

FORENSIC INFRASTRUCTURE

BUILDING THE GLOBAL SOUTH

WISER (WITS INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH), JOHANNESBURG

The workshop will consider the following questions: What are the conceptual and historical underpinnings and technologies of the infrastructures of political violence? How do mappings of infrastructures in different forms—military technologies, policing, biometrics, forensics, cities, texts—enable and facilitate new geographical and topographical imaginings, producing emergent networks of communication, economic exchange and social interaction? To what extent are these built around the appropriation of pre-existing urban infrastructures or, by contrast, worked out through the development of new informal or ‘underground’ urban circuitries? Do these alternative infrastructural networks run beneath, below and between the rigid, physical governmentalities of not only the state but also the increasingly cross-national capitalist connections that are coming increasingly to define the global South? In what ways do these informal socioeconomic infrastructures cut against, yet also conform to and perpetuate, broader trends of global inequality and structural violence? To what extent do the changing formal responses of literary and cultural narratives initiate a ‘forensic’ analysis of cities like Johannesburg (to draw on Eyal Weizman’s methodology of ‘forensic architecture’)? Can we build new understandings of the social and political potential of urban infrastructures through our readings of these shifting cultural forms?

PROGRAMME

Day 1: Tuesday 31 March

- 9.00 - 9.15** **Registration and tea/coffee**
- 9.15 - 10.30** **Introductory Panel: Planned Violence: Infrastructures, Technologies, Politics**
Elleke Boehmer, David Goldberg, Dominic Davies, Pablo Mukherjee, Sarah Nuttall
- 10.30 - 12.30** **Intervention 1**
- Speaker and Reading:** Grégoire Chamayou, ‘Necro-Ethics’
- Further Readings:** Derek Gregory, ‘Drones and Late Modern War’
Eric Hazan, ‘A little Cynicism goes a Long Way’
Etienne Balibar, ‘Three Words for the Dead and the Living’
Alexis Okeowo, ‘Inside the Vigilante Fight against Boko Haram’
- Respondents:** Achille Mbembe, Michael Keith, Elleke Boehmer
- 12.30 - 13.30** **Lunch**
- 13.30 - 16.00** **City Tour of Johannesburg with Zen Marie**

Day 2: Wednesday 1 April

- 9.00 - 10.30** **Intervention 2**
- Speakers and Readings:** David Goldberg, 'Conclusion': *Are We Postracial Yet?*
Elleke Boehmer, 'Postcolonial Writing and Terror': *Terror and the Postcolonial*
Keith Breckenridge, 'Introduction': *The Biometric State*
- Further Readings:** Saskia Sassen, 'When the City Itself becomes a Technology of war'
- 10.30 - 11.00** **Respondents:** Sharad Chari, Lakshmi Menon
Coffee break
- 11.00 - 12.30** **Writers' Readings and Performance**
- Speakers:** Mark Gevisser, *Lost and Found in Johannesburg*
Imraan Coovadia, *Tales of the Metric System*
Zen Marie, 'I Am Not Jozie'
- Further Readings:** Teju Cole, extracts from *Open City*
- Respondents:** Ackbar Abbas, Charne Lavery, Pamila Gupta
- 12.30 - 12.40** **Short Presentation**
- 'Visualising Urban Infrastructural Violence': Concept note on online exhibition accompanying Workshop
Julie Taylor, *Guns and Rain*, Contemporary southern African Fine Art
- 12.40 - 14.00** **Lunch**
- 14.00 - 16.00** **Intervention 3**
- Speaker and Readings:** Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture and Erasure, The Conflict Shoreline*
- Respondents:** Mark Gevisser, Keith Breckenridge, Grégoire Chamayou
- 16.00 - 16.15** **Coffee break**
- 16.15 - 17.30** **Position pieces: New Cultural Forms: Probing the City**
- Speakers:** Pablo Mukherjee, 'Indian Ocean crime fiction'
Ruvani Ranasinha, 'Migrant lives'
Lakshmi Menon, 'University Infrastructures'
Claudia Gastrow, 'Tools of segregation in Luanda'
- 17.30 - 18.15** **Closing Comments: Thinking Beyond Infra-structural Violence**
- Elleke Boehmer, David Goldberg, Achille Mbembe, Dominic Davies
- 19.30** **Informal dinner**