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Fondation Pierre du Bois
pour l'histoire du temps présent

***International Conference
“A Luta Continua, 40 years later”:
Entangled Histories and
Legacies of Empire in Southern Africa***

Date: 5-6 November 2015

Place:

*French Institute of South Africa
62 Juta Street, Braamfontein
Johannesburg, South Africa*

Organizing Institutions:

*French Institute of South Africa
Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WiSER)*

Institutional and Financial Support:

*Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
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Pierre Du Bois Foundation for Current History*

Head of the Initiative:

Caio Simões de Araújo, International History Department, Graduate Institute, Geneva

Summary of the Initiative:

This international conference will examine the histories and living legacies of the Portuguese empire in Southern Africa, 40 years after decolonization. It will encourage historians to debate the entangled trajectories of the region, in the past, present and future. The conference will furthermore invite scholars from the social sciences and humanities to reassess the Southern African postcolonial condition in its complex manifestations. The term “legacy” is understood in its broadest sense, to indicate the impact decolonization had on the subsequent postcolonial period, but also its material and immaterial heritage, ranging from architecture, literature, cinema, to the arts.



Image: Constitutional Hill, Johannesburg. Photo by Caio Simões de Araújo.

Call for Papers

2015 marks forty years of Portugal’s imperial withdrawal from Southern Africa. In the aftermath of a lengthy military conflict and a complicated negotiation process, the liberations of Mozambique and Angola in 1975 had a strong impact on neighbouring countries. On the one hand, these events deeply reconfigured power relations in the region. For instance, they had a decisive role in supporting the liberation struggles in Zimbabwe and Namibia and, in so doing, deepening the political deterioration of the apartheid regime, which eventually fell in 1994. On the other hand, decolonization triggered a significant wave of migration towards South Africa, where the community of Portuguese origin came to represent from 10 to 15% of the total white population. Yet, many of these historical entanglements are underrepresented or underdeveloped in the historiography, and their role in shaping past and current histories is frequently obscured under the weight of nationalist representations. When historians and social scientists limit their gaze to the labels of, say, “Portuguese”, “Zimbabwean”, “South African”, “Mozambican”, or “Angolan” histories – as it has commonly been the case –, the shared moments are ignored and, ultimately, lost. This state of affairs is not only intellectually limiting, for it clouds our vision into broader historical processes, but it is also socially unproductive. As pointed out by the UNESCO, shared histories are crucial in developing a “culture of peace” in regions that have been historically torn by conflict. This seems to stand for Southern Africa, where decolonization was assumed their most violent forms, with implications that survive to this day.

With all that in mind, the *Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research* (WiSER) and the *French Institute of South Africa* are pleased to host the International Conference “*A Luta Continua, 40 years later*”, to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, 5-6 November 2015. The conference will look at the entangled histories of

southern Africa and examine the legacies of empire, four decades after Portuguese decolonization took place. We engage with this commonly nationalist moment as a critical gesture and a reminder that much can be gained from looking at this history beyond nations and empires alone. Perhaps nothing represents more powerfully the both regional and transnational dimension of the Southern African (post)colonial question than the emblematic motto of Mozambican liberation: “*a luta continua*”. From Maputo to Johannesburg or Harare, in the original Portuguese version or in translation – “*the struggle continues*” – this phrase came to represent solidarities against interconnected forms of oppression: colonialism and apartheid’s racism. But its resonance was not limited to Southern Africa either. *The struggle continues* also came to represent broader affiliations taking shape in the West and the “Third World” alike. For instance, the pressure networks of the Anti-Apartheid Movement or Cuba’s involvement in Angola. At any rate, *a luta* (the struggle) was deeply internationalized. In the present, these words still persist in the collective memory of the region (as one can see in the prominent place they occupy on the walls of the Constitutional Hill, in Johannesburg). If anything else, the symbolic resonance of the phrase across national borders reveals how tortuous the routes of Southern African liberation were, crosscutting multiple spaces and shaping political, social and cultural worlds.

This conference will explore many of these critical issues. On the one hand, it invites historians of empire and decolonization, apartheid and anti-racism, to focus their attention on the connections, transits and shared processes within the region and beyond. We will privilege the post-1945 moment, marked both by the decolonization of Africa at large and by the struggles against racism, being staged in multiple *locale*. We welcome contributions that will challenge or disrupt more conventional images of national liberation or decolonization as contained or bounded processes, by looking instead at unsettling moments or issues, from the ambiguous place of the Portuguese diaspora in the region, to South Africa’s involvement in the wars in Mozambique and Angola. On the other hand, this conference invites scholars from the social sciences and humanities to interrogate the legacies of empire in all its complex manifestations. We use the term legacy in a broad sense, to denote both the impact decolonization had on the subsequent postcolonial moment, but also the material and cultural heritage of empire, in architecture, cinema, literature and the arts. Finally, the conference will be a space where researchers and the public at large will have the opportunity to question how a better grasp of these entangled histories and shared legacies can encourage new

routes of reconciliation in the region, including opportunities for academic dialogue and cooperation.

We invite paper proposals for 20 minutes presentations in any of the following indicative, but not exhaustive, areas:

- **Beyond nations and empires:** shared, entangled, and regional histories
- **New histories of empire, decolonization and apartheid:** unsettling conventions
- **Legacies of Empire in Southern Africa:** peoples, heritage, and culture
- **The Aesthetics of Liberation:** Southern Africa in film, literature and the arts
- **The Spaces of Contact:** cities, urbanism, and architectural heritage
- **Post-colonial and Post-apartheid:** entanglements and comparisons
- **Knowledge, history writing and scientific cooperation:** past, present and future
- **From Southern Africa to the world:** transnational linkages and international actors (e.g. international organizations, Third world solidarities, Cold War alliances, etc)

Interested contributors should submit a short abstract (no more than 200 words) and a career description (one paragraph, no more than 15 lines) **no later 1 July 2015**. Notification of acceptance will be send out by 7 July 2015. We intend to publish a collection of essays in an edited volume or journal issue.

We will charge a small conference fee of R200 from scholars based in Southern African and 30 Euros from international participants. A limited number of bursaries will be available to scholars based in the region.

Proposals or inquiries to be sent to Caio Simões de Araújo at:
caio.simoes@graduateinstitute.ch

CAIO SIMÕES DE ARAÚJO

Maison de la Paix P2-501

Case Postale 136

CH-1211 Genève 21, Suisse

E-mail: caio.simoes@graduateinstitute.ch