

RESEARCH WORKSHOP
SEMINAR SERIES 2025

A multidisciplinary approach to the study of Urban Crisis: A focus on the City of Johannesburg

16 OCT

Time: 1-3pm

Venue: PARI OFFICES

Register to attend in person

AND ONLINE

<https://rebrand.ly/5q8qbxz>

The 'Forefathers' of Braamfontein and Fashioning Black Masculinity

by **MPHO THATO MORARE**

This research explores how the 'forefathers' of Braamfontein, a vibrant inner-city hub in Johannesburg known for art, music and fashion, shape ideals of cool Black masculinity. I followed seven young men—urban cultural and style entrepreneurs—who play key roles in Braam's fashion and creative scenes. Four core participants include a piercing studio owner, a creative director, a stylist-jeweller and a thrift-store owner. Through participant observation, online and offline engagement, and semi-structured interviews, I examined how these men negotiate and perform cool masculinity. Their dress, movement and use of space reflect a dynamic interplay between individuality, social networks and broader cultural forces such as gentrification, hip-hop and social media. The study reveals how aesthetic knowledge is passed between generations, highlighting Braam's unique style culture, known as Mswenkofontein. This work contributes to scholarship on urban Black masculinities by foregrounding the spatial, cultural and intergenerational dimensions of cool in contemporary South Africa.

MPHO THATO MORARE is an MA Anthropology candidate at Wits whose research explores intersections of gender, identity, and urban life through a Black feminist lens.

DISCUSSANTS

THATSHISIWE NDLOVU is a postdoctoral fellow at the Narrative Enquiry for Social Transformation (NEST) at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her research explores the lived experiences of trauma and the ways individuals navigate its emotional, social, and political effects, with a particular interest in how violence, gender, and voice intersect.

THABANG SEFALAFALA is a lecturer in Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand. Thabang does research on people's experiences of unemployment and the meaning of work and how these interacts with identity formation, masculinity, social recognition, political engagement, social policy and development.