

## Global Health: How can the concepts of "vulnerability" and "deservingness" facilitate new (situated knowledge based) futures?

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Transversal Disputation | 04 April 2022 | 4pm - 6pm (CET/SAST) | online via Zoom  
Please register with [bettina.schoen@hu-berlin.de](mailto:bettina.schoen@hu-berlin.de) to receive the link to the video conference.

### Speakers:

Seth M. Holmes (University of California, Berkeley), Ukhona Ntsali Mlandu (artist & activist, Cape Town)

### Moderators/Discussants:

Ulrike Kluge (Charité Berlin & Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Federico Settler (University of KwaZulu-Natal)

We are happy to invite you to the second Transversal Disputation of the International Research Training Group [Transformative Religion. Religion as Situated Knowledge in Processes of Social Transformation](#). The Transversal Disputations are a format in which guest speakers will discuss issues that 'transverse' the IRTG research focus on religion and relate to critical concepts, discourses and practices that circulate in politics, the economy, civil society, local communities. The Transversal Disputations seek to connect academic and public debates around crucial issues of our time concerning religion.

This Transversal Disputation critically addresses the omissions and asymmetrical power relations in current debates on global health. Despite the WHO-definition of "health", there are otherwise situated understandings and knowledges of what health and well-being are that have increasingly come into circulation. These local and translocal notions about health and well-being are impacted by social transformation, and in turn affect social transformation processes. Nevertheless, global health structures continue to be characterized by power asymmetries rooted in a long history of colonialism, racism, and patriarchal norms. These asymmetries result in the (re)production of social and health inequalities that are being circulated on local, translocal, transnational as well as inter-generational levels. The speakers in this Transversal Disputation will map their respective views on these processes and power asymmetries.

Social science and humanities driven conceptions of vulnerability and deservingness are rather new analytical concepts in health services, as well as in critical global health research and practice. So far, in health-related disciplines, vulnerability finds its niche in applied ethics, where it is largely used to identify groups at increased risk of harm and in need of protection. This understanding has been criticized for reducing vulnerability to a state of victimization and passivity that may reinforce paternalistic interventions – thus legitimizing a hegemonic disposition that perpetuates the asymmetrical power between the "vulnerable" and those offering benevolent protection. In particular, migrants, women of colour, and queer bodies are most vulnerable and subject to these moral regimes.

Starting with a critique of this constellation, the panel discussion extends notions of vulnerability and deservingness to the field of global health by elaborating on examples from (a) health and racialization in migration research (border politics), and (b) race, gender, and health in a decolonial African lens. The conditions and processes of vulnerability and deservingness will be discussed in light of the challenges of future global health research and practice, as well as articulations of indigenous conceptions of health.

Seth Holmes and Ukhona Mlandu bring particular and contextually rich competencies and perspectives to this topic and we trust that their discussion, with our own IRTG colleagues Ulrike Kluge and Federico Settler, will provoke questions about the social position and local situatedness of individuals in the context of health-inequalities, as well as local/ indigenous knowledge regimes.

## Speakers

**Seth M. Holmes** is a sociocultural anthropologist and physician and Dean's Professor at the University of Southern California. He has worked on social hierarchies, health inequities, and the ways in which such asymmetries are naturalized, normalized, and resisted in the contexts of transnational im/migration, agro-food systems, and health care. He has received national and international awards from the fields of anthropology, sociology, and geography, including the Margaret Mead Award. In addition to scholarly publications, he has written for popular media such as The Huffington Post and Salon.com; spoken on multiple NPR, PRI, Pacifica Radio and Radio Bilingüe radio programs; and produced the multiple-award winning ethnographic film, *First Time Home*. Most recently, he was awarded an ERC Consolidator grant focused on invisibilized relations between migrants and the rest of societies through food systems.

**Ukhona Ntsali Mlandu** is an artist, activist, and decolonial critic/observer based in South Africa. She is currently the director of Greatmore Studios in Cape Town and founder and head curator of makwande.republic in the Goshen Village, Eastern Cape. Her creative and activist work focusses on the lived and embodied experiences of black women, with special reference to the politics of public space and place-making, spatial, gender and obstetric justice, as well as heritage and memory. Among her many awards and installations, Mlandu's recent work included a public art intervention called *ukuzibuyisa: giving myself back to myself*. She was a finalist for the Birthrites Collective, and is presently working on the embodied archives of black women's bodies and social lives.

## Moderators/Discussants

**Ulrike Kluge** is professor for medical and psychological integration and migration research at the Clinic for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy at Charité, University Medicine Berlin. There she heads the Center for Intercultural Psychiatry and Psychotherapy (ZIPP) and the Research Group Intercultural Migration and Health Services Research, Social Psychiatry. She is head of the Department of Migration, Physical & Mental Health and Health Promotion at the Berlin Institute for Empirical Integration and Migration Research (BIM) at Humboldt University, Berlin. Prof. Kluge is currently leading various inter- and transdisciplinary research and intervention projects on (forced) migration and health, as well as on psychosocial integration and solidarity practices in the migration society.

**Federico Settler** is an Associate professor in sociology of religion from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. He has held several prestigious research fellowships, and most recently was a visiting Professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology's Centre for Interdisciplinary Study of Culture (2020). He has published widely on race, postcolonialism and migration, and its entanglements with religion. Prof Settler is Editor of *Culture and Religion* and serve on several editorial boards. His most recent publications reflect on race and the phantasies of benevolence in Nordic practices of hospitality. He is the author of the forthcoming book *Mundane Enchantments and Everyday Religion* (Routledge, 2022).

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