



Zurich Human Geography Colloquium

The Zurich Human Geography Colloquium is jointly organised by the units of Economic Geography, Political Geography, Space, Nature and Society and Social and Cultural Geography at the Department of Geography, Zurich University. All interested are cordially invited.

Tuesday, 8 December 2020, 4 pm on Zoom, no registration necessary:
<https://uzh.zoom.us/j/96202562485?pwd=QnRnbTlZakI4QXVzZXROa09ZNzh5dz09>

Prof Sophie Oldfield

Urban Studies, University of Basel

African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town

High stakes, High hopes: Urban theorizing in partnership

High Stakes, High Hopes builds urban theory in partnership in the political and physical realities of everyday southern city life. Drawing from a book manuscript, in the seminar I will reflect on a decade-long research and teaching partnership, which brought my university and a township civic organization in Cape Town to research the city together. *High Stakes, High Hopes* grapples with a set of critical questions for urban scholarship. It examines the ways in which collaborative partnerships open up provocative conversations on everyday urbanism, what it takes to sustain households in overcrowded homes and shack settlements, realities that shape the demands of activism, and the hardships of structural inequality that intertwine in this neighbourhood and city. It tracks ways to build a partnership, incrementally, pedagogies to work and teach together, to research, to write, and to share our thinking in and across the urban inequalities that divide us. It reflects on what is at stake in this partnership and its creative, and at times, conflictive, evolution. What happens to learning in this work when teaching and assessment moves out of the classroom onto township streets and into ordinary people's households? What is reoriented in urban theory when civic activists and community workers open up their struggles to university scrutiny? And, what unfolds differently when university practices of research and assessments are infused in township realities and commitments? This approach and pedagogy help to locate us. The partnership holds us steady to question what we know, to reflect critically on how we produce knowledge, with whom and for what agendas. Through its aesthetic form, *High Hopes, High Stakes* brings together multiple voices, registers and accounts that share the collaborative building of urban theory in spaces across the city.



Sophie Oldfield is the University of Basel–University of Cape Town Professor of Urban Studies, based at the African Centre for Cities (ACC) at the University of Cape Town. She has a PhD in Geography from the University of Minnesota. She is internationally recognized for research on southern urbanism through her theoretical and empirical research. In contexts of housing, informality and governance, her work reflects on urban politics in mobilizing and social movement organizing, exploring the ways in which citizens and organized movements craft agency to engage and contest state governance. To substantiate political practice and everyday urban geographies, she has a track record of excellence in collaborative research practice, challenging how academics work in and between 'university' and 'community'. Commitment to this collaborative approach lies at the heart of her research and writing on cities of the global south.