

# ERIN TORKELSON

Geography Department  
University of California, Berkeley  
505 McCone Hall #4740, Berkeley, CA 94720  
USA: +1 480 2410980 / RSA: +27 76 798 3137  
[etorkelson@berkeley.edu](mailto:etorkelson@berkeley.edu)

## EDUCATION

- 2020 Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley, Department of Geography  
*Taken for Granted: Geographies of Social Welfare in South Africa*  
Gillian Hart (chair), Michael Watts, Donald Moore, Sharad Chari, Michael Burawoy
- 2005 M.Phil., Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, Department of English
- 2003 B.A., Arizona State University, Department of English and Barrett Honors College

## AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

### National Fellowships

- 2017 Charlotte Newcombe Dissertation Completion Award, Woodrow Wilson Foundation
- 2015 Wenner-Gren Dissertation Fieldwork Award, Wenner-Gren Anthropology Foundation
- 2014 Foreign Language and Area Studies Award, US Department of Education
- 2006 Fulbright Fellowship, International Institute of Education, US Department of State

### Institutional Fellowships

- 2018 Graduate Division Summer Fellowship, Graduate Division, UC Berkeley
- 2018 International Conference Travel Award, Graduate Division, UC Berkeley
- 2016 Rocca Scholarship in African Studies, Center for African Studies, UC Berkeley
- 2015 Simpson Memorial Research Fellowship, International and Area Studies, UC Berkeley
- 2015 Rocca Scholarship in African Studies, Center for African Studies, UC Berkeley
- 2015 Summer Language Scholarship, Center for African Studies, UC Berkeley
- 2015 Outstanding Graduate Instructor Award, Center for Teaching Excellence, UC Berkeley
- 2014 Graduate Division Summer Fellowship, Graduate Division, UC Berkeley
- 2014 Geography Department Summer Fellowship, Geography Department, UC Berkeley
- 2013 Rocca Pre-Dissertation Award, Center for African Studies, UC Berkeley
- 2012-18 Geography Department Grant, Geography Department, UC Berkeley

## PUBLICATIONS

### Manuscripts Under Review

- ND Torkelson, Erin. "Taken for Granted: Cash Transfers as Debt Transfers." *World Development*. (Manuscript in Revision).

### Manuscripts in Preparation

- ND Torkelson, Erin. "Sophia's Choice: Debt and Debt Work." *Society and Space*. (Manuscript in preparation)
- ND Torkelson, Erin. "South African Geographies of the 'Welfare Queen.'" *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (Manuscript in preparation)
- ND Deborah James, **Erin Torkelson** and David Neves, "Savings, Investment, Borrowing: A South African Perspective on Thrift." In *Thrift*. Ed. Catherine Alexander and Daniel Sosna.

### Public Scholarship

- 2018 Esley Philander, Colleen Crawford-Cousins, Johan Abrahams and **Erin Torkelson**. "Easy Come, Easy Go: Social Grants and the Green Card." *Cutting Edge*. South African Broadcasting Company. 27 March. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAy0T3R8UDI>
- 2017 Torkelson, Erin. "The World Bank's Role in SA's Social Grant Payment System." GroundUp, 23 March. <http://www.groundup.org.za/article/world-banks-role-sas-social-grants-payment-system/>  
*Reprinted by Mail & Guardian, Huffington Post, News24, Daily Maverick*  
*Most viewed article on social grants on Google News (23-25 March 2017)*
- 2017 Torkelson, Erin. "Sophia's Choice: Farm Worker has to Decide which Child to Feed." GroundUp, 15 March. <http://www.groundup.org.za/article/sophias-choice-farm-worker-has-decide-which-her-children-feed/>  
*Reprinted by Independent Online and Daily Maverick*
- 2017 Torkelson, Erin. "Deductions from Social Grants: How it All Works." GroundUp, 3 March. <http://www.groundup.org.za/article/deductions-social-grants-how-it-works/>  
*Reprinted by Huffington Post, Business Day, and Independent Online*
- 2017 Erin Torkelson. "Deductions from Social Grants: How it All Works." *Daily Maverick Podcast*, Cliff Central Radio, Johannesburg. Air Date: March 7. <http://cliffcentral.com/the-daily-maverick-show/daily-maverick-show-social-grants/>
- 2015 Michael Watts, Camilla Hawthorne, Brittany Meche and **Erin Torkelson**. "What we Learn from the Film 'Concerning Violence' about Franz Fanon's Ideas. Africa is a Country, 8 April. <https://africasacountry.com/2015/04/movie-night-a-discussion-on-goran-olssons-2014-film-concerning-violence-about-franz-fanons-writings-and-ideas/>

### Policy Briefs

- 2019 Torkelson, Erin. "Debt and Cash Transfers: Port Elizabeth, Limehill, Botshabelo, Delft." *Black Sash Policy Brief*, Cape Town, RSA: Black Sash.

- 2017 Torkelson, Erin. "EasyPay Card Recourse: Port Elizabeth, Limehill, Delft." *Black Sash Policy Brief*, Cape Town, RSA: Black Sash.
- 2017 Torkelson, Erin. "Five Country Survey of Social Grant Payment Arrangements." *Black Sash Policy Brief*, Cape Town, RSA: Black Sash.
- 2012 Torkelson, Erin with Mark Eshbaugh, Greg Maly, Jonathan Moyer. "Putting the Breaks on Road Traffic Fatalities in Africa," *African Futures Brief No 3*, Pretoria, RSA: The Institute for Security Studies.
- 2011 Torkelson, Erin with Keith Gehring, Patrick McLennan, Jonathan Moyer, Hopolang Selebalo. "Knowledge Empowers Africa: The benefits of increased investment in education," *African Futures Brief No 2*. Pretoria, RSA: The Institute for Security Studies.
- 2011 Torkelson, Erin with Eric Firnhaber, Patrick McLennan, Jonathan Moyer "Taps & Toilets: How access can radically improve Africa's future," *African Futures Brief No 1*, 25 August. Pretoria, RSA: The Institute for Security Studies.
- 2011 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "Considering Affordability for End Users," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(12), 1 May. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2011 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "Land Use for Sustainable Housing," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(11), 1 April. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2011 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "Good Design and Construction," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(10), 1 March. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2011 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "Housing Typologies," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(9), 1 February. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2011 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "Tenure Options," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(8), 1 January. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2010 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable People," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(7), 1 December. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2010 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "Community Participation and Leadership," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(6), 1 November. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2010 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "Considering Livelihoods," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(5), 1 October. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.

- 2010 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "An Integrated Approach to Development," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(4), 1 September. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2010 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "Good Location," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(3), 1 August. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2010 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "South African Housing Policy," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(2), 1 July. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2010 Torkelson, Erin and Tonkin, Anzabeth. "Sustainable Urban Development," *Urban Land Matters*, 1(1), 1 June. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2010 Torkelson, Erin. "Netreg Housing Project: Remaking City and Vernacular Economy According to Communal Needs and Desires," *Inclusive Housing Case Studies*. Cape Town, RSA: Development Action Group.
- 2006 Torkelson, Erin and Ndashe, Sibongile. *Know Your Relationship Rights*, Cape Town, RSA: Women's Legal Centre.
- 2006 Torkelson, Erin and Ndashe, Sibongile. *Know Your Inheritance Rights*, Cape Town, RSA: Women's Legal Centre.

## **EXPERT SUBMISSIONS**

- 2019 "From Private to Public: Monitoring the Welfare Transition," South African Social Security Agency, with Lynette Maart and the Black Sash, Johannesburg, RSA, 15 July.
- 2018 "Is Recourse Possible?: Black Sash Selected Case Studies," South African Constitutional Court, Panel of Experts, with Lynette Maart and the Black Sash, Johannesburg, RSA, 16 March.
- 2018 "The Techno-optimism of Cash Transfer: Financial Technologies in Welfare," The Banking Association of South Africa, with Lynette Maart and the Black Sash, Cape Town, RSA, 28 February.
- 2017 "Black Sash Net1 Monitoring," South African Social Security Agency, with Lynette Maart and the Black Sash, Johannesburg, RSA, 15 September.
- 2012 "African Futures and South African Presents," South African Departments of International Relations and Cooperation, Trade and Industry, and Defense with the Pardee Centre from Denver University, Pretoria, RSA, 14 February.

- 2012 “African Futures,” African Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and UN Habitat, with the Pardee Centre from Denver University, Pretoria, RSA, 13 February.
- 2012 “African Futures and Cape Town’s Presents,” Western Cape Department of Economic Development, with Hennie van Vuuren, Cape Town, RSA, 26 July.
- 2011 “Effective Responses to Organized Crime in Southern Africa,” Kenyan Office of the Presidency Mombasa, Kenya, 29 August - 2 September.
- 2009 “The N2 Gateway Project,” South African Parliament, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, with Kailash Bhana and the Development Action Group, Cape Town, RSA, 27 October.
- 2008 “Namibia’s Country-Wide Slum Upgrading,” UN Commission on Sustainable Development with the Namibian Slum Dwellers Federation, New York, USA, 5 - 16 May.

## **CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION AND PRESENTATIONS**

### **Conferences Organized**

- 2019 “Debt and Social Welfare,” Conference organizer with Deborah James and the Black Sash, Black Sash, Cape Town, RSA, 23-28 August.
- 2015 “Race, Space, Violence,” Conference organizer with Camilla Hawthorne, Andrea Marston, Meredith Palmer, and Brittany Meche, University of California Graduate Student Conference, Omni Commons, Oakland, USA, 3-5 June.

### **Panels Organized**

- 2019 “Health as Fix I and II: Geographies of the Biopolitical in Settler and Post Colonies,” Panel organizer with Stephen McIsaac and Meredith Palmer, Association of American Geographers, Washington DC, USA, 4 April.

### **Conference Presentations**

- 2019 “Collateral Damages: South Africa’s Techno-spatial Fix,” Association of American Geographers, Washington DC, USA, 4 April.
- 2018 “Life on an Instalment Plan: Debt, Social Grants and South Africa,” Africa in the World, American Anthropology Association and African Studies Association, Johannesburg, RSA, 26 May.
- 2016 “isiXhosa Articulations of Home: Thinking Alongside Gillian Hart,” Association of American Geographers, San Francisco, California, USA, 29 March - 2 April.

### **Invited Presentations**

- 2019 “Poverty Finance: Techno-Finance for the Poor from Apartheid to the Present,” Department of Geography, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, RSA, 20 September.
- 2019 “Household Debt and Dispossession through Social Welfare,” Rethinking Economics for Africa Festival, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, RSA, 6 September.
- 2018 “Collateral Damage: Debt and Social Grants” Hands Off Our Grants Strategic Review, Black Sash, Cape Town, 3 July.
- 2017 “Easy Come, Easy Go: Debt and The EasyPay Card,” Hands Off Our Grants Strategic Review, Black Sash, Cape Town, RSA, 12 July.
- 2017 “Living the Lottery: Social Grants and the Politics of Development Discourse” PLAAS Seminar Series, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, RSA, 16 June.
- 2017 “Sophia’s Choice: Do Social Grants (Really) Work?” Social Grants and Intergenerational Relations Conference, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, RSA, 10 April.
- 2017 “South Africa’s Social Grants in Context: Upending Development Thinking,” Hands Off Our Grants Strategic Review, Black Sash, Cape Town, RSA, 29 May.

### **Institutional Presentations**

- 2018 “Taken for Granted: Cash Transfer as Debt Transfer” Center for African Studies, University of California, Berkeley, USA, 19 September.
- 2017 “The Moral Economy of Debt,” Guest Lecture in Introduction to Geography. Geography Department, University of California, Berkeley, USA, 14 November.

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

### **Primary Instructor**

- 2019 Nature, Culture, Power, Department of Geography, University of California, Berkeley, USA, Summer Session 2019.

### **Graduate Student Instructor**

- 2017 Introduction to Geography, Jake Kosek, Department of Geography, University of California, Berkeley, USA, Fall 2017.
- 2013/14 Development in Theory and History, Gillian Hart, International and Area Studies, University of California, Berkeley, USA, Spring 2013 and 2014.
- 2013 Introduction to Development, Michael Watts, International and Area Studies,

University of California, Berkeley, USA, Fall 2013.

2007/06 South Africa Summer Study Abroad Program, School of Social Justice and Transformation, Arizona State University, USA, Summer Session 2006 and 2007.

### **High School Teacher**

2004-05 English as a Second Language and Freshman English Literature, McClintock High School, Tempe Union High School District, Arizona, USA.

### **FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE**

2019 London School of Economics (LSE) Funded Fieldwork, RSA (3 months)  
Researched debt and social grants in 9 cities for the Black Sash with Deborah James (LSE) and David Neves (University of the Western Cape).

2017-18 Intermittent Fieldwork, Black Sash, Cape Town, RSA (6 months)  
Researched debt and the EasyPay card in 4 cities for the Black Sash and National Credit Regulator.

2016-17 Dissertation Fieldwork, Black Sash, Cape Town, RSA (14 months)  
Researched deductions from social grants in 4 cities for the Constitutional Court; completed a research project on social welfare as collateral in five countries; participated in quarterly surveys at social grant distribution points.

2015-16 Dissertation Fieldwork, Siyakhathala, Cape Town and Cala, RSA (12 months)  
Conducted over one hundred interviews on household budgeting practices, livelihoods strategies and social grant payments.

2014 Pre-Dissertation Research, Cape Town and Cala, RSA (3 months)  
Researched the politics of home making between the urban township of Khayelitsha and the rural village of Cala; studied intermediate Xhosa.

2013 Pre-Dissertation Research, Cape Town and Cala, RSA (3 months)  
Researched the politics of home making between the urban township of Khayelitsha and the rural village of Cala; studied beginning Xhosa.

### **WORK EXPERIENCE**

2010-12 Researcher, Corruption & Governance Program, Institute for Security Studies, Cape Town, RSA  
Managed multi-country research project on urban areas governed by gangs and sustained by criminal economies (CIDA funded); managed multi-country futures modeling project on development in Africa; contributed to research projects on economic crime, environmental crime, and corporate tax evasion.

- 2009-10 Researcher, Land & Housing Program, Development Action Group, Cape Town, RSA  
 Researched and wrote submissions to Parliament on the N2 Gateway Housing project; researched and wrote case studies on medium density urban development projects; wrote and designed twelve periodicals on medium density urban upgrading to undo apartheid spatial planning.
- 2009 Researcher, Urban Poverty Program, Asian Coalition of Housing Rights, Bangkok, Thailand  
 Researched housing policy and social movements in Thailand, Hong Kong, South Korea, Mongolia, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.
- 2006-08 Researcher, Urban Poverty Program, Shack Dwellers International, Cape Town, RSA  
 Researched and reported on housing policy and social movements in Kenya, Namibia, Malawi, Philippines, India and Sri Lanka; built and mentored grassroots research team to collect data on tenure security and housing projects in 20 countries.
- 2005-06 Researcher, Legal Education Program, Women's Legal Centre, Cape Town, RSA  
 Wrote popular education materials on women's inheritance and marriage rights.

## **SERVICE EXPERIENCE**

### **Service for the Discipline**

Reviewer for *Society and Space* (2019 – present)

### **Service for the Department**

Graduate Student Representative to Faculty, Berkeley (2017 – 2018)

Graduate Student Representative for Colloquium Speakers, Berkeley (2014 – 2015)

Member, UAW Local 2865, Graduate Student Union, Berkeley (2012 – 2019)

## **TEACHING AREAS**

### **Lower Division**

Introduction to Geography

Introduction to Development Studies

Introduction to African Studies

Geographies of Justice

### **Upper Division**

Political Economic Geographies

Financial Geographies: Value and Values

Geographies of Gender, Race and Class

Postcolonial and Decolonial Geographies

Cities of the South



Poverty and Inequality  
Nature, Culture, and Power  
Geographies of African Memoir

## **LANGUAGES**

Xhosa – basic spoken, intermediate reading  
Spanish – basic spoken, intermediate reading  
American Sign Language – dormant

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

Member, American Association of Geographers  
Member, African Studies Association, USA  
Member, Graduate Group on Gender and Difference, Berkeley  
Member, Radical Geographers Working Group, Berkeley  
Member, UAW Local 2865, Graduate Student Union, Berkeley

## REFERENCES

Gillian Hart  
Professor of Geography  
505 McCone Hall #4470  
University of California, Berkeley  
Berkeley, CA 94702  
hart@berkeley.edu  
(510) 6423903

Michael Watts  
Professor of Geography  
505 McCone Hall #4470  
University of California, Berkeley  
Berkeley, CA 94702  
mwatts@berkeley.edu  
(510) 6423903

Donald Moore  
Associate Professor of Anthropology  
232 Kroeber Hall  
University of California, Berkeley  
Berkeley, CA 94702  
dsmoore@berkeley.edu  
(510) 5472310

Sharad Chari  
Professor of Geography  
University of California, Berkeley  
505 McCone Hall #4470  
Berkeley, CA 94702  
chari@berkeley.edu  
(510) 6423903

Michael Burawoy  
Professor of Sociology  
University of California, Berkeley  
410 Barrows Hall  
Berkeley, CA 94702  
[burawoy@berkeley.edu](mailto:burawoy@berkeley.edu)  
(510) 6424766