UMSAEP Report, July 2-Aug 13, 2012

Faculty/Research Exchange: Shannon Jackson, Anthropology, UMKC and Heike Becker, Anthropology, UWC

Project Title: Embodiment and the Built Environment in Cape Town

While the broader aim of this project is collaborative, it includes a phase of individual research. The results of the individual research were documented for the purpose of circulation amongst scholars and students in Cape Town. It is vital that one's research, particularly when it is ethnographic in nature, fit and build-upon a vibrant academic public sphere in Cape Town. It is also crucial that the overall claims or validity of one’s ethnographic findings are supported by those who, in many respects, live or have lived the historical contexts and identity positions one claims to represent.

The two interconnected aims of this project unfolded in two distinct, but related stages, the first being individual research, the second being collaboration on a project led by Dr. Heike Becker, Anthropology, University of the Western Cape (see attached). The primary phase entailed data collection in two sound archives, one photographic archive, and one film archive. Interviews were also conducted with employees of the Table Mountain National Park Service involved in cultural heritage. Once data had been collected from these sources, it was initially analyzed and written-up for presentation for a seminar that is part of the collaborative project led by Dr. Becker. The proposed output of the individual research is a chapter in my own book, enhancement of chapters already drafted, and the proposed output of collaboration between Dr. Becker and myself is my contribution of a chapter in an edited volume as well as my help with editing the graduate student papers that will be selected for the volume.

Dr. Becker originally requested I also contribute teaching and research to two courses at UWC: “Perspectives on Multiculturalism” (Graduate Course) and “Contemporary Cultural Issues” (3rd Year Undergraduate Course). But, scheduling conflicts emerged and it was determined there was a better fit with a graduate course, “Visual Culture”. So I took responsibility for one week of the course, and an article I have recently published, “Reforming Bodies” was assigned.

Phase One, Individual Research

There were adjustments in what was originally proposed. Originally, I planned to gather data and input from South African scholars for two chapters of a book that will be a historical account linking the evolution of the built environment in Cape Town with the creation and negotiation of mixed-race or Coloured identity. The book’s title will be: Boundary Conditions in Cape Town: Embodiment, the Built Environment, and Coloured Identity. But, due to the fact that the Human Genome Project is no longer located at the University of Cape Town and that its faculty
Director is no longer in the country, this component of the proposed research was adjusted. The chapter structure of the book has been adjusted as well. The topic of heritage with regard to the Hoërikwagga Trail on Table Mountain will also be shifted from foreground to background of a more limited focus on the claims of an indigenous identity amongst Coloureds participating in heritage projects. This is due, in part, to a fact learned in interviews with those who developed the trail—this is that the Government has removed funding and no longer places much emphasis on cultural heritage. Environmental Sustainability has become an autonomous budget item instead.

It was also discovered that sound archival holdings that are more extensive than originally anticipated exist in two places, the Center for Popular Memory (UCT) and the District Six Museum thus facilitating an expansion of one of the book chapters that already exists as well as the one that remains to be written. These sound archives consist of interviews conducted in 1996 and 2000 on the subjects of Coloured identity, forced removals, and Table Mountain. An additional photographic archive, photos taken by Jan Greshoff of District Six in the 1960s and 70s was discovered. It was originally proposed that I would only examine and gain copyright permission for the photographs taken by Janse Wissema of District Six just prior to its demolition. Thus both archives were located, examined, and, either scanned with copyright permission, or photocopied with future permission secured.

Research for the larger book project has been archival and ethnographic. The guiding hypothesis of the book is: the lived contours of memory and identity, specifically amongst Cape Coloureds, connects the weight of habit forged by the built environment with creative negotiations of political legitimacy and strategies of historical representation to complicate claims that culture is either purely constructed or historically continuous. It is the fact of embodiment, particularly in terms of habits forged in movement, which disrupts the well-worn assumptions that culture is merely semiotic or a direct extension of cognitive structures of meaning.

A subset of this hypothesis is that what is unique to Cape Town is its consistent position as a privileged cultural crossroads linking the Mercantilist Dutch era, the Industrial British era, the High Modernist Afrikaner era, and the more recent Neo-Liberal era. The Coloured position in Cape emerges out of contact and cultural encounter occurring in all of these eras, so claims to stabilize history and heritage, or by any one group to the city's history, resources, and development, is problematized by both this history and this group.

**Phase Two, Collaboration**

Because it took the College of Arts and Sciences, UMKC until the end of the Spring 2012 semester to make a decision regarding my request for research leave, the initial schedule for the South Africa trip had to be adjusted. This further impacted my availability to teach at UWC. My responsibilities were ultimately limited to one week of one course. But, I was able to use my own previously published work to lead graduate students participating in in the SANPAD project, as well as others, in
formative analysis of the relationship between embodiment and the built environment. This offered some tools to employ in broader understandings of how we performatively engage built and aesthetic form by means of our bodies or bodily habit.

The interviews and the photographs I collected and examined during the first month of my stay were then incorporated into a draft of the new book chapter, titled "Street, Stoep, and Passage", which was presented at the "Performance and Difference" Workshop, a component of the SANPAD project, for which I am collaborating. Valuable feedback from students and faculty participating in the collaborative project were provided. The central hypothesis guiding my larger project was supported. A shorter version of the chapter, adjusted to fit the broader theme of Performativity, will then become part of the edited volume evolving out of collaboration between UMSAEP and SANPAD.

The next step will be to read and edit the graduate student contributions to the edited collection as they emerge. I will do this on-line. I will also read the faculty/senior scholarly contributions and expand/adjust my own chapter to fit the textual conversation that emerges from these.

**Schedule:**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>July 2-6</td>
<td>Establish contact and permissions with archives: Center for Popular Memory, Univ. of Cape Town, African Studies Library, UCT, and District Six Museum</td>
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<td>July 9-16</td>
<td>Research/collection transcripts sound archives at CPM and District Six</td>
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<td>July 17</td>
<td>Interview, Wendy Annecke, Table Mountain National Park Service</td>
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<td>July 19</td>
<td>Meeting, Heike Becker, UWC</td>
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<td>July 20</td>
<td>Meeting, Steven Robins, Anthropologist, Stellenbosch</td>
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<td>July 23</td>
<td>Photography Archive, Cape Institute for Architects</td>
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<td>July 25</td>
<td>Sociology/Anthropology Seminar, UWC</td>
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<td>July 26</td>
<td>Interview, Brett Myrdal, Table Mountain National Park Service</td>
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<td>July 31</td>
<td>Guest Lecture, Graduate Seminar &quot;Visual Culture&quot;, UWC</td>
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<td>Meet students participating in SANPAD project</td>
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<td>Tour of UWC with Neoleen Murray, Architecture, UWC</td>
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<td>Aug 1</td>
<td>Sound Archive, District Six</td>
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Aug 2  Paper presentation, “Street, Stoep, Passageway”, Performance and Difference Workshop, UWC  
Meet Senior Researchers participating in SANPAD project
Aug 3  Meeting, Dr. Steven Robins, Stellenbosch
Aug 4  Visit Solms Delta, Franschoek with Heike Becker
Aug 6-7  African Studies Library, Film Archive
Aug 8  Paper presentation, “Memory and Movement in Kansas City”, Ant/Soc Postgraduate Seminar
Aug 9  Interview, Linda Fortune, District Six
Aug 12  Township tour, Nick Charman
Aug 13  Depart Cape Town
Aug-Jan   Complete book manuscript
          Complete draft of book chapter for edited volume
          Read and edit graduate student contributions
SANPAD RESEARCH PROJECT DETAILS

**Title:** Cultural performance, belonging, and citizenship in contemporary South Africa

Project Leader: Heike Becker (Anthropology, UWC)
Senior researchers: Emile Boonzaier (Anthropology, UWC)
Miki Flockemann (English, UWC)
Desirée Lewis (Women and Gender Studies, UWC)

Dutch partner: Birgit Meyer (Anthropology, VU University Amsterdam)

MA & PhD fellows, associate fellows

Running: January 2011 – December 2013
start-up workshop: 4-5 November, 2010

**Overall aim:**

This project empirically investigates the significance of cultural performance in the processes of reconfiguring citizenship in contemporary South Africa. As the resurgent xenophobic violence in the context of service delivery protests demonstrates, such issues of belonging have become quite explosive, particularly among populations who live on the social margins of South African cities. This project will reveal how notions of inclusion and exclusion are mediated through cultural forms and the politics of authentication through which mediated cultural forms come to be framed as authentic and “true”. It will focus particularly, but not exclusively, on performers and their audiences in socially marginal urban settings. Amongst the venues of this interdisciplinary project (Anthropology, Cultural Studies, and Gender Studies) will be performative cultural forms, including festivals, masquerades, rituals, public spectacle, drama productions, music, dance, sports, fashion, or other forms of contemporary popular culture.

**Main research question:**

The core research question investigates three interconnected aspects of performance and citizenship, (a) how do forms of performance mediate what it means to be South African in the contemporary era; (b) how are such performances connected with politics of belonging and the concomitant dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, and (c) what is the significance of aesthetic strategies for the reconfiguration and authentication of citizenship in contemporary South Africa?
Specific research objectives:

Following from the three interconnected research questions, the following specific objectives will be established:
- how – and why – particular forms of performance become framed as authentic, “true”, and beyond questioning;
- how people single out, mobilize and articulate what they perceive to be essential cultural elements;
- what conflicts arise over competing notions of authenticity;
- what makes people feel that certain cultural elements provide an authentic experience, where they are in touch with both a “real” world and their “true” selves;
- how aesthetic strategies resonate with the embodied memory and knowledge production of marginal urban populations.

Background and motivation

Through empirical investigation and grounded theorizing, this project studies the role and significance of performance in the processes of reconfiguring citizenship in contemporary South Africa. We are concerned with new patterns of contestation from the 1990s onwards: Global discourses of multiculturalism alongside calls for Africanization have replaced in South African public culture the previously dominant notions of a homogenous modernity juxtaposed with the Apartheid era claims to the primordial existence of culturally different, ethnic “nations”. The state-driven model of the integrative rainbow nation appears to be contested, however, by the rhetoric of the state, NGOs, the media, and the ever-growing heritage and cultural tourism industry, which emphasises the reconstruction of postcolonial identities around notions of a diversity of (ethnic) “cultures”, including invocations of masculinised ethnicity, e.g., during Zuma’s rape trial in 2006. Numerous case studies have shown, however, the emergence of alternative, cross-cutting articulations of cultural identities on-the-ground, particularly in popular youth culture(s), including those involving young people from the social margins of South African society (Dolby 2001, Salo 2003, Nuttall 2009, Becker & Dastile 2008, Badsha 2003, Becker 2010). Assuming that cultural identities and citizenship are always in the making, the project asks: How do public invocations of cultural heritage, difference, indigeneity and traditionality affect the contested reconfigurations of what it means to be South African? The innovative feature of this project is twofold: (a) the attention paid to the question, how heritage-based and alternative, hybridized cultural forms intersect in the social imaginary of citizenship in contemporary South Africa. Do they compete or overlap, or do they join together in the appreciation of what is culturally “truthful” and perceived as authentic? (b) The focus on authentication (the contested processes of framing cultural forms as “true”, and beyond questioning) is novel. Performances seem particularly well-suited sites to investigate the aesthetic strategies (styles) that are being employed to authorize authenticity in contestations over gendered and embodied identity and citizenship.

Literature review

This project links to academic debates, which critically engage notions of performance, belonging and citizenship in postcolonial societies, and across the globe. (e.g., for Great Britain: Werbner 1996) African studies scholars and particularly anthropologists have long
paid attention to social drama and performance in African societies (Gluckman 1940; Turner 1974, 1986); studies directly relevant to this research have focused on cultural festivals and masquerades (e.g., Lentz 2001, Van Binsbergen 1994, Apter 2005, Cohen 1993) and their significance for making ethnicsities in particular, along with the seminal studies of performance in touristic settings (MacCannell 1993); or they have made use of the concept of performance to analyse rituals. (e.g. Kratz 1994) In South Africa, earlier studies of performance and citizenship were linked to the critical appraisal of the Apartheid regime’s politics of ethnic difference and engaged with questions of culture and legitimacy, which was particularly clear in Gunner’s (1994) edited volume on Politics and Performance (also see Kruger 1999). Sharp and Boonzaier (1994) demonstrated the performance of ethnicity in claims against the State. These seminal works indicated the shift from the crisis of (political) legitimacy to the emerging “crisis of identity” (Gunner 1994: 1) on the cusp of the post-apartheid era. The performance of identity became central in much of the work in the 1990s (e.g., Haupt 2004; James 1994, 1995) and continues as a dominant theme, particularly in postgraduate student research. (e.g., Dastile 2005, Fransman 2005; Van Heerden 2009)

**Towards an innovative analytical approach to belonging and citizenship: From identity to aesthetics and the politics of authentication:**

This project, however, takes as its departing point critical appraisals of the concept of “identity” as the underlying notion of belonging, which has come under much scrutiny, despite – and because – of its global and South African currency in politics, culture, and development. (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; 2009) Attempts to rethink identity as an analytical category have emphasized hybridity and creolization (Bhabha 1994, Hannerz 1987/1997; for South Africa: Nuttal and Michael 2000) Despite these attempts, the usefulness of the identity concept has become questionable, particularly because of its “unfortunate tendency to fix what is in constant flux” (Geschiere 2009: 31; also see Brubaker & Cooper 2000, Handler 1994). The fixity inherent in the identity concept also masks social inequality. This is particularly critical for this project, which places special emphasis on marginal sections of the South African population in the Western Cape (Becker 2008; Salo 2009). The project will therefore use the term “identity” not as an analytical category but as a category of practice (Brubaker & Cooper 2000). That is, it pays attention to the meanings developed by social actors, as distinguished from the categories used by analysts; thus critically following appropriated conventions in the international and national social sciences and humanities concerning the practice of identifications in the contemporary world order. (Meyer and Geschiere 1999; Baumann 1999)

The constructed nature of the social fabrications that we continue to call “identities” has become a generally accepted premise in the social sciences and humanities. The distinctive approach to this project, however, draws on innovative theorising, which takes up the challenges to constructivism whilst retaining the valuable insights of constructivist approaches, i.e., to acknowledge the reality of social phenomena without denying their constructed and mediated character (Latour 2005). The key notion here is authenticity. While in itself a social and cultural construction, it is regularly accompanied by processes of authentication, in which people have at their disposal resources and techniques, which they use to realize an authentically felt grounding to the social and cultural constructions that make up their lives. (Lindholm 2008) The project’s approach thus focuses analytically on the performative experience of “being authentic” without disallowing an account of human effort to take things to be “true”. Drawing on a related international comparative project under the leadership of the Dutch partner to this project this project “calls attention to the question how constructions, even though admittedly ‘in the making’, are fashioned in such a way that they can be experienced as persuasively ‘authentic’ and ‘real’, that is how mediated cultural forms
operate through processes of authentication.” (Meyer et.al. 2008; also see Chidester 2005) Meyer’s work (2009) emphasises the significance of aesthetics as sensorial and embodied. Some South African scholarship has also drawn on the notion of aesthetics in analyzing performance and belonging, particularly Nuttall (2004; 2009) who argues that self-styling is central to explorations of how South Africans negotiate their hybridized cultural landscape (also see Lewis 2010). For the most part, however, aesthetics, the senses, and embodiment have thus far not featured much in South African studies of performance and citizenship (but see Lewis 2009), which have up until now focused more on their social meaning than on mediated forms and the participants’ sensorial and embodied experience.

Research methodology

This project will be distinctive in focusing on aesthetics, the senses and embodiment in the study of performance, belonging and citizenship, while innovatively paying attention to the juncture of heritage-based and alternative, hybridized cultural forms. The research design builds on these perspectives. The project will produce comparative data, to be gained from four case studies on the connections between performance, the politics of authentication and cultural citizenship in contemporary South Africa. All case studies will be conducted in the Western Cape metropolitan area because Cape Town and its environs, due to its specific history and demographics are of particular interest with regard to cultural performance and citizenship.

The case studies thus allow for a sharply focused comparative research project on different settings within Greater Cape Town. The research will highlight similarities and differences in the ways, people, who are different in terms of social denominators, such as age, gender, social class, cultural and geographical, perform, and thereby produce the aesthetics of ‘the authentic’ in different settings. The project will demonstrate the connections between performance, the senses, and gendered embodiment in the reconfiguration of citizenship through the

a) Performance in institutions of public culture, amongst them, festivals, theatre, and local heritage day celebrations; and the

b) Performance in the rituals of the everyday (including funerals, religion, and performative self-styling of the body)

The methodology of a project, which pays attention to on-the-ground sensational and performative aspects of the reconfiguration of citizenship will design appropriate methods, which emphasise innovative qualitative in-depth research. The primary research methods will thus be of an ethnographic nature, including participant observation and other forms of in-depth qualitative data collection, with innovative reference to sight, sound, smell, texture, taste (Stoller 1989; Dlamini 2009), including sensual appropriations (in addition to more conventional ‘textual readings’) of material culture (food, clothing, etcetera), genres of cultural expression (music, visual, drama, amongst them), and the flexible relationships between people involved in settings of performance.

The primary data collection for this project will be done through 4 case studies (see appendix), to be conducted by MA and PhD students under the supervision of the project leaders and senior researchers. The annual project workshops (see workplan) will be crucial for data analysis. The South African researchers and students will meet in regular seminars for continuous analysis, including also the discussion of relevant academic literature. The
data analysis will further be supported through ongoing consultation with the stakeholders as well as with academics involved in commensurate projects, including, among others, David Chidester and Duane Jethro (UCT; partners to the Dutch NWO Cultural Dynamics research programme; Meyer et.al. 2008), Carolyn Hamilton (UCT; Public Culture and Archives NRF Chair), and VU University Amsterdam academics, involved in the SAVUSA scheme for collaboration with South Africa.

**Expected outcomes:**

The project will result in a significantly enhanced understanding of how the reconfiguration of citizenship works through apparent contestations in contemporary South Africa. It will demonstrate, particularly, how heritage-based and alternative, hybridized cultural forms intersect in the social imaginary of citizenship. Through its innovative emphasis on performance, aesthetics and authentication, it will make a substantial contribution to national and international scholarship on belonging and citizenship in South Africa, and beyond.

The project will increase interdisciplinary collaboration among academics and postgraduate students at UWC (Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, as well as, among others, History and Sociology), and between UWC and other South African academic institutions. The project is further envisaged to build the foundation for a long-term collaboration between UWC and VU University Amsterdam under the auspices of the Dutch-SAVUSA collaboration. Beyond its academic outputs, the project will contribute to building connections between the academy and its stakeholders, including Government and institutions and cultural activists in socially marginal areas, particularly in the urban and peri-urban Western Cape. Through this initiative, the project will support the development of cultural activities in socially marginal areas, and thus impact positively on social development.

Expected academic outputs include:
- final report
- 3 MA theses
- 1 PhD dissertation
- 3 Honours research projects (through support for Honours students as research assistants)
- 1 international colloquium (in connection with final workshop)
- 1 national seminar (in connection with intermediate workshop)
- 1 edited volume (peer-reviewed)
- papers in accredited journals
- guest lectures by the Dutch project leader

Outputs directed at, and developed in collaboration with stakeholders outside the academy will be substantial. (for details see Dissemination strategy)

**Dissemination strategy/engagement with multiple publics**

A multi-pronged strategy has been designed to disseminate the findings of this project within the academy, among the governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, the research communities, and the general public. The dissemination strategy will target primarily South Africa, and particularly the Western Cape; it will, however, also direct initiatives to the Netherlands since the issues of authenticity, belonging and citizenship addressed by the project are of concern there, too. (see the comparative project on *Heritage Dynamics*:
Politics of Authentication and Aesthetics in Brazil, Ghana, South Africa and the Netherlands, directed by the Dutch partner; Meyer et.al. 2008)

In South Africa the dissemination strategy includes:
- within the academy:
  - seminar and colloquium
  - publications (peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and book publication; the book publication will be co-published by a South African academic publisher; funding will be sought through SAVUSA)
- stakeholders:
  - government/policy makers: ongoing consultations and briefings with Department of Arts & Culture and SAHRA (South African Heritage Resources Agency); invitations to DAC and SAHRA to address project-organised public lectures on project-relevant matters
  - non-governmental institutions: ongoing consultations and briefings; invitations to key representatives (e.g., playwright/activist Fatima Dike of Siyasanga) to participate in and address project workshops, seminars and colloquium
- research communities: feedback presentations on the findings of the case studies
- general public: through mass media, including newspaper articles in local and national newspapers; appearance on radio/TV programmes; production of feature programme with the Cape Town-based Radio Workshop; project website

In the Netherlands the dissemination strategy includes:
- within the academy: researchers’ presentations during conferences and colloquia; guest lectures by the South African project leader (during project visits to the Netherlands)
- general public: appearance by the Dutch and South African project leaders, and South African researchers on radio/TV programmes (during project visits to the Netherlands).

Relevance for development/policy relevance

This project is aimed at enhancing the understanding of how the reconfiguration of citizenship works in contemporary South Africa. It is particularly relevant to social development in South Africa because it pays special attention to the question how heritage-based and alternative, hybridized cultural forms intersect in the social imaginary of citizenship in contemporary South Africa. As a prerequisite to the development of social cohesion, it is indispensable to understand the dynamics of performance and embodied and sensorial politics of belonging in addressing questions of diversity. Resurgent xenophobic violence in service delivery protests and common references to ‘tradition’ in aggressive acts to reinforce gendered authority at township taxi ranks, etc., suggest that this may be particularly significant with regard to sections of the population that are particularly deprived in material terms.

The research findings will be significant for policies to develop South African culture in order to ensure social cohesion, as envisaged by the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC). As stated by DAC Minister Lulu Xingwana in the budget vote (19 June 2009) and during the National Consultative Workshop on Intangible Cultural Heritage Policy (2 December 2009), social practices are a crucial part of intangible heritage, which is significant to instil a deeper consciousness of what it means to be South African. The DAC, therefore, will be the project’s main stakeholder and will be consulted throughout (workshops, briefings, etc.). Crucial non-
governmental cultural and educational Western Cape-based stakeholders include the Guga S'thebe Arts & Culture Centre, the Siyasanga repertory theatre company, as well as the independent LEAP schools because of their pioneering life skills programmes for township secondary school learners.

**Working bibliography:**


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