best equipped to deal with such a complex topic. We thus look forward to a conference where participants will contribute to the topic from various angles, depending on their preferred disciplinary lenses. For this reason, we hope that the conference will draw participation from a range of disciplines such as history, philosophy, linguistics, economics, anthropology, media, art, health sciences, to mention a few.

Interested participants should send abstracts, with paper titles, of 250 words by 31 July 2019 conference convener Lungisile Ntsebeza at africanstudies2019@gmail.com. To ensure in-depth discussions of papers and, given that we would like to publish the papers in either a special issue or edited volume, full drafts of the papers should be circulated by 15 October 2019.