

Call for Applications

Social movements and the position of the researcher

Methods and approaches for analysing contemporary contestation and mobilisation

Date:	September 17-18, 2013
Venue:	Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB), Klosterberg 21-23, CH-4001 Basel
Convenors:	Prof. Elísio Macamo (Centre for African Studies Basel) Dr. Veit Arlt (Centre for African Studies Basel)
Invited speakers:	Dr. Ineke van Kessel (University of Leiden) Prof. Breno Bringel (University of Rio de Janeiro)

Social movements and protests have become a central focus of research in African Studies and Social Anthropology. Against the backdrop of the European and American scholarly tradition, social movements in Africa or Asia appear in novel and hybrid forms and have also gained international attention in the social and mass media. Yet, the conceptualization of social movements remains scanty and researchers are confronted with pressing methodological questions. How transnational are today's protests, and to what extent can their global appearance be attributed to the academic concepts and the global media hype that frame them in the first place? What is the position of the researcher, in terms of his or her sympathy/antipathy regarding demonstrators and implicit assumptions on notions such as 'civil society', 'democratisation', and 'the state'? The goal of addressing these and further questions is to refine our analytical tools, to assess the suitability of established frameworks, and to clarify what area studies and related disciplines can (and cannot) contribute to the study of social movements and protests.

Combining public lectures and discussions with two parallel workshops on conceptual and methodological issues in social movement research, the University of Basel's Centre for African Studies (CASB) and the Research Group on Political Transformation at the Institute of Social Anthropology invite PhD students and postdocs to two days of vigorous debate on their empirical research and specific methodological and/or conceptual questions.

To apply for participating at the workshops, we ask candidates to send a short CV and a 5-page research outline to Julia Büchele (j.buechele@unibas.ch) until July 15th 2013. The outline, which will also serve as a basis for discussion during the workshops, should explicitly relate to the workshop's specific focus. The method-related workshop, moderated by Prof. Ineke van Kessel (Leiden), is concerned with "Social Movements and the Position of the Researcher: Normativity and assumptions"; the workshop on conceptual issues, held by Prof. Breno Bringel (Rio de Janeiro), is entitled "Against a catch-all concept: Clarifying the meaning and context of social movements" (see Programme Draft).

The workshops are offered in the framework of the joint training module 'Methodological Challenges in Area Studies' (a cooperation of the Centre for African Studies Basel and the University Research Priority Program Asia and Europe at the University of Zürich) and the Graduate School of Social Sciences at the University of Basel.