While transnational approaches have flourished in history and the social sciences in recent decades, most of the historiography on Southern Africa remains distinctively “national” in scope. Often written from the centers of power, national histories tend to pay relatively little attention to what lies beyond the margins of the state or beyond the political borders of a given territory. While migration and diaspora necessarily underscore the porosity of national borders, the historiography on this issue has been often compartmentalized and, as a result, has failed to capture the complexity of human mobility in its various forms. Here we must consider the often neglected relations between multiple communities (e.g. different migrant groups) in the process of (un)settlement, but also bear in mind that people co-exist and interact with a myriad of other elements themselves in circulation, from objects and merchandise to non-human actors. Building on these premises, the International Conference “Circulations: the (un)making of Southern Africa beyond and across borders” will address how critical border-making and border-crossing processes have been, and still are, in shaping the historical trajectories of the various social spaces in the region. By focusing on circulation this conference intends to challenge the idea of the inside and the
outside (of a nation, a society or a group) as two comfortable or self-evident positions, and proposes instead to problematize each endpoint by emphasizing the various forms of movement, traffic and conversations occurring in between.

To be sure, migration is a critical part of this puzzle. In Southern Africa, this issue has been mostly written about in relation to the mechanisms of control of the African (and sometimes Asian) labor force. But we know relatively less about people who migrated illegally, off the official grid (or about those who facilitated various forms of illegal border-crossing). International tourism, in all directions, is another powerful pathway of regional human mobility that has been commonly overlooked. Soldiers, policeman, intelligence officers, as well as anti-colonial and anti-apartheid actors in several Southern African locations crossed the border more often, and more consequentially, than we have earlier thought. Decolonization and the global Cold War affected patterns of regional and trans-regional circulations in ways that are still to be fully mapped. In the aftermath of independence, for instance, Angola and Mozambique were inviting to political activists from the region and beyond, most noticeably the Socialist block. Our focus on Southern Africa, thus, should not occlude the fact that movements took, and take, place not only within the region, but also beyond its shores, e.g. in the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, and in trans-regional dimensions.

The shift in focus from human mobility alone to circulations in a broader sense suggests that people were not the only actors crossing the border. The circulation of material goods and of ideas and imaginings needs to be unpacked, in their past and present configuration. Objects, merchandise, produce, books, artworks, photographs, postcards, newspapers, film, correspondence, and so on, all were (and are) makers of connectivity in their own right. Yet, little is known of the material cultures and social worlds enabled by and associated with these “things” (and their social life). Likewise, the material pathways of movements, such as roads, railways, shipping lines, etc, are still relatively unexplored in terms of their social and cultural histories. Symbolic and cultural practices, too, call for further examination beyond a strictly national paradigm. Journalists and news have been consequential to the ways in which various life worlds come to know and imagined each other. Writers and artists have looked at and beyond borders as a way of critically examining notions of identity and belonging, often drawing
on their own experiences of mobility. In particular, contemporary artists, photographers and filmmakers have been addressing histories and memories of border-making and border-crossing through archival and research-based practices with impact on the historiography, while the circulations of their works (and of their own) in and beyond Southern Africa also demand further analysis.

Having all this in mind, this conference invites scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds (history, sociology, anthropology, area studies, cultural studies, art history, etc.) to rethink the region’s past and present in its multiple transnational intricacies and complex maps of connectivity, beyond and across borders. We encourage interested scholars to send paper proposals for 20 minutes presentations in any of the following indicative, but not exhaustive, areas:

- **Borderlines**: the making and unmaking of borders in Southern Africa.
- **Of Settlements and Diaspora**: rethinking migration and settler colonialism.
- **Dangerous liaisons**: security and circulation under colonialism and apartheid.
- **Migrating power**: networks and movement during liberation struggles.
- **Pathways of circulation**: social histories of infrastructure (roads, railways, etc).
- **Bodies on the move**: histories of legal and illegal migration, for labor and leisure.
- **Intersections**: the politics of race, gender and class in transnational movements.
- **Knowledge unbound**: scientific cooperation and circulation of scholars and ideas.
- **Celebrating togetherness**: the politics of cultural diplomacy and official visits.
- **Moving objects**: consumption, material cultures and the social worlds they make.
- **Moving words**: circulation of newspapers, correspondence, books, etc.
- **Moving images**: photography, film, art, and visual culture across borders.
- **Entangled representations**: circulation of writers, artists, filmmakers, etc.

Potential contributors should submit a short abstract (no more than 200 words) and a career description (one paragraph, no more than 15 lines) **no later than May 31, 2016**. Notification of acceptance will be sent out on **June 15, 2016**. Draft papers are expected on **October 1, 2016**, and will be pre-circulated amongst participants. We intend to publish a collection of papers. Please visit our website:

www.circulationsconference.wordpress.com
Abstracts should be sent to both organizers:
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