

Call for Papers and Participation

In Search of Solutions: Methods, Movements and Undocumented Migrants in Africa

Research and Training Workshops, 1-4th of July, 2008 University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

The Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation, University of Hull, and the Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, invite submissions for a two part colloquium on methods and informal migration. This event is designed to strengthen and further refine the strategies used to analyse and understand migration patterns in Africa. Since many migrants operate outside official channels, conventional methods and government statistics can often be of limited value in coming to terms with this contentious issue. In the absence of empirically reliable and theoretically sophisticated research methods, speculation and hyperbole have regularly filled the void.

Researchers in this challenging field can only go so far by raising doubts about exaggerated figures and tenuous claims. What is required is a deeper and broader understanding of migration, incorporating both i) improved research heuristics, methods and procedures for generating data; and ii) the capacity to effectively and sensitively integrate available data within larger political and sociological perspectives. With this in mind, the colloquium brings together researchers for two separate yet related events:

Research Workshop (3rd and 4th of July 2008)

Scholars of migration are continually refining the methods used to study various aspects of informal migration. This workshop seeks to capitalise upon this ongoing innovation and methodological experimentation, providing researchers with a targeted forum to disseminate their findings, further refine their techniques, and reflect upon the larger relationship between methodology and informal migration in an African context.

Both scholars and practitioners are invited to submit paper proposals addressing one or more of the following themes:

The Moving Target: sampling mobile populations; Revealing the Illicit: corrupt immigration enforcement and subterranean migrant economies; Enumeration and Extrapolation: connecting anecdotal and case-specific evidence to larger patterns; Weapons of the Weak: conceptualising and documenting resistance; The Vulnerable Researcher: working in threatening and insecure field sites; The Past in the Present: linking historical and contemporary migration; Documenting the Undocumented: ethical quandaries in migration research; Methodology and Public Policy: research, activism and political change.

The complete proceedings from the workshop will be edited and published online in late 2008. Selected workshop participants will be invited to revise their papers for submission to a special issue of a peer reviewed journal.

Interested researchers should send abstracts of up to 300 words, together with a current curriculum vitae [by e-mail only] by the 22nd of February 2008. Applicants will be notified by the 10th of March whether they have been accepted. Final papers of around 6000 words will be expected by the 1st of June 2008. The organisers have secured funds through the British Academy to cover travel and maintenance for eight scholars and practitioners. Priority funding for attendance will go to early career researchers from and/or based in Africa.

Training Workshop (1st and 2nd of July 2008)

In order to address the longer term challenges of research on undocumented migration, we need to develop a new generation of skilled researchers. With this in mind, the research workshop will be preceded by a two-day training workshop focusing upon methodology and migration.

This workshop, which includes a visit to a field site in Johannesburg, has been designed to help emerging scholars develop the specialized strategies and skills required to conduct first-class research in this challenging field. The training programme is designed for postgraduate students who are currently designing research proposals, implementing fieldwork strategies and analysing data. The main topics that will be explored are:

Sampling and survey design;
Qualitative and key informant interviews;
Freedom of information legislation and archival research;
Participant observation procedures;
Comparative analysis and historical context.

Interested applicants should submit an outline of around 400 words explaining how the workshop would benefit their research plans, together with a CV and a short reference from a supervisor - to be delivered separately - by e-mail before the 22nd of February 2008. Applicants will be notified by the 10th of March whether they have been accepted. In order to prepare for the workshop, students will be asked to write a brief paper of around 1500 words reflecting upon the influence of methodological issues upon their research. These will be expected by the 1st of June 2008. The best papers will be published online through the FMSP Methods and Field Notes series. Doctoral candidates are invited to apply to attend both workshops. Ten bursaries are available to cover/contribute to the cost of travel and accommodation for participants from Southern Africa.

Submission Information

Please send submissions by email - with subject heading either:
'Training Workshop Submission' or 'Research Workshop Submission - to:
darshan.vigneswaran@wits.ac.za.

Requests for additional information should be directed to Dr Joel Quirk (j.quirk@hull.ac.uk).

The Forced Migration Studies Programme (<http://migration.org.za/>) is Southern Africa's premier centre for the academic study of migration. This workshop will form a part of a multi-faceted training and dissemination agenda for 2008, including a conference on the State of Migration in Southern Africa in March, and a Statistics Institute later in the year.

The Wilberforce Institute (<http://www.hull.ac.uk/wise/>) is dedicated to the pursuit of world class research in the areas of slavery, emancipation, human rights, and social justice. The institute seeks to improve academic knowledge and public understanding of both historical practices and contemporary problems, and to inform public policy and political activism.

This event has been made possible through a UK-Africa partnership grant from the British Academy. The Wilberforce Institute and Forced Migration Studies Programme have also received support for two further colloquia. Over time, the best submissions will be compiled into an edited collection focusing on Migration and Forced Labour in Africa.