



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة

AUC International Conference on Research in African Challenges (ICRAC)

Track H1: Economies of Poverty

SUB-TRACK H1: THE NEW POLITICS OF REDISTRIBUTION IN AFRICA

Chair: Dr. Hania Sholkany

Co-chair: Dr. Dzodzi Tsikata

“Structures of distribution are determined by structures of production” (Ferguson 2015: 34). The past three decades have witnessed a shift in poverty and social policy and politics in the African continent whereby production and investment in infrastructure and in productive assets, once the mainstay of development policy have been eclipsed to some extent by the new programs of distribution. These are cash transfer programs and grants of South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Morocco and Egypt. These programs have been well studied and critically evaluated. They have had an effect on poverty but have also effected the content and meaning of citizenship. Cash transfers, basic income payments and work guarantees are no longer simple technologies of poverty and misery alleviation. Indeed, in an edited collection by anthropologists on cash transfers (Olivier de Sardan & Piccoli 2018), the authors question the possibility of understanding or championing such tools of distribution in the absence of an understanding of context, history, power and the realms of possibility.

The articulation of these large programs to the wider context has similarly been problematized by Devereux et al who have noted that externally-driven and/or funded social protection programs have little domestic traction. They are either perceived to be unnecessary, too generous or too miserly, too small if introduced as pilots and on the whole unsustainable or insignificant. They are yet another donor band-aid placed on a festering and deep wound (Devereux et al. 2010: 3).

This track will invite researchers from the continent to reflect on the politics and implications of social protection to citizenship, identity, and national development trajectories.

Biographies

Dr. Hania Sholkamy is an Egyptian anthropologist with a PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Sciences of the University of London. She obtained her BA and MA from The American University in Cairo (AUC). She is currently an associate research professor at the Social Research Center of the AUC. She has spent a decade working on social protection issues and has designed and piloted the cash transfers programs of the government of Egypt in her capacity as special advisor to the minister of social solidarity. She is a proponent of feminist social protection and has lobbied for the right of women to receive welfare and pensions in their own right and not as dependents. She was regional coordinator of the Pathways to Women’s Empowerment Research Consortium in partnership with the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex, United Kingdom.



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Prior to her current position, she was served as an assistant professor of anthropology in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Egyptology at AUC, worked as a research associate at the International Population Council and was the Ioma Evans Pritchard Junior Research Fellow at St. Anne's College of Oxford University. Her research interests and publications mainly revolve around the fields of poverty, health, particularly reproductive health, gender, population and qualitative methods. She has co-edited two volumes, one titled Categories and Contexts: Anthropological and Historical Studies in Critical Demography (OUP) with S. Szreter and A. Dharmalingam and another titled Health and Identity in Egypt (AUC press) with F. Ghannam.

She was a visiting fellow and professor at the American University in Beirut, the Arab Gulf University in Bahrain and Yale University. She has participated as a member of various professional associations including the Reproductive Health Working Group, the Committee on Anthropology and Demography of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (1998-2002) and the Advisory Committee of the Middle East Awards program of the International Population Council (2002/3). She was also a member of the executive committee of the Institute for Gender and Women's Studies of AUC, a fellow of the Economic Research Forum and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Arab Council for Social Sciences.

Dr. Dzodzi Tsikata: is a professor at the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research at the University of Ghana. Her academic interests include gender and development Issues, gender equity policies and practices. She was elected in June 2015 as the president of Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa at their 14th general assembly meeting in Senegal. Her research interests have also included the exploitation of local contract farmers by large corporate plantations that are often characterized as having "few linkages" into the economies of the countries that they operate in