



## CLARE HALL CAMBRIDGE

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**Presentation:** 'Structural and spatial inequalities and violence against women in post-apartheid South Africa'

My presentation focused on the relationship between poverty, structural and spatial inequalities and violence against women in post-apartheid South Africa. Drawing on life story research conducted for my MPhil thesis at the University of Cape Town from 2014-2016, I showed how these intersecting forms of violence and inequality serve to complicate, and often limit, marginalised women's access to education. I argued that life story research is a useful method to illustrate the difficult choices, dilemmas and constraints many women face in accessing quality education for themselves and their children in conflict and post-conflict setting. I further showed how pursuing education in these situations is often accompanied by increased risks, vulnerability and sacrifices. Importantly, the life stories I conducted with marginalized women in post-apartheid South Africa highlight women's remarkable agency, resilience and ability to care for self and others in the face of on-going violence, poverty and exclusion. But while recognizing women's agency and contributions is important to challenge images of women as passive and powerless, I argued that scholars should not end the analysis there, but must also address the social and political production of gender vulnerabilities, inequalities and indifference. One of the key findings of my research is that gender vulnerabilities and inequalities have not only endured in the post-apartheid era, but have been actively reproduced by the neoliberal democratic state through disinvestment and urban planning. As a consequence, many women face similar challenges in accessing quality education during liberal democracy as they did during the height of apartheid. While my research can be read as a particular critique against the South African government's failure to address apartheid's legacies and fulfil the state's constitutional obligations, I highlighted two general conclusions pertaining to the topic of this conference. Firstly, I argued that we, when thinking about gender equality and access to education in conflict and post-conflict-setting, must be cognizant of the limits of liberal rights and democracy. Secondly, I argued that we, in order to better understand the barriers women face in accessing education, need an intersectional approach that takes into account, not only race, class, and gendered inequalities, but also spatial inequalities. While spatial inequalities are often neglected, naturalized or explained as an inevitable by-product of capitalism, I showed that spatial

inequalities are politically produced and reproduced, and can thus be addressed and transformed.

## **Bio**

Heidi Mogstad is currently enrolled in the MPhil Social Anthropology course at the University of Cambridge. Previously she has been awarded an MPhil Justice & Transformation, University of Cape Town where she conducted research on the relationship between structural and spatial inequalities, poverty and violence against women; MSc International Relations, LSE, and BA, Development Studies, University of Oslo, Aker Scholarship fellow. Her relevant research experience on the theme of gender equality and human rights include a nine-month qualitative research project on domestic violence and policing in the South African township Khayelitsha (2014-2015), and a peer reviewed paper, 'Policing the Private: Social Norms and Beliefs as Barriers to the Effective Policing of Domestic Violence' in *South African Crime Quarterly*, 2016 (56): 5-17 (see <http://journals.assaf.org.za/sacq/article/view/414>)