



Zurich Human Geography Colloquium

Program Fall Semester 2022

Prof Natalie Oswin, Associate Professor, Department of Human Geography, University of Toronto Scarborough
Social Junk

Public lecture: Tue, 27 September, 4-5PM, Room Y25-H-79

Workshop: Wed, 28 September, 10-12am, Room Y25-H-86

Dr Lerato Thakholi, Sociology of Development and Change Group, Wageningen University and Research, The Netherlands / Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

Conserving inequality: the reproduction of spatial injustice in South Africa's private nature reserves

Public lecture: Tue, 4 October, 4-5PM, Room Y25-H-38

Workshop: Wed, 5 October, 09:30-12:30, Room Y25-L-40

(For details about the workshop please write to sierra.deutsch@geo.uzh.ch before 28 Sept.)

Prof Harshana Rambukwella, Open University of Sri Lanka
Deep solidarity? Reflections on 'post-colonial' solidarities in a moment of national crisis

Public lecture: Tue, 15 November 4-5PM, Room Y25-H-79



Tue, 27 September 2022 | Prof Natalie Oswin

Social Junk

Queerness is a residue, an elision, a shadowy presence within urban theory since the queer – and the non-normative of various description – is everywhere within mainstream urban thought and praxis; as prop, as foil, as problem in need of correction, as object out of place. This talk charts a tradition of queer urban studies as it emerged out of the dominant grammar of *The City*, the 1925 collection of essays by Chicago School sociologists Ernest Burgess and Robert Park. Still widely taught today as ‘foundational’ to urban theory, and reissued for a second time in 2019, this text is not only ripe for queer analysis. Its authors played a pivotal, paradoxical and widely unrecognized role in spurring on queer and other critical ‘underdog’ scholarship on the urban and urbanization that exists today. This text’s role in the history of queer/ urban studies as both facilitator and foil shows that while there is no ‘queer urban theory’ per se, radical queer aims may in fact be better met without one.

Natalie Oswin is associate professor in the Department of Human Geography at the University of Toronto Scarborough. Her work explores postcolonial queer geographies in the context of globalization and urbanization. She is author of *Global City Futures: Desire and Development in Singapore* (University of Georgia Press, 2019) and managing editor of the interdisciplinary journal *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* and the *Society and Space* online magazine.

Tue, 4 October 2022 | Dr Lerato Thakholi

Conserving inequality: the reproduction of spatial injustice in South Africa’s private nature reserves

In 2016, South Africa launched its National Biodiversity Economy Strategy. This strategy aims to facilitate the development of a ‘wildlife economy’ as a solution to unemployment, loss of biodiversity and rural development. Central to the strategy is the role of private conservation actors, who keenly posit their commercial model as the best way to achieve these objectives. This stands in sharp contrast to recent critiques that suggest that private conservation reinforces structural inequality by denying access to land and perpetuating unjust labour conditions. Drawing from ethnographic data from the South African Lowveld region that includes the Kruger National Park, the paper takes these critiques further by arguing that a rapidly growing alliance between private conservation and property developers actively conserve inequality by maintaining and even extending spatial injustice in the region. Two popular recent manifestations of this alliance in particular, share block systems that distribute ownership of access to real estate in private reserves and wildlife housing estates, have established new conservation-property developer linkages that entrench capitalist socioecological fixes. Not only do these initiatives lead to further engrained spatial injustice, I conclude that this conservation-property developer alliance at the centre of the ‘wildlife economy’ also willingly sacrifices environmental sustainability on the altar of white conservation imaginations and private profit.

Dr Lerato Thakholi is a lecturer at Wageningen University and a senior researcher at the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies. She studies labour and property in Southern Africa’s conservation landscapes.



Tue, 15 November 2022 | **Prof Harshana Rambukwella**

Deep solidarity? Reflections on 'post-colonial' solidarities in a moment of national crisis

This talk explores what solidarity might mean in the current geo-political context through the specific example of postcolonial Sri Lanka, which is experiencing an existential threat unprecedented in the country's contemporary history. Mired in a deep and intractable economic and governance crisis the country's future looks dark. But in spite of this despondent outlook, a youth-led protest movement, that transcends the many institutional, social and economic fault lines, that have characterized Sri Lanka's postcolonial history has emerged. I argue that this movement represents a form of 'deep solidarity' that stands in contrast to other iterations of solidarity such as enchanted and disenchanting solidarities and vertical and hierarchical solidarities that are often marred by instrumentalist motives shaped by geo-political power and other forms of instrumental power structures. Exploring the actual protest movement and some of the artistic and cultural registers within which this protest has expressed and represented itself, I offer a series of critical reflections on the limits and possibilities of solidarity in postcolonial societies and argue that deep solidarity is a tenuous and at times idealistic but nevertheless morally and even pragmatically superior alternative to other ways in which solidarity has been imagined.

Harshana Rambukwella is professor in English at the Postgraduate Institute of English, the Open University of Sri Lanka. He was recently a Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences (Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen) in Vienna and the Sri Lanka Chair at the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg in 2019. He is an Associate Editor of the Journal of Sociolinguistics and serves on the editorial board of the International Journal of the Sociology of Language. Harshana's work is interdisciplinary in nature and spans fields such as nationalism, history, literature and sociolinguistics.