



## Call for concepts and participants

### ***Connecting social movements: A dialogue for activists and researchers in East and Southern Africa***

**4-5 April 2019**

Venue: Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi

#### **Overview**

Since 2010 scholars of social movements have been discussing a 'global protest wave'. Yet the dominant focus of analysis has been predominantly orientated towards the Global North. To the extent that prominent narratives reach the African continent, they often focus on the spectacular cases of Egypt and Tunisia, while simultaneously abstracting them from their context on the African continent. Sub-Saharan Africa is rarely included in the so-called narrative of popular resistance despite the ongoing levels of struggle.

That the struggle of the sub-Saharan African working class is largely excluded from a discussion of the global protest wave highlights the dominant modes of global academic and popular forms of knowledge production. Even where scholarship does exist it is often conducted by scholars not located within the continent who are often at a distance from day-to-day struggles as they unfold on the ground. Furthermore, such scholarship is often at a distance from the practical and theoretical concerns for activists.

The Centre for Social Change (University of Johannesburg), the Institute for Development Studies (University of Nairobi) and the African Leadership Centre will host a 2-day workshop intended to connect scholars and activists from East and Southern Africa. The workshop will provide a forum for activists and researchers to exchange knowledge and perspectives about social movement struggles in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

It is hoped that the workshop will lay the foundations for an ongoing research network that can create an essential role in co-producing emancipatory knowledge for and with social movements as well producing scholarship that will contribute to Africa's marginalisation from the field of social movement studies.

We invite participants and speakers to engage with the following themes:

- 1. The history and trajectories of social movements in East and Southern Africa.**  
What are the specific histories and trajectories of social movements in different national contexts? What are the continuities and discontinuities between the past and present? How have working class movements responded to economic, social and political crises? What strategy and tactics have social movements used over time?



## **2. The role of NGOs.**

Can NGOs be social movements? What is the relationship between social movements and NGOs? Are NGOs necessary for social change?

## **3. Building resistance.**

How do movements build and sustain resistance? Can social movements be self-reliant? What strategies and tactics are used to build resistance? How are solidarities built between different sections of society: the middle class, students and working class?

## **4. Concepts, theories and political ideologies.**

Is social movement theory appropriate to the African context? Is social movement theory useful? What, if any, is the relationship between the theory of scholars and of activists? How are social movements shaping political ideologies?

## **5. The role of research and researchers in movements.**

What can scholars do to support and contribute to social movement struggles? Can academics produce movement-relevant theory? What should the relationship be between scholars and activists?

### **How to apply**

Submit a proposal to [crunciman@uj.ac.za](mailto:crunciman@uj.ac.za)

Provide a short paragraph (no more than 700 words) outlining your vision of the key question(s) or themes you want to engage with, and specifying your past, current and future activist and/or research in the area. **The deadline for submission is on 12 March 2019.**

Participants will be selected on the basis of relevance, fit with other proposals to ensure meaningful discussion, and experience in the area by the workshop organisers. Preference will be given to participants living and working in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa or Zimbabwe. Selected participants will be asked to prepare notes and a presentation to kickstart each of the sessions.

### **Travel and accommodation**

There is a limited amount of funds for travel and accommodation. All invited participants who live outside of Nairobi will be accommodated by the organisers. Funds will also be available for the reimbursement of reasonable travel costs for those traveling from outside Nairobi.

### **Questions**

Any queries about the workshop should be directed towards Professor Carin Runciman ([crunciman@uj.ac.za](mailto:crunciman@uj.ac.za)) and Mr Njuki Githethwa ([njukig@yahoo.com](mailto:njukig@yahoo.com))