

## **+/- 1632m: disturbing the Swiss/African Commons**

Senior Fellow: Hannah le Roux, Guest Professor

Associate Fellow: Tom Avermaete, Chair for the History and Theory of Urban Design

ETH Zürich. Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta)

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### **Abstract:**

The idea of the commons has entered urban studies as a way to describe the shared resources that shape cities. In contrast with this positive view, histories of north-south extractivism show the territorialisation of indigenous common lands and praxis. This event suggests a third, intersecting definition of a commons. Using trans-disciplinary and cross site studies, it explores how Western techné reshapes and disturbs the commons on the African continent, through acts of survey, settling and servicing the land. At the same time, the use of such techné might be reconsidered with a view to reparation.

The event takes place on the anniversary of an important day in Africa's de-colonial history: the student uprisings against apartheid that began in Soweto on June 16th, 1976. The event uses as its datum a typical domestic property, lying 1632m above sea level, that was impacted by three apparently unlinked, and little remarked on moments of Swiss technical practice. These dimensions will serve as a starting point to explore other aerial, terrestrial and sub-surface positions and disturbances, amplified through creative research, in conversations that reach towards the repair of the Commons at a planetary scale.

Three sessions will be bracketed by three artists projects created for this event, following the course of the day from sunrise to sunset in Soweto. We conclude with an apéro designed around Swiss/Basotho food histories. Together, they will offer new perspectives on these common histories.

### **Symposium**

13:00 Opening remarks Sebastian Bonhoeffer

13:05 Moment of silence for the youth of June 16.

### **Session 1 - *What makes a Swiss/African Commons?***

13.10 Rita Kesselring: *Relations, interdependencies and commons between Southern Africa and Switzerland.*

13.45 Hannah le Roux: *Sectioning Colonial Architecture*

### **Session 2: *Aerial views on the Commons***

14:00 Ignacio Acosta: *Drones as counter-surveillance tool in the fight against extractive industries*

14:30 Thomas Chapman: *From Above and Beyond: Exploring Drone Perspectives in Post-Apartheid Urban Design Discourse*

### **Session 3: *Food Commons***

14:45 Grace Gloria Denis: *Aural Oral: listening as a precursor to response-ability.*

15:05 Natalia Solana Meza: *Hidden from the naked eye. Contamination within and beyond the agricultural landscapes of the United Fruit Company.*

15:40 tea and coffee break

### **16:00 discussion: *Levelling Swiss/African histories***

Tom Avermaete, Samia Henni, Sebastiaan Loosen, Rita Kesselring

## **Artworks**

**Nolan Oswald Dennis: *A Long Sun\_rise***

Labor gallery

**Ignacio Acosta: *Litte ja Goabddá* [Drones and Drums] [2016-2018]  
and *Archaeology of Sacrifice* [2020]**

Where: Meridian room

When: 11:45–12:45 and 17:20–18:00

17:00 - 18:00 Small Observatory and common spaces

### **Apéro**

**Grace Gloria Denis: apéro design and realisation**

**Lineo Segoete: sound piece, *Litholoana* (seeds/fruit trees/harvest/outcomes)**