

GUILTY PLEASURES IN POSTCOLONIAL CITIES



SCAN TO READ THE FULL THESIS PRESENTATION

THINKING ABOUT SEXUAL AND GENDER DISSIDENCE FROM URBAN SPACES IN ABIDJAN AND KINSHASA

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY REFLECTION ON SUBALTERN URBANITIES EXPLORING HOW SPACES AND BODIES ARE GOVERNED AND CONTROLLED, BUT ALSO PRODUCED AND SUBVERTED IN AFRICAN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS.

Social norms and state rule control sexual identities and practices, but also their various modes of expression in urban spaces. The **politics of regulating bodies** – in both their social and biological dimensions – most strongly affect those that are seen as deviating from commonly accepted heteronormativity.

By concentrating different people, interests and activities but also the power relationships associated to these different entities, **cities function as preferred spaces for socio-political models' (re)production**. These models give rise to urban spaces that are more or less hostile to people on the basis of their gender and/or sexuality. **Spaces of exclusion of sexual dissidents and coextensive spaces of resistance** are behind a moral geography that this thesis will question from the position of **two post-colonial African cities** marked by recent conflicts, major urban and demographic expansion, and strong inequalities giving rise to various social demands, including those relating to identities.

Côte d'Ivoire and DRC share an **ambiguous legal contexts** where there is no condemnation of LGBT+ identities, but where some practices are relegated to the private sphere to respect the legislation on 'indecent exposure', 'unnatural practices' and 'good moral standards'. As a result, gender and sexual dissidents have to play on different **registers of (in)visibility** to enable livability in the city. This occurs through developing an **inventive and pragmatic way of urban space and time (re)appropriation** that shapes the environments in which sexual dissidents exist and move around (e.g. strategic choice of location for establishments, code-swifting between night and day, use of a language reserved for the initiated, etc).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1

To what extent, do the power relations at play around sexual and gender dissidence in the city shape urban spaces and the postcolonial State?

2

How can the local study of sexual and gender dissidence from the perspective of the postcolonial city help to sketch out new political horizons and global epistemological potentialities for thinking differently about sexualities, the urban and the political – as well as their entanglement?

OBJECTIVE

Here, reflection begins where the quest for a planned urban order 'from above' ends by interrogating how on **how marginalised people and communities experience everyday life, state power, and access to urban 'public' spaces very differently depending of their social characteristics** – among which sexual orientation and/or gender expression.

The primary theoretical goal of this thesis is then to uncover to what extent **urban inequalities impact sexual dissidents' right to the city** - i.e urban resources, water, housing, land, or urban transport - **but also their urban subjectivity** - i.e ways of being, loving and thinking (in) the postcolonial city.

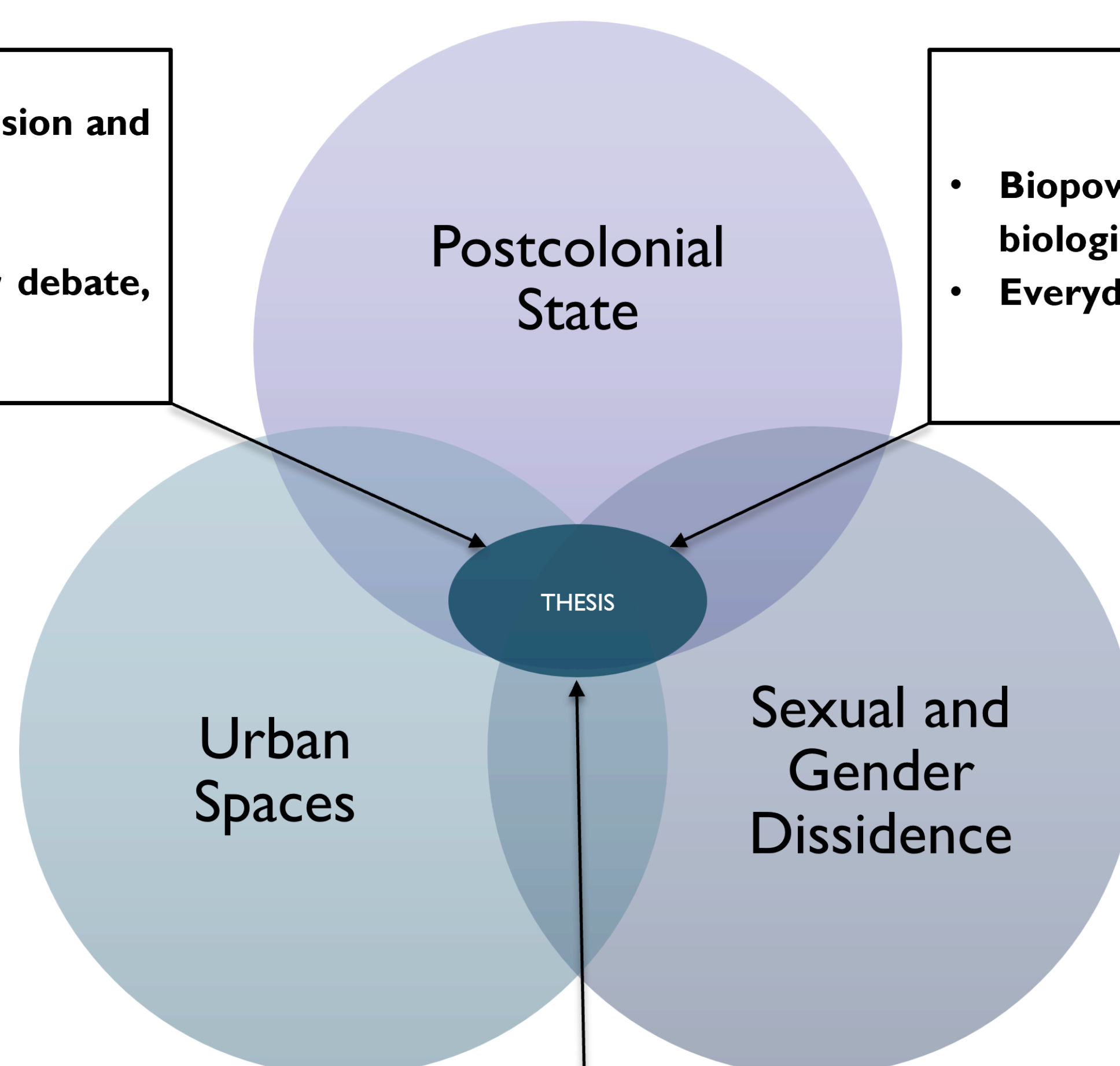
METHODOLOGY

To (literally) **visualise spatial and social dynamics and agencies that shape power relations** in the access to and use of urban spaces in Abidjan and Kinshasa, this study proposes an **interdisciplinary analysis from a feminist, decolonial and queer perspective**, focusing on **everyday life** using **participatory visual ethnography** tools during **six months fieldwork in each city**:

- Semi-structured interviews
- Participatory observation
- Ethnographic interviews
- Participatory mapping
- Relief Map (Rodó-de-Zárate 2014b; 2014a)
- Photovoice
- Capturing the urban soundscape across the city (soundwalking)
- Photography of street scenes, objects and built environments

GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THESIS' CONCEPTUAL DIMENSIONS

- **Urban planning, resource provision and governance**
- **Interface bureaucracy**
- **Urban space as a synonym for debate, democracy and 'public' opinion**

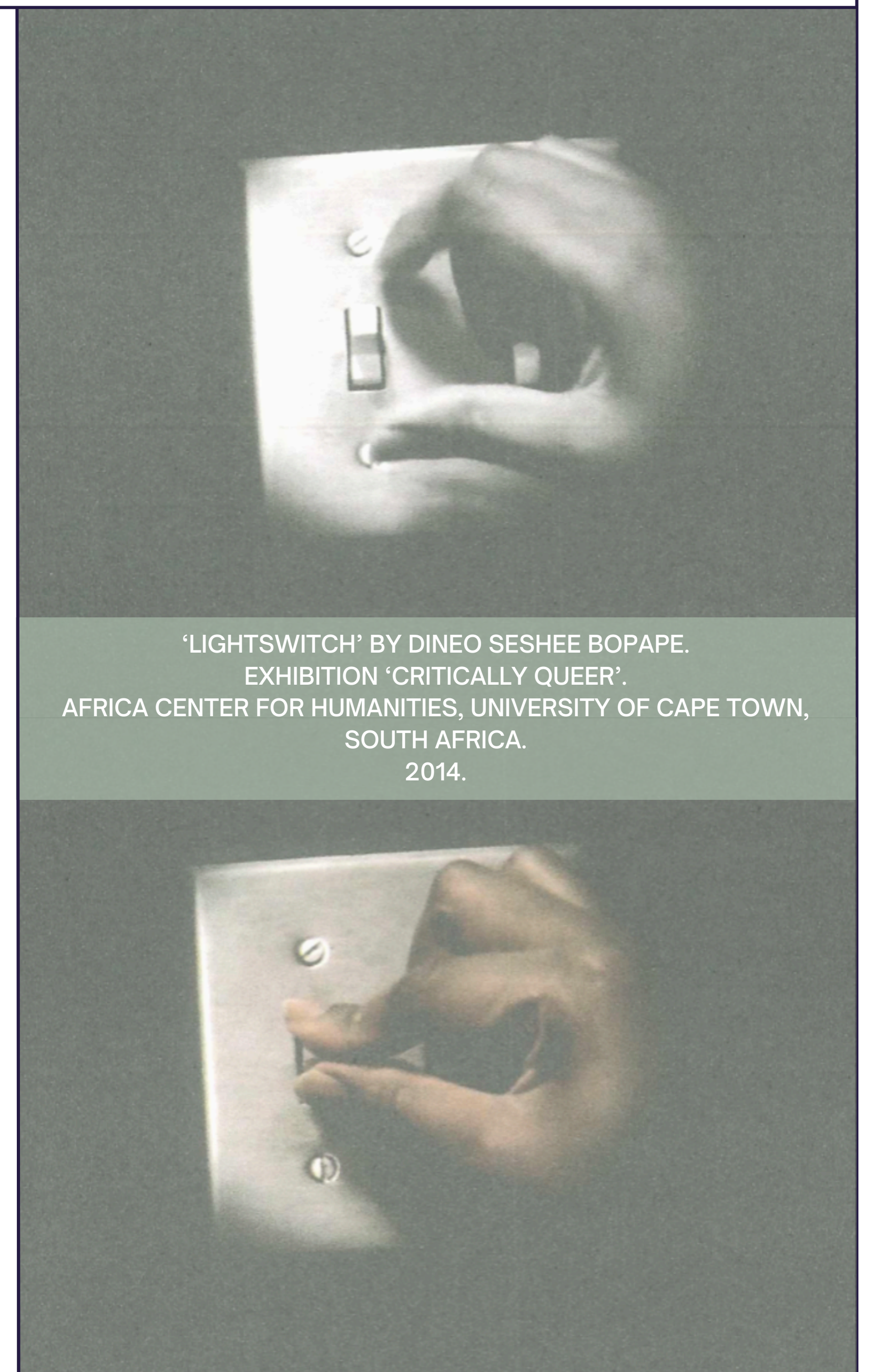


- **Biopower and the governance of (social & biological) bodies**
- **Everyday resistance & State formation**

Critical theoretical and methodological framework:

- Decolonial Approaches
- Queer Studies
- Feminist Theories

- **Urban socio-materiality between constraints that create inequalities and interstices of freedom**
- **Using the city in different ways, living space and inventing cities daily**



'LIGHTSWITCH' BY DINEO SESHEE BOPAPE. EXHIBITION 'CRITICALLY QUEER'. AFRICA CENTER FOR HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, 2014.

AUTHOR

Following the completion of a degree in Humanities and Social Sciences, Aline Nanko Samaké pursued training in international relations, specializing in Humanitarian Management and Advocacy. After gaining some professional experience with international organizations during three years between Paris and the Democratic Republic of Congo, she decided to return to her studies at the University of Geneva for a Master's in African Studies.

Aline Nanko Samaké continues to question the social world around her and strive to understand, conceptualize, and impact it as an apprentice researcher by engaging with issues related to gender, sexuality, global health, public spaces, and more, using tools borrowed from political science and anthropology. An advocate for research rooted in real life, she firmly believes in the transformational power that stems from closer ties between activists, artists, development stakeholders and researchers.

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