

NEWSLETTER OF  
THE STELLENBOSCH  
INSTITUTE FOR  
ADVANCED STUDY



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*Cover: Interior, Wallenberg Research Centre*

*Above: Wallenberg Research Centre Marais Street entrance*

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4 It is a place where top researchers and intellectual leaders are provided a creative space for the mind and are encouraged to find innovative and sustainable solutions to issues facing the world and, in particular, the country and the continent of Africa. STIAS provides the opportunity for high-level research and intellectual development in an international context.

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# Preface

Already the end of the first semester of 2023 – and those six months have flown in a flurry of twice-weekly fellows' seminars, book launches, workshops and other meetings. We started in over 30-degree heat celebrating our annual harvest in February and ended in icy Cape of Storms winter weather while enjoying the smooth jazz stylings of Darius Brubeck.

The year started on a very sad note for the institution with the death of STIAS's long-term (and only) Chairperson of the Board of Director's Desmond Smith – a true friend, guiding force and stalwart in STIAS's early years and ongoing success. We reflect more on his contribution in this issue.

As usual, we also highlight some of the activities of the seminars – including the public lectures, updates on news from some of our fellows and the celebrations of two book launches – of Jonathan Kingdon's latest book *Origin Africa: Safaris in Deep Time* and of Darius and Cathy Brubeck's *Playing the Changes: Jazz at an African University and On the Road*.

For our profile interviews we simultaneously delve into the past and look towards the future with interviews with Christopher Fuchs and Elina Amadhila. Fuchs first came to STIAS as a fellow in 2012 and credits the discussions and debates held at STIAS as accounting for some of the breakthrough moments in the development of the field of QBism. Amadhila is one of our rising stars – she is part of the fourth Iso Lomso cohort and recently completed her final residency at STIAS. She shares more about her life, the experience of being an Iso Lomso fellow and her hopes for the future.

In the second half of the year, we will immediately plunge deep into the final planning for the second Nobel in Africa Symposium on *Chemistry: Tuberculosis and Antibiotic Resistance – From Basic Drug Discovery to Clinic* to be held from 23 to 27 October 2023. This is already shaping up to be an important event with an interesting programme and fascinating array of local and international speakers and participants. Of course, it's a topic of huge significance to the African region and we aim to do it justice. [α](#)

Edward K. Kirumira, Director of STIAS







# A man of few words but infinite wisdom

**“His passing is a personal loss to everybody at STIAS,” said STIAS Founding Director Bernard Lategan. “We hope that what he meant to others will be a source of comfort and encouragement for his family and friends.”**

**In January STIAS lost one of its stalwart leaders – Board of Directors’ Chairperson, Desmond Kent Smith. Appointed in 2000, Smith was the first STIAS Board Chairperson and was instrumental in the establishment of the institute as well as in fostering a productive relationship between STIAS and Stellenbosch University, and with the broader public, locally and internationally.**

**“Desmond always saw STIAS as a space that brings people and entities together and thus a catalyst in finding solutions to global challenges.”**

Smith was born in Gqeberha on 21 June 1947. He matriculated at Indwe High School, graduated from Stellenbosch University with a BSc (*cum laude*) in Mathematics and Applied Mathematics in 1967 and in 1968 began reading for his fellowship at the Institute of Actuaries in London. In 1968 he joined Sanlam of which he later became Managing Director and Chairperson of the Sanlam Group leading the group through an extensive transformation and demutualisation process in the 1990s. He was involved in the Actuarial Society of South Africa in the 1970s and became its President in 1996. In 2011 he became the first African to be elected President of the International Actuarial Association. Smith was the Chairperson of the Council of Stellenbosch University and served on several Boards in the private sector.

He is survived by his wife Estelle, daughter Gillian and son Brendan.

At a memorial service held on Stellenbosch University campus after Smith’s death, STIAS Director Edward K. Kirumira said: “More than 20 years ago a conversation between Desmond, Bernard Lategan and Dr Peter Wallenberg Senior laid the basis for the formation of STIAS – a creative space for the mind, an academic space for free thought and the exchange of knowledge. It took a conversation with Desmond, and I, for one, always looked forward to those conversations. He had an interesting habit of calling me at 10 o’clock at night for a conversation and you had to take that conversation very seriously.”

“He was a non-assuming but firm chairperson,” he continued. “He will be missed greatly for his rare ability to bring into mutually beneficial conversation the academic world and the private and public sectors, and for nurturing STIAS’ relationship with its partners and funders.”

“Desmond had many sterling qualities as a leader and person,” said Lategan. “From the perspective of STIAS, I’d like to mention just three – starting with trust. When we approached him to be the chair of STIAS his first question was ‘Can’t you get someone better?’ But once we had convinced him there was no one as suitable as he, he never looked back. He soon had the trust of everybody at STIAS. He also had the trust of the university – where as former chair of the council – he knew all the intricacies and pressures of the academic world. He also won the trust of the Wallenberg Foundations. He navigated the triangle of STIAS, university and sponsors with tact and skill, helping to bring the international recognition that STIAS now enjoys.”

“The second is his style of leadership. Desmond was chair of numerous institutions in very different environments but what stood out is what I would call a minimalistic style of leadership. A man of few words, cool and collected, and often in the background. In our environment he was a wise guiding force. He was very aware of the folly of over reaction and always brought a wise perspective – carefully considering all the factors and forces at play. He also understood that great chairs create the conditions that make it possible for other people to shine.”

“The last is friendship. His genuine interest in and care for people inevitably led to enduring friendships. He knew everybody at STIAS – no matter their position or function – he was aware of everyone. We honour him for that. His friendship was personal – a source of encouragement and support.”

“Desmond always saw STIAS as a space that brings people and entities together and thus a catalyst in finding solutions to global challenges,” added Kirumira. “He emphasised STIAS’s autonomy and, at the same time, emphasised that the institute draws energy from and gives energy to the greater South African, continental and global scholarly environment.”

“He saw the success of others as his own success. I will miss him for that,” said Kirumira. “Go well, Desmond. We celebrate your life of selfless service and the opportunity to have been guided by you.” α

# If the laws of physics won't allow it, the laws of physics must be wrong

**“I was a huge fan of science fiction, particularly of *Star Trek*, the original series from the 1960s. In my middle school years – when I was about 11 or 12 – I thought travelling to the stars was the best thing possible: We should figure out how to do it. I started reading everything I could about how to build a spaceship that would get us to the stars and bring us back home to fanfare. In doing so I learned all sorts of fascinating things, like Einstein's theory of relativity, about black holes, and so on.”**

**“But the key thing I learned was that if Einstein was right, we'll never get to the stars because we can't travel faster than light. The nearest star is four light years away: Even if we could travel on a light-ray it would take us eight years to get there and back! So what I really wanted, I learned physics wouldn't allow.”**

**“Quantum mechanics is a tool for helping us navigate a participatory world – one that is not fully pre-existent out there but is shaped and moulded by our actions.”**

“I remember telling a friend: ‘If the laws of physics won't allow it, the laws of physics must be wrong.’ I genuinely believed that the laws of physics had to be wrong if they wouldn't allow us to be in an episode of *Star Trek*.”

This started the quest that led renowned physicist Christopher Fuchs, Professor of Physics at the University of Massachusetts Boston and STIAS Fellow, to try to understand one of the deepest mysteries in physics: The very meaning of quantum theory. The result, developed with Rüdiger Schack and David Mermin (also STIAS Fellows), is now one of the most prominent approaches to the interpretation of quantum mechanics – QBism – an interpretation that takes an agent's actions and experiences as the central concerns of the theory.

QBism (originally short for Quantum Bayesianism, but now somewhat tongue-in-cheek Quantum Bettabilitarianism) gives human concerns an essential place in quantum theory. It says that every quantum measurement is an agent's action upon the world, resulting in the creation of something new. It thus implies that the world does not evolve according to an objective

mechanism, as an agent's actions will be determined in part by their personal judgments.

“When you make a measurement – for example on a subatomic particle or a quantum computer – the process of measurement participates (and this is an important word, participates) in bringing about the actual value. We are accustomed to thinking that accurate measurements only reveal what is already there. For instance, I'd like to know how wide this desk is, so I pick up a ruler and find it's exactly one metre. The common perception is that I found it was one metre because it was one metre in actual fact. But in the quantum mechanical world things don't have pre-existing properties like length – the thing obtains a value for me when I make the effort to measure it.”

“One QBist slogan is that quantum mechanics is more about us than it is about it,” said Fuchs. “Quantum mechanics is a tool for helping us navigate a participatory world – one that is not fully pre-existent out there but is shaped and moulded by our actions. That's what the maths of quantum mechanics is about – how to make better decisions about actions to take in a malleable world.”

## Black holes to QBism

Fuchs's early readings about black holes led him to the work of theoretical physicist John Archibald Wheeler who coined the term black hole. “At a late stage of his life Wheeler had turned his interest towards quantum mechanics and was the person who introduced the idea that quantum mechanics teaches us that this is a participatory universe. While still in high school I visited his office – he wasn't there – but I was introduced to his slogan, ‘The only law of physics is that there are no laws’. The very idea was a dream come true for me. That somebody serious was saying that the only law of physics is that there are no laws intrigued me immensely. That was the start.”

By the time Fuchs went to graduate school (at the University of New Mexico) the field of quantum computing and quantum information had come to prominence largely due to Wheeler's influence.

“He told his students to try to find an information theoretic understanding of quantum mechanics. I took that seriously. With the assistance of the field of quantum computing I could talk about these things without being laughed at too much – I'm still laughed at, but not too much.”

But laughter is probably very far from most people's minds as Fuchs's very distinguished career has recently led to another major milestone – substantial grants from the John Templeton Foundation and the US National Science Foundation totalling nearly \$3 million.

The Templeton grant is for a consortium, including institutions in the US, United Kingdom, Sweden,





Denmark, France, Canada and Brazil. The participants include physicists, philosophers and mathematicians. “All of us are concerned with the question of what can be meant by metrology, the science of accurate measurement, given the foundational mysteries of quantum mechanics I described. The grant is about understanding that. We have a bureau in the US called the National Institute of Standards & Technology – they calibrate all the scales and clocks. To make sure this works they make sure that all clocks have the same rhythm, but in quantum mechanics accepting that they have the same rhythm takes a quantum measurement. The rhythm comes about because someone is looking. It’s a bit of a paradox given what I said about the participatory nature of the universe, and we managed to persuade the Templeton Foundation that this is an interesting question.”

The National Science Foundation grant is devoted to the mathematics of this idea and whether it is of any value for understanding quantum computing. “Quantum computing is a big business in the US now,” said Fuchs. “Not that anyone has built a quantum computer of any value yet, but the belief is that in 15 or 20 years we’ll be able to do some amazing things with quantum-mechanical computers that we can’t do with present-day computers. This is only a tiny drop of the billions of funding in this area.”

*Below: Some of the attendees of the 2017 workshop on participatory realism held at STIAS*

## Breakthrough moments

Fuchs credits the time he and his colleagues spent as fellows of STIAS as crucially important to the development of these ideas.

“My initial link was through STIAS’s former director Hendrik Geyer,” he explained. “As a professor of theoretical physics at Stellenbosch University he had a master’s student who was exploring quantum information theory – my specialty. Hendrik contacted me because he wanted an external advisor for the student, and he had read some of my papers. That’s how our relationship began.”

“About eight years passed and Hendrik, by then Director of STIAS, contacted me again to ask whether I’d be interested in designing a six-week fellows’ programme on a subject of my choice. I visited STIAS for the first time in 2010 to see what the place was like, found that it was wonderful and not a scam (laughing), and organised my first programme in 2012. That was ground-breaking.”

The initial group of six included Rüdiger Schack and David Mermin.

“We recruited David Mermin to come. He is a famous physicist who had written columns for *Physics Today* for years about the quantum mysteries and whose book





with Ashcroft *Solid State Physics* is a standard textbook in the field. He and I had been in dialogue for several years, but he had never fully accepted our ideas on QBism. We managed to get him to come nonetheless. After three weeks of discussion there was a fateful day when David came to my office door and said: 'I have an announcement to make'. After a pregnant pause, he said, 'I believe it. I believe QBism'. He said he had had an epiphany. That was the most wonderful thing to come from that programme."

"David's fame helped put QBism on the map. He wrote an article for *Nature* in 2014 titled – QBism puts the scientist back into science. This brought a lot of attention to QBism and I think is partially responsible for the current grants. It certainly legitimised QBism to the point of being able to get such a large grant."

Fuchs made a total of six visits to STIAS and in 2017 he and Schack organised a workshop on "participatory realism" including about 20 participants.

"The debate was whether it was a coherent notion that something as insignificant as people – us – actually have the ability to participate in making reality what it is."

He explained that the concept has faced resistance from some philosophers.

"Most philosophers of physics hate QBism because it feels to them like an anti-Copernican move. We learned from Copernicus that the earth is not the centre of the universe, and a large part of science's success came from explicitly eliminating as many humanly, subjective elements as possible. We are insignificant, so the reasoning goes: The laws of physics cannot be about us, they have to be about something grander than us. To start speaking in the opposite way appears to philosophers as posing a real danger of returning to some kind of primitive or religious understanding of things."

But not all philosophers. Followers of phenomenology, a philosophy established in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Edmund Husserl and developed further by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, have become "very intrigued by the connections between QBism and phenomenology and started writing about it. This year there will be an edited volume on QBism and phenomenology published by Routledge. In the introduction to that volume, the editors write, "The question is not whether QBists and phenomenologists should attempt to join forces, but what has taken us so long?"

Looking forward, Fuchs highlighted the need to further develop these connections – to better understand what it means for our world to be a participatory one – and explore whether we have been analysing various problems in physics in the right way. "The Templeton grant is devoted to that," he explained. "Could this way of thinking actually impact how people do things in the standards business – weights and measures and all that? Have we



Above (l-r): David Mermin, Rüdiger Schack and Christopher Fuchs at STIAS in 2012

been thinking about it in the right way? Can a new way of thinking allow us to do things we couldn't do before – do things to higher precision, for instance?"

"I'd love to get more of the community involved and maybe one day come back to STIAS and have a big meeting on it – bringing phenomenologists, metrologists and quantum information science people together."

"My personal ambition is to get QBism discussed more widely and see it have an impact on our worldview. I'd like to see it become part of the physics curriculum and make a difference to workaday physicists," he concluded. "One can't get more personal than wanting to understand one's place in the universe. I think this is a methodology for exploring that question. I'd like to know the answer before I die; I'd like to have a better grasp of 'what makes the universe go' before my time is up." α

**"I'd love to get more of the community involved and maybe one day come back to STIAS and have a big meeting on it – bringing phenomenologists, metrologists and quantum information science people together."**







# “The world is my stage – I want to take advantage of all the opportunities”

**“I always say research chose me, I didn’t choose it,” said Elina Amadhila. “But I’m a very curious person. I see the world as full of opportunities and try to grab as many as I can. And if I don’t get them, I still see myself as a winner because I tried. You always gain from the experience.”**

**Amadhila is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Management Sciences at the University of Namibia and has just completed the final residency of her Iso Lomso fellowship at STIAS. Her project looks at government agricultural finance interventions as instruments for social protection in developing economies and her most recent emphasis is on the role of social protection for women in agriculture in Namibia.**

But she describes herself as a very interdisciplinary researcher who doesn’t like to be confined too narrowly. “A lot of my work is focused on development. I don’t narrow myself to one field. I try to look at anything that makes a contribution to existing knowledge and can inform policy – especially development policies. I try to write about things that can make a difference on the ground and to the future. I’ll work on anything that has the potential to have an impact.”

“For example, I recently wrote on education because I teach and there are issues I relate to. I spoke to my students to get their views on what they regard as good teaching and published a paper on conceptions of good teaching in higher education institutions. That doesn’t require me to have a degree in education. I practice it every day.”

## Growing up in Namibia

One of four sisters and a twin, Amadhila was born in Ongwediva in the northern part of Namibia.

“Namibia is a very small country in terms of population (only 2.6 million) but very big in land size. I liked growing up there. Namibia has a turbulent past but since independence in 1990 it’s been very peaceful and stable. When I visit some other countries I appreciate my country more,” she said. “However, the opportunities there are quite limited. For example – we only have two public and one private university. Of course, there is progress and the government is doing its best to provide the basics like free school education for those who need it but there is still a lot more to improve in terms of access to assets such as land.”

Amadhila’s father worked for NAMDEB, a diamond-mining exploration company in Oranjemund in the South of Namibia. “We would visit him there as children. Later he was a sales rep for a private company. My mother did a lot of things in the informal sector to earn an income. She eventually got a job as a cleaner at a hospital and retired as a qualified paramedic.”

“They are both retired now but my mother refuses to sit at home – she still works, but informally.”

She described her siblings as all “doing well for themselves and very independent. My parents really pushed us – especially regarding education, education and education.”

## Catching the research bug

On finishing high school, Amadhila moved to the capital city Windhoek and in 2009 completed a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration at the University of Namibia, majoring in Human Resources and Marketing.

After graduating she initially struggled to find her way until she became involved in a multi-country, European Union-funded research project which focused on access to healthcare services for people with disabilities. “I was working with researchers from South Africa (including Prof. Leslie Swartz of the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University), Malawi, Sudan and Norway.

“That’s how I got into research. Although the topic wasn’t specific to my background, I grabbed the opportunity in front of me.”

The project also allowed her to complete a master’s and to start contributing to her academic publication record. “It made me realise this was what I wanted to do.”

**“I try to write about things that can make a difference on the ground and to the future. I’ll work on anything that has the potential to have an impact.”**



*Above: STIAS Iso Lomso Fellow Elina Amadhila during her seminar on 25 March 2021*

After the project ended, she got a job in HR administration at the University of Namibia. “But I immediately started to look for scholarships to allow me to study further. Luckily, I came across a call from Stellenbosch University for scholarships for people wanting to do a PhD in the Faculty of Economics and Management Science. I applied and got it. So I resigned, packed my bags and moved to Stellenbosch in 2014.”

After completing her PhD, she returned to Namibia and initially got a job at the private university, followed by a permanent position at the University of Namibia where she started as a lecturer in 2018 and was promoted two years ago to Senior Lecturer. “Definitely helped by my Iso Lomso fellowship,” she said.

“The expectation back home is that if you have a PhD, you teach at a university. But teaching, of course, doesn’t allow much time for doing research so I kept looking for more opportunities.”

“I knew about STIAS from being in Stellenbosch but didn’t really understand who goes to STIAS,” she continued. “By googling I came across the Iso Lomso applications and decided to try. I applied, got it and here I am!”

“I think I have always persevered,” she said. “Looked for opportunities. I don’t limit myself.”

Her interest in agriculture came from a chance conversation with a friend who is also an academic which alerted her to the fact that there aren’t many researchers focusing on agriculture in Namibia. “Although the country depends heavily on agriculture, we don’t study it. That was the beginning of my research focused on agricultural finance for my PhD which was then expanded upon in my Iso Lomso fellowship.”

## Shy but determined

Amadhila describes herself as shy, an introvert and loner, who is very happy at home with a book and reality TV. “Growing up with a twin meant I always had a friend. We were always together. Maybe that’s why I’m not so good at making lots of friends,” she laughed.

But she also loves travelling and thoroughly enjoyed spending her second STIAS residency at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin in 2022. “I like to explore and experience different countries and cultures”. She also made time for her other hobby – singing – by joining the WiKo choir in Berlin. “I’ve always been in choirs,” she said.

STIAS and the time in Berlin helped to expand her horizons and thinking regarding her future. “I see myself working for an international organisation – like the United Nations or the Food and Agriculture Organization. Most of the time academic research is not read by decision makers. I think the type of research I do needs to be heard on an international platform. I’d like to be a voice on some of these topics at an international level.”

Amadhila has recently been selected as a member of the Global Young Academy. The Academy has 200 members selected for their scientific excellence and commitment to engage with society, and aims to elevate the voice of young scientists in evidence-informed, inclusive, global, regional and national decision making. (Read more at: <https://globalyoungacademy.net>).

“The Iso Lomso fellowship has really opened my eyes,” she said. “The world is my stage. I know I have a lot more to contribute. The end of Iso Lomso is the beginning of me taking on much bigger opportunities.”

“The past three years have truly unleashed my potential. It’s been a journey filled with wonder, growth and connections. I was able to embrace brilliance. These were extraordinary years I will never forget. They have empowered me and I think I have helped to empower those around me by sharing what I’ve learnt.”

Read about the workshop Amadhila held whilst at STIAS this year at: [www.sun.ac.za/english/Lists/news/DispForm.aspx?ID=10009](http://www.sun.ac.za/english/Lists/news/DispForm.aspx?ID=10009) α.



# NEWS ROUNDUP

## STIAS Public Lecture Series first semester 2023

### Human processes – John Dupré

It's common to think about the world as containing things, sometimes assembled into bigger things, all obeying a set of physical laws. Dupré proposes a wholly different worldview. Think instead of a lawless world of chaotic and entangled process. In this chaos eddies emerge, with the ability to channel some of the energy in the surrounding chaos into the maintenance of pattern or order. Organisms are a prime example of such processes, and humans, as organisms, should also be understood as processes.

Another key process in biology is the lineage or species. Lineages have evolved to become increasingly coherent processes, notably through sexual reproduction and sociality. Humans are also part of such a process, stretching back through the millennia, the lineage out of which they evolved. The human species has evolved a unique kind of cooperation, also reflecting unique features of the human organism.

In this lecture Dupré described these two kinds of process, the organism and the lineage, which interact with one another in a process of mutual stabilisation. He illustrated

the value of this perspective on human life, by showing how it provides insight into the ways we distinguish kinds among humans, including kinds sometimes thought to be biological, notably race and gender, but also indisputably cultural kinds, such as nation, tribe or religion.

Dupré is Professor of the Philosophy of Science at the University of Exeter, where he was the founding Director of Egenis, the Centre for the Study of Life Sciences. He specialises in the philosophy of biology. His publications include: *The Disorder of Things* (1993); *Human Nature and the Limits of Science* (2001); *Humans and Other Animals* (2002); *Darwin's Legacy* (2003); *Processes of Life* (2012); and, *The Metaphysics of Biology* (2022). The main focus of his research for the last 15 years has been developing a process metaphysics of life, which resulted in his 2018 anthology, edited with Daniel Nicholson, *Everything Flows: Towards a Processual Philosophy of Biology*. Dupré is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Past President of the Philosophy of Science Association.

Dupré used his time at STIAS to prepare a series of six invited lectures at the University of Edinburgh during May as part of the prestigious Gifford Lectures programme.

Read more at: [Talking things, processes, organisms, species, lineages, gender, race and culture – STIAS Public lecture by John Dupré – Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study](#)

Below: STIAS Fellow John Dupré during his public lecture on 23 February 2023





Above: The cover of Braverman's book, *Settling Nature: The Conservation Regime in Palestine-Israel*

Below: STIAS Fellow Irus Braverman during her public lecture on 16 March 2023

## Settling nature: The conservation regime in Palestine-Israel – Irus Braverman

In her talk, Irus Braverman drew on more than a decade of ethnographic work in Palestine-Israel to suggest that nature management is much more central to settler colonial regimes than is commonly recognised. Her research documents, specifically, how the administration of nature advances the Zionist project of Jewish settlement and the corresponding dispossession of non-Jews from this space. This research is structured around two main lines of inquiry: on the one hand, it examines the sovereign control of land through its designation by the settler state as a national park or nature reserve; and, on the other hand, it explores the settler state's biopolitical protection of wild organisms, which often exceeds the boundaries of the protected territories. This dual-protection scheme lies at the heart of the extensive, yet overlooked, conservation regime in Palestine-Israel.

The territorial reach of Israel's conservation regime is remarkable: to date, nearly 25 per cent of the country's total land mass is designated as a park or reserve. Alongside the powerful protection of territory, Israel deploys wildlife for its ecological warfare. Recruited to the front lines are fallow deer, gazelles, wild asses, griffon

vultures, pine trees, and cows – on the Israeli side – against goats, camels, olive trees, hybrid goldfinches, and *akkoub* (a thistle-like plant) – which are affiliated with the Palestinian side. These non-human soldiers are effective precisely because nature camouflages their tactical deployment as such.

The deep ecological foundation of settler colonialism and, *vice versa*, the deep colonial foundation of ecological thought are key to understanding Israel's 'settler ecologies' – a concept Braverman coins and develops in her work. Such settler ecologies perpetuate violence to all forms of life, both nonhuman and human, highlighting that instances of violence across the more-than-human spectrum are both interdependent and coproduced.

Braverman is professor of law and adjunct professor of geography at the University at Buffalo, the State University of New York. She is the author of several monographs, including *Planted Flags: Trees, Land, and Law in Israel/Palestine*, *Zooland: The Institution of Captivity*, and *Coral Whisperers: Scientists on the Brink*.

Read more at: [Settling nature – STIAS Public lecture by Irus Braverman – Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study](#)







Above: STIAS Fellows Kopano Ratele and Glenn Adams during their public lecture on 13 April 2023

### **Toward a decolonial Africa-centring psychology: Beyond the whitestream gaze on racism and well-being – Glenn Adams and Kopano Ratele**

From #RhodesMustFall to #BlackLivesMatter, an important component of intersectional anti-racist protest movements has been concerns about epistemic injustice and the corresponding need to decolonise and depatriarchalise knowledge institutions. Typical accounts of epistemic injustice focus on underrepresentation in knowledge-production processes (epistemic exclusion) or imposition of Eurocentric models without regard to cultural-historical context (intellectual imperialism). In this presentation, Adams and Ratele drew upon an Africa-centring standpoint and perspectives of decolonial theory to illuminate another manifestation of epistemic injustice that is particularly important in psychology and related disciplines: the coloniality of the modern individualist lifeways that increasingly inform both descriptive and prescriptive standards for everyday life in the modern global order.

In the first half of the presentation, they located this understanding of an Africa-centring standpoint among various approaches to the project of African psychology. Rather than turn a whitestream theoretical lens to the study of an African object, an Africa-centring psychology considers what the world looks like from here and takes African experience as a foundation for re-thinking whitestream theory-in-general. They then considered one the most important insights of an Africa-centring psychology: an appreciation for the coloniality of

modernity. Decolonial perspectives emphasise that Eurocentric modernity and its associated individualist lifeways are not the leading edge of progress on a march to liberation and justice, but instead are both a product and source of racial violence in service of white futurity.

In the second half of the presentation, they considered implications for understandings of racism and the study of well-being. Typical understandings tend to psychologise racism, approaching it as prejudice or other manifestations of individual bias. A decolonial Africa-centring psychology instead illuminates the materialisation of racist ideology via the coloniality of knowledge and (well)being. The view from African standpoints suggests that dominant models of well-being are not the just-natural expression of human nature, but instead may depend on levels of affluence sustained through colonial plunder. Although the self-expansive personal growth associated with these lifeways can promote optimal individual experience for a well-situated few, they may do so at the expense of a viable existence sustainable at the level of humanity in general. An Africa(n)-centring approach holds potential to illuminate sustainability-oriented models of (well)being as a more solid prescription for viable collective existence in our shared-planet reality of global interdependence.

Professor of psychology at the University of Stellenbosch and head of the African Centre for Critical and Creative Thought, Kopano Ratele teaches on African psychology and decolonial/critical social psychology. His recent books include *Why Men Hurt Women & Other Reflections on Love, Violence and Masculinity* (2022) and *The World Looks Like This From Here: Thoughts on African Psychology* (2019). He has a regular fatherhood feature on Wednesday nights on SAFM's *The Meeting Point* with Keketso Sachane.

Glenn Adams is Professor of psychology at the University of Kansas and Interim Director of the Kansas African Studies Center.

Together and separately they are part of decolonial, cultural, anti-racist, or Africa(n)-centring psychology collectives located in different parts of the world. Among these are the READSURA Collective, with whom they recently co-edited three special issues and authored four feature articles that apply decolonial approaches to the production of knowledge in psychology. While at STIAS, Adams and Ratele worked on a joint monograph on decolonial psychology and well-being.

Read more at: [Toward a decolonial Africa-centering psychology – STIAS Public lecture by Kopano Ratele and Glenn Adams – Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study](#)

# Fellows return for exciting book launches

STIAS was delighted to host the book launches of Fellows Jonathan Kingdon and Darius and Catherine Brubeck in May.

## Exploring our origins

“This book is about the land where humanity originated,” said Jonathan Kingdon. “This old and fertile continent boasts the most diverse and richest array of living things on planet earth. To understand our ancestral depths we must be prepared to safari far and wide and look deep into time.”

“Humans are novices on a scene crowded by elders – animals and plants that were here long before we came on the scene,” he continued. “I hear the voices of these

ancestors whispering, yelling and threatening from all over the continent.”

Jonathan Kingdon, one of Africa's greatest zoological artists and a leading authority on African mammals, launched his latest book *Origin Africa: Safaris in Deep Time* (William Collins, 2023) at STIAS on 17 May. He read selected extracts from the 22-chapter publication and discussed the work with Michael Cherry from the Department of Botany and Zoology at Stellenbosch University.

“The book is about the evolution of life interwoven with autobiographical details of Kingdon's life and beautifully illustrated with his artwork,” said Cherry.

Primarily an author in the fields of evolutionary biology, anthropology and biogeography, Kingdon has written numerous books, mainly on the evolution of humans and other animals in Africa. He is well-known for his seven-volume, magnum opus *East African Mammals: An Atlas of evolution in Africa*. He is also an artist in many media and in both 2D and 3D – bridging both arts and sciences.

*Origin Africa* takes us on a journey of portraying our continent of origin, as well as our human origins from a broadly scientific perspective. This is interspersed with personal anecdotes and contemporary happenings that attempt to illustrate how we, a new, novice species, occupy an ancient but hugely dynamic world and continent.

“Africa is the most misrepresented, badly treated continent on earth,” said Kingdon. This book seeks a different and truer portrait of the continent and its peoples and ends with pleas for a reordering of the rapidly growing knowledge of natural processes – that process, not profits, should be the guiding principle of policies.”

“This book is an outcome of my obsessive childlike curiosity. It's about the child in all of us. It's about the continent as the nursery, school and university of human origins – the ultimate setting of the universe of human creative thinking and living.”

But Kingdon also added a warning: “The birth of our civilisation occurred during one of the most benign periods in our planet's history. Now – we humans are bugging it up!”

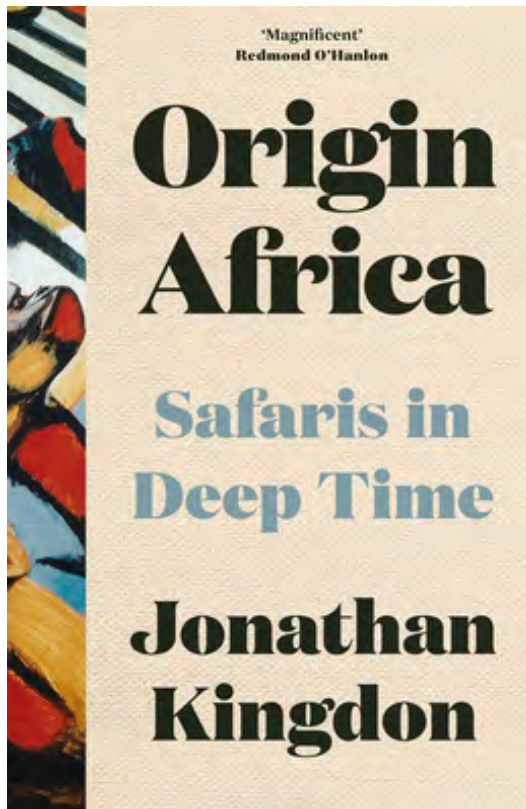
“Our behaviour determines the shape of future generations. All animals adapt to circumstances, but human circumstances are essentially self-made.”

Read more about Kingdon's fascinating life in an interview in the last issue of this newsletter (<https://stias.ac.za/news-and-events/newsletters/2022-7/>)

Jonathan Kingdon. *Origin Africa: Safaris in Deep Time*. William Collins, 2023. <https://harpercollins.co.uk/products/origin-africa-safaris-in-deep-time-jonathan-kingdon>

Below: Jonathan Kingdon

Below left and right: *Origin Africa: Safaris in Deep Time*





## Examining the transformative effect of jazz in South Africa

“Jazz has always been associated with the fight for freedom and the end to oppression. It’s also about continuous reinvention and defying definition and control by authorities,” said Darius Brubeck.

Darius and Cathy Brubeck returned to STIAS to launch their book *Playing the Changes: Jazz at an African University and On the Road* (UKZN Press, 2023) and were in conversation with STIAS Fellow David Attwell of the Department of English and Related Literature, University of York.

“This is a marvellous, heart-warming book,” said Attwell. “It’s an extremely accomplished narrative of a series of astonishing achievements with personal and social implications.”

Darius Brubeck is an internationally renowned pianist, composer and band leader. He was head of Jazz Studies and then director of the Centre for Jazz and Popular Music at the University of KwaZulu-Natal from 1989 to 2005, when he moved to London and established the Darius Brubeck Quartet.

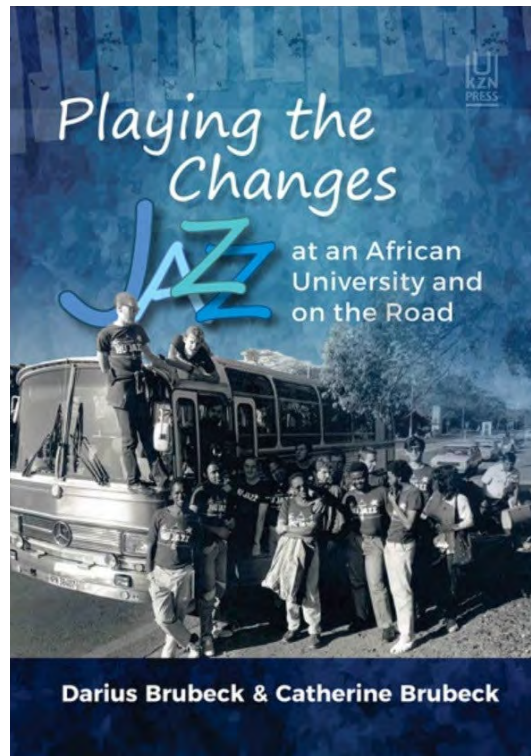
Catherine Brubeck worked for political change as a student at the University of Natal before a varied career in publishing, conference organising and music management in New York. On her return to South Africa, she initiated and arranged tours and concerts for students and professional South African jazz groups.

*Playing the Changes* is their memoir of performing, teaching and promoting jazz in South Africa. Covering the period from 1983 to 2005, the book is not a history of South African jazz, nor a chronological report of the development of jazz education but a personal account of an initially improvised programme. In 1982, Darius signed a two-year contract with the University of Natal as a Music Theory teacher that “turned into a quarter century of improvisation”. This appointment led to the establishment of the first-ever jazz studies degree programme in Africa and the creation of the Centre for Jazz and Popular Music which was eventually designated as one of the university’s centres of excellence.

The Brubeck’s tell the story of a jazz life both on and off the campus and give some insights into the lives of musicians (many now deceased), who made music throughout the turbulent, challenging and changing times of the 80s and 90s in South Africa.

“It documents the work in helping to change things from within the university. I think we gave a picture of the kind of society South Africa could have,” said Catherine.

“There was and still is an intersection of cultures in Durban. You were more likely to have a group of



musicians of mixed origin and there was a strong tradition of meeting and intersecting at jazz clubs,” said Darius. “Through the university musicians also had more opportunities to develop local and international networks which was career building for many. The status and stability of the jazz scene moved from gigs in shebeens to different levels of global accomplishment.”

“We also hope the book can help in building institutional memory in South Africa,” he added. “The people who can change the world going forward should know how things came about.”

But the last note was left to the music itself – with Darius in an exhilarating concert with Victor Masondo (bass), Kevin Gibson (drums) and Nic Paton (sax and guitar) – all members of the Jazzanians – the first multi-racial student jazz group to travel outside of South Africa in 1988. “Until today we last had a rehearsal 35 years ago!” joked Darius.

Darius Brubeck and Catherine Brubeck. *Playing the Changes: Jazz at an African University and On the Road*. UKZN Press, 2023. [www.ukznpress.co.za](http://www.ukznpress.co.za) α



Top: Catherine Brubeck

Above: Darius Brubeck

Above left: *Playing the Changes: Jazz at an African University and On the Road*

# IN THE NEWS

## Tamale receives international book prize

STIAS Fellow Sylvia Tamale won the International Studies Association FTGS (Feminist Theory and Gender Section) Book Prize in 2022 for her book *Decolonization and Afro-feminism* (2020) which she completed whilst at STIAS in 2019.

The association annually awards a prize for new publications making a substantial contribution to our understanding of international studies and global politics through feminist theory and gender studies.

Tamale presented a public lecture while in residence at STIAS. See [Peeling away at the layers of colonisation – public lecture by Sylvia Tamale – Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study \(stias.ac.za\)](#)

Below: STIAS Fellow  
Sylvia Tamale

Below right: The cover of  
Tamale's book, *Decolonization  
and Afro-Feminism*

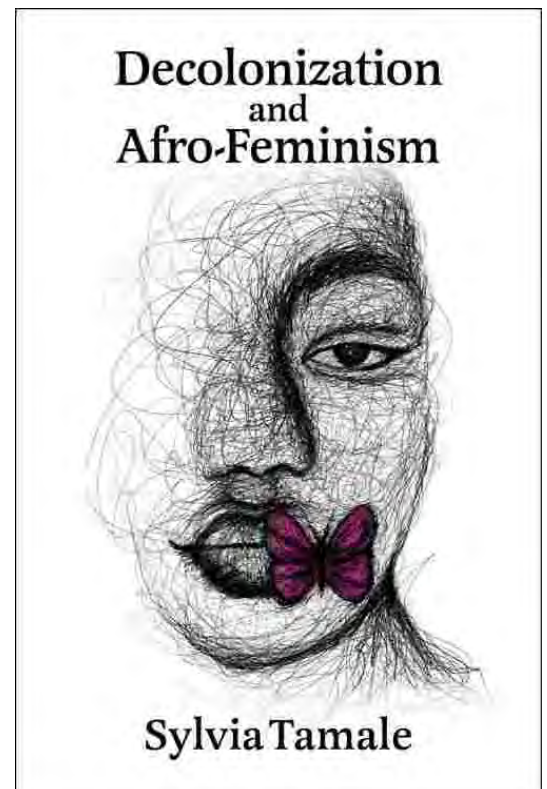


## Knighthood for Van Doorslaer

On 24 February 2023, on the day of his valedictory lecture, health economist Eddy van Doorslaer became a Knight of the Order of the Lion of The Netherlands.

In making the award the Deputy Mayor of Rotterdam Tim Versnel, said that Van Doorslaer was awarded the royal honour for his outstanding contribution to the specialist field of health policy worldwide. "You have made healthcare fair, not just in the wealthy West but also in countries where this is less the case," said Versnel. "Your academic work, managerial abilities and warm personality have been indispensable in this endeavour, both at Erasmus University and far beyond."

Eddy van Doorslaer retired as a professor of Health Economics at Erasmus University, Rotterdam on 1 March, after 32 years. He was described as a "bridge builder between the economic and health sciences at the university", where he created and led a group of health economists in both schools. He was co-founder of the specialisation of Health Economics in the Master in Health Economics, Policy and Law, as well as of several networks promoting interfaculty cooperation in his field, such as the Rotterdam Global Health Initiative (RGHI), the Smarter Choices for Better Health Initiative (SCBH) and the Erasmus Centre for Health Economics Research (EsCHER).







Above: Eddy van Doorslaer

"His research in health economics has been recognised internationally as world class. He is a leader in the area of inequalities in healthcare systems. A book for the World Bank, which he co-wrote, on how to measure and analyse these inequalities, has become a standard work," said Rector Magnificus Annelien Bredenoord.

Much of his work was carried out in partnership with – or on behalf of – international organisations like the World Bank, the WHO, UNICEF and the OECD.

Read more about Van Doorslaer's STIAS project at [Eddy van Doorslaer \(stias.ac.za\)](http://Eddy.van.Doorslaer(stias.ac.za))



## My fellow South Africans

STIAS Artist-in-Residence Fellow and South African playwright Mike van Graan's latest multi-sketch satirical revue *My fellow South Africans* recently premiered at Artscape's Innovation Lounge in Cape Town.

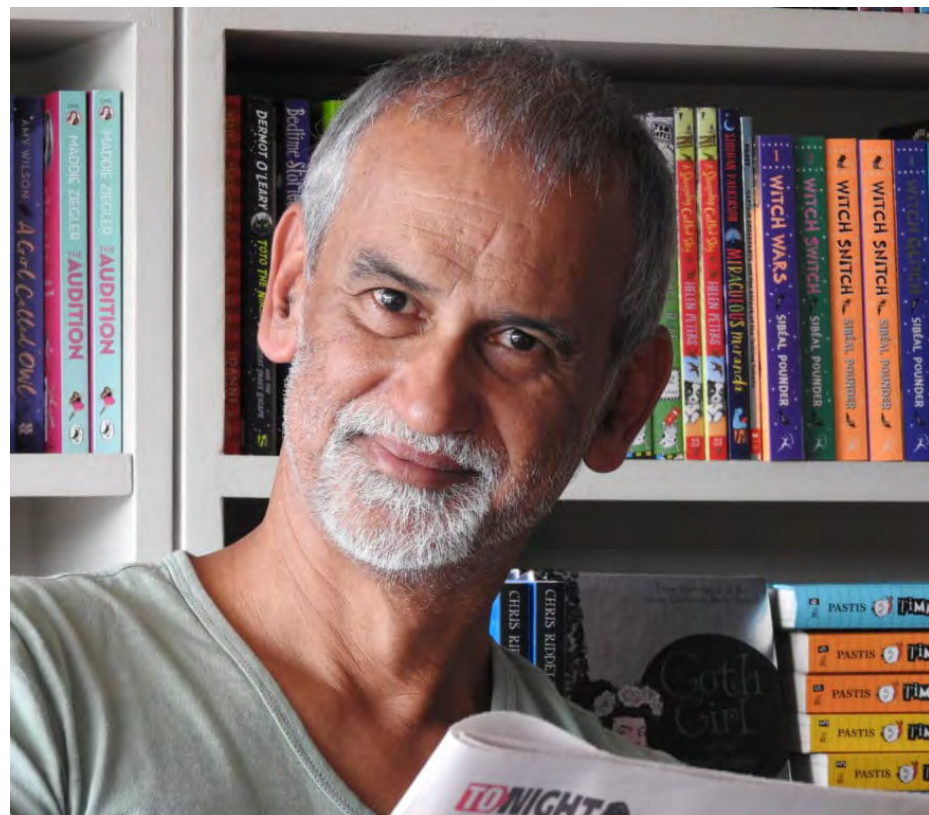
Combining original and updated sketches from previous award-winners like *Bafana Republic* and *Pay Back the Curry* as well as new sketches, *My fellow South Africans* takes its audience on a cathartic rollercoaster as they laugh, sigh, even cry – but mainly laugh – through 65 minutes of satirical commentary, complemented by the cartoons of the iconic Zapiro.

The outstanding performance of Kim Blanche Adonis, who plays multiple characters in this one-person revue, "blew away" audiences and the production was described as "Not to be missed", "Political satire at its best" and "such a cleverly constructed play ... the kind of play that should be performed to young people throughout the country".

The premiere will be followed by a series of shows in people's homes and other venues as part of a strategy to help theatre recover from the devastating impact of the COVID pandemic as well as during the upcoming Stellenbosch Wordfees 2023 festival.

Below: STIAS Artist-in-residence Mike van Graan

Below left: E-poster for *My Fellow South Africans* (Source: LinkedIn)





Above: Sylvia Vollenhoven

## Fleur du Cap nomination for Vollenhoven

Sylvia Vollenhoven along with Basil Appollis was nominated for a Fleur du Cap award in the category Best New South African Script for her work *Dance of the La Gumas* which celebrates the life and legacy of literary giant Alex La Guma and his wife Blanche. The play explores the couple's early days in District Six when Alex and Blanche were young sweethearts, to their underground work for the Communist Party and his life as a Treason Trialist, as well as their time in exile and diplomatic posting in Cuba.

The production also received a nomination for Best Actor in a play for Elton Landrew.

Now in their 58<sup>th</sup> year, the Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards are South Africa's most prominent, longest-running theatre awards. Fifty-nine productions were considered in 2022.

Vollenhoven is part of the STIAS 2023 first semester cohort working on her book *Krotoa is present* – the story of Krotoa !Goa /gōas of the Goringhaicona – a young woman who grew up in the household of Jan van Riebeeck.

The book as well as Vollenhoven's play *Krotoa Eva van de Kaap*, connects the dots between what happened in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and what is still happening in the modern world. Read more at: [Krotoa is present – Fellows' seminar by Sylvia Vollenhoven – Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study \(stias.ac.za\)](#)

## New moves for Uchenna Okeja

Uchenna Okeja was appointed in May as research professor in the faculty of humanities at Nelson Mandela University and as director of the Emengini Institute for Comparative Global Studies in Worcester, MA, USA. The Institute is a centre for research aiming to address global problems from perspectives that take seriously the contributions of Africa and other neglected voices. It supports the dialogue of Africa and the world and is a think tank engaged in the collaborative exploration of global humanities.

Uchenna was a member of the first cohort of Iso Lomso fellows and at STIAS for residencies in 2017 and 2019. He was previously professor and chair of the philosophy department at Rhodes University and philosophy lecturer at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany.

He has also held fellowships or visiting professorships at Harvard University, Utrecht University, the University of Chicago, the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at Bad Homburg and the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies. He is editor of the *Routledge Handbook of African Political Philosophy* (London: Routledge 2023).

His 2022 publication *Deliberative Agency: A Study in Modern African Political Philosophy* has received substantial praise and been described as "an original political theory for the Africa of today". It has been the subject of recent seminars at the Universities of Amsterdam and Utrecht, and was named a Choice Outstanding Academic Title. [Deliberative Agency \(iupress.org\)](#) α.

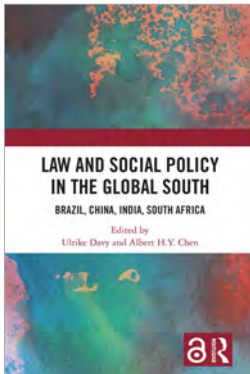


Above: Uchenna Okeja



## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

For the full list of publications by STIAS fellows see: <https://stias.ac.za/fellows/publications>



**Albert H. Y. Chen and Ulrike Davy.** *Law and Social Policy in the Global South*. Routledge, 2023.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003242826>

The book is an in-depth study of the origins and the trajectories of the law governing social policies in Brazil, China, India and South Africa, four middle-income countries in the Global South with a history in social policy making that starts in the 1920s.

The policies of these countries affect almost half of the world's population. The book takes the legal framework of the policies as a starting point, but the main interest lies behind the letter of the law: What were the objectives and goals of social policy over the course of the last 100 years? What were the ideas, ideologies, and values pursued by relevant actors? The book comprises four country studies and a comparative study. The country studies concentrate on the political and social context of social policy making in

Brazil, China, India and South Africa as well as on the ideas, ideologies, and values underpinning the constitution, statutory laws, and case law that frame and shape social policy at the national level. The country studies are complemented by a comparative study exploring and describing the commonalities and differences in the ideational approaches to social policies across the four countries, nationally and – in the formative decades – internationally. The comparative study also identifies the characteristics that make Brazilian, Chinese, Indian and South African social policies distinct from European social policies. With its emphasis on law and drawing on legal scholarship, the book adds a new dimension to the existing accounts on welfare state building, which, so far, are dominated by European narratives and by scholars with a background in sociology, political science and development studies.

This book is relevant to specialists and peers, and will be invaluable to those individuals interested in the fields of comparative and international social security law, human rights law, comparative constitutional law, constitutional history, law and development studies, comparative social policies, global social policies, social work and welfare state theory.

**Catherine E. Walsh.** *Rising Up, Living On*. Duke University Press, 2023.

[www.dukeupress.edu/rising-up-living-on](http://www.dukeupress.edu/rising-up-living-on)

In *Rising Up, Living On*, Catherine Walsh examines struggles for existence in societies deeply marked by the systemic violences and entwinements of coloniality, capitalism, Christianity, racism, gendering, hetero-patriarchy, and the continual dispossession of bodies, land, knowledge, and life, while revealing practices that contest and live in the cracks of these matrices of power. Through stories,

narrations, personal letters, conversations, lived accounts, and weaving together the thought of many – including ancestors, artists, students, activists, feminists, collectives, and Indigenous and African peoples – in the Americas, the Global South, and beyond, Walsh takes readers on a journey of decolonial praxis. Walsh outlines individual and collective paths that cry out and crack, ask and walk, de-school, undo the nation-state, and break down boundaries of gender, race, and nature. *Rising Up, Living On* is a book that sows

re-existences, nurtures relationality, and cultivates the sense, hope and possibility of life otherwise in these desperate times.

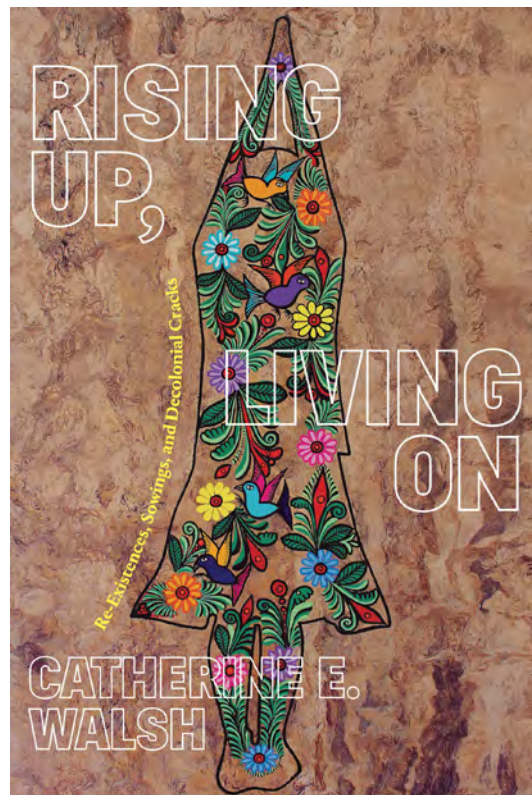


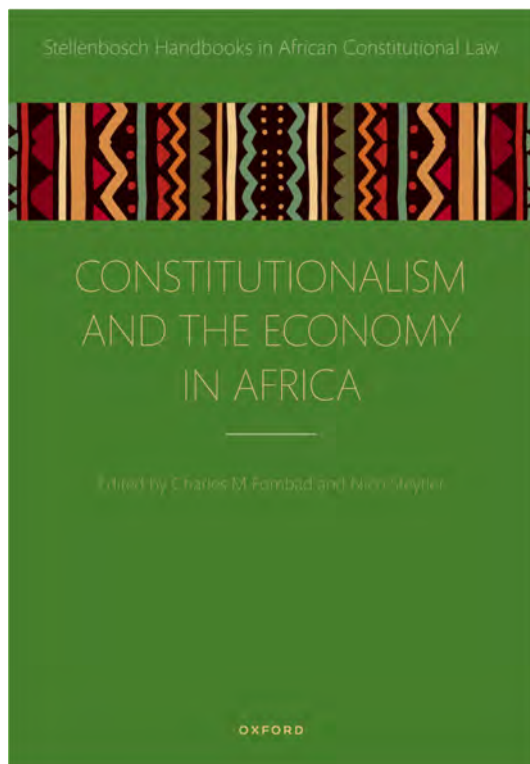
**Gibson Ncube.** *Queer Bodies in African Films*. NISC Press/African Humanities Association, 2022.

[www.nisc.co.za/products/111/books/queer-bodies-in-african-films](http://www.nisc.co.za/products/111/books/queer-bodies-in-african-films)

*Queer Bodies in African Films* makes two overarching interventions. First, the book focuses on how queer bodies in films are texts. As sites invested with multiple and often overlapping discourses and narratives, queer bodies in films textualise silenced narratives and histories. They are inscribed with more than just desire, eroticism and sexuality.

Second, this book sets out to read selected queer films from North Africa against and together with some from sub-Saharan Africa. It brings into productive conversation these broad regions of the continent, which in African Studies, are often demarcated along linguistic and geographic





lines. This makes it possible to demonstrate how queer bodies, in their multiplicity, are disruptive figures whose materiality calls for a rethinking of how gender and sexual identities are not just performed and staged but also constructed and embodied.

In examining diverse films in various languages and from different parts of the African continent, *Queer Bodies in African Films* shows that queer African experiences and cultural productions have developed beyond the hegemony of South Africa. Furthermore, its nuanced reading of films from different geographic zones and time frames contends that a focus on the body allows for a unique understanding of what queerness is and means within the context of Africa.

**Charles M. Fombad and Nico Steytler. (Eds.).** *Constitutionalism and the Economy in Africa*. Oxford University Press, 2022.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192886439.001.0001>

This volume deals with the relationship between constitutionalism and economic growth in Africa and addresses five questions: (1) In the constitutional reforms of the 1990s and thereafter, did constitutions also reflect the shift towards a market economy through the protection of property and freedom of contract? (2) Given that agriculture and extractive industries are the main source of state revenue in many African economies, how are matters of land and other natural resources dealt with constitutionally?

(3) Where the market economy is captured in a constitution, what is the state's relationship to that economy: interventionist or laissez-faire, or somewhere in between? Have constitutions also established a 'social' state that provides the basic elements of a dignified life? (4) In the process of constitution-making and implementation with regard to the economy, what impact has globalisation had on constitutionalism and economic life in Africa? (5) How has the relationship between constitutionalism and economic growth played out in practice? Is there a symbiotic relationship and has constitutionalism led (or may do so) to greater economic prosperity?

**Petr Skalník. (Ed.).** *Ernest Gellner's Legacy and Social Theory Today*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-06805-8>

This edited volume examines the critical issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century through the prism of Ernest Gellner's work. The contributors look critically at Gellner's legacy, questioning whether he remains an inspiration for today's social theorists. Chapters proactively probe Gellner's thoughts on a variety of pressing topics – modernity, postcolonialism, nationalism, and more – without losing sight of current debates on these issues. This volume brings these debates to life by having each chapter followed by a comment by an academic peer of the chapter author, thus transforming the text into a lively and dynamic conversation.



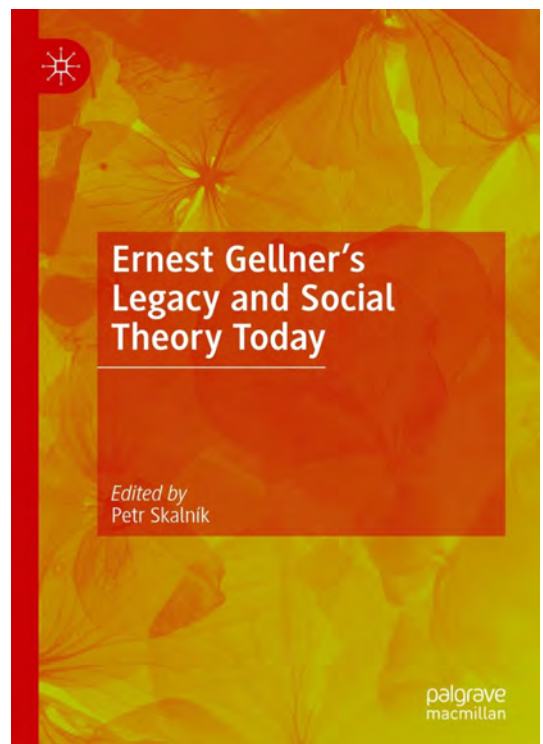
**Rita Kiki Edozie and Moses Khisa.** *Africa's New Global Politics: Regionalism in International Relations*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2022.

[www.rienner.com/title/Africa\\_s\\_New\\_Global\\_Politics\\_Regionalism\\_in\\_International\\_Relations](http://www.rienner.com/title/Africa_s_New_Global_Politics_Regionalism_in_International_Relations)

The African Union's threat to lead African states' mass withdrawal from the International Criminal Court in 2008 marked just

one of many encounters that demonstrate African leaders' growing confidence and activism in international relations. Rita Kiki Edozie and Moses Khisa explore the myriad ways in which the continent's diplomatic engagement and influence in the global arena has been expanding in recent decades.

Focusing in particular on collective action through the institutional platform of the African Union – while acknowledging the internal challenges involved – the authors show how Africa's role as a dynamic world region is both shaping and being shaped by current trends in global development and geopolitics.







Organised into three themed sections and 23 chapters, this volume covers a variety of topics, exposing the reader to a full range of scientific, conservation and management issues.

Tatenda Dalu and Ryan Wasserman. (Eds.). *Fundamentals of Tropical Freshwater Wetlands: From Ecology to Conservation Management*. Elsevier, 2022.

[www.elsevier.com/books/fundamentals-of-tropical-freshwater-wetlands/dalu/978-0-12-822362-8](http://www.elsevier.com/books/fundamentals-of-tropical-freshwater-wetlands/dalu/978-0-12-822362-8)

*Fundamentals of Tropical Freshwater Wetlands: From Ecology to Conservation Management* is a practical guide and important tool for practitioners and educators interested in the ecology, conservation and management of wetlands in tropical/subtropical regions. The book is written in such a way that, in addition to scientists and managers, it is accessible to non-specialist readers. Organised into three themed sections and 23 chapters, this volume covers a variety of topics, exposing the reader to a full range of scientific, conservation and management issues. Each chapter has been written by specialists in the topic presented. The book recognises that wetland conservation, science and management are interlinked disciplines, and so it attempts to combine several perspectives to highlight the interdependence between the various professions that deal with issues in these environments. Within each chapter extensive cross-referencing is included to help the reader link related aspects of the issues being discussed.



Sharad Chari. 2023. *Gramsci at Sea*. University of Minnesota Press.

[www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/gramsci-at-sea](http://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/gramsci-at-sea)

Exploring how the crisis of the world ocean is produced by capitalism and imperialism, this succinct work reads Antonio Gramsci's writings on the sea, focused in his prison notes on waves of imperial power in the inter-war oceans of his time.

Chari argues that the imprisoned militant's method is oceanic in form, and that this oceanic Marxism can attend to the role of sociocultural dynamics, to waves of imperial power, as well as to the capacity of Black, Drexian, and other forms of oceanic critique to 'storm' us on different shores. **α**




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