# Anthropology Southern Africa Annual Conference 2019

Nelson Mandela University
Department of Sociology, Anthropology and History

Dates: 26th – 28th September 2019

Call for papers and panel proposals

# Narratives of Society in Transition, Crisis and Change

A 'global society in crisis' – significant climate change, unprecedented levels of violence and poverty as well as dictatorial and destructive political leadership – has received increased focus and scrutiny. Social scientists everywhere are concerned about the regression of political justice and equality, the increasing power and influence of major international companies, the devastation caused by the long term consequences of climate change and ocean pollution.

The term crisis suggests an acute state of discomfort and disjuncture. It creates an impression that the situation experienced will pass as long as appropriate measures and remedies are put in place. However, the global crisis experienced in the world today appears to have no end. Its longevity has been duly noted. According to David Graeber even the world's current debt is some 5000 years in the making. How should anthropologists respond to the experience, knowledge, participation and observation of crisis?

Enduring experiences of crisis are accompanied by ever more concerted efforts to implement change. Organizations the world over are engaged in change management journeys. In Southern Africa the focus is on decolonization and the necessity of 'a' decolonial

turn in higher education. The precarious hypothesis is that if the organization is the locus of substantive change, the force and fervour of organizational change will be sufficient to address the challenges inherent in global society. We propose that this change discourse risks entrenching crisis, locking communities and universities in endless circuits of change, wearying those intent on reaching meaningful social and economic transformation. Fortunately, global society consists of and produces webs of meaning, power and obligation. This means that crisis also permeates society and creativity, influencing ritual practice, belief, heritage management, politics, art, fashion and style, social media and communication. We wonder if crisis can be generative and positive for society.

This conference seeks to harness the thoughts, theories and practices of researchers nationally and internationally to engage in debate, discussion, exhibition and/or performance on the central theme of crisis, culture and society in a time of global 'change'. We hope that the following questions will also be answered: How do we navigate periods of transition? What do we do with knowledge forged in the *longue durée* of history? What is the place of ancient traditions, intangible cultural heritage and endogenous philosophies in a world on the move? How should we respond to enduring contributions to crisis, evident in South Africa for instance in the themes of electricity supply, corruption, poor medical services and inadequate funding in universities? Does art, performance, self-styling and social media offer remedy and salve to the jagged-edge world of uncertain economies and derailing polities? How do we maintain social cohesion and a measure of relative peace in a context that requires us to change while it is itself changing?

Please send individual paper abstracts and panel proposals to the organisers at **Luvuyo.Kiti@mandela.ac.za** by **30 May 2019**. Panel proposals and individual paper abstracts should be no more than 300 words. For panel proposals, please include a list of prospective participants and their institutional affiliations if these have already been identified.

We welcome abstracts and proposals from anthropology and cognate disciplines that address social and cultural change from a theoretical and/or ethnographic perspective. We are particularly interested in papers which focus on the following themes:

- Indigeneity, tradition and authenticity

- Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous methodologies

- Racial politics, human rights and social justice

- Indigene-ship, migration, citizenship and land rights, identity construction and negotiation

- African philosophy, worldviews, belief systems, rituals, festivals and ceremonies

- Media, aesthetics and material culture

- Power, governance, leadership, politics, corporate world, religious organisations and intuitions of higher learning

- Gender based  violence, sexuality and sexual Identities

- Alcohol and substance abuse