

Professor James Ferguson  
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# Give a Man a Fish:

## From Patriarchal Productionism to the Politics of Distribution in Southern Africa (and Beyond)

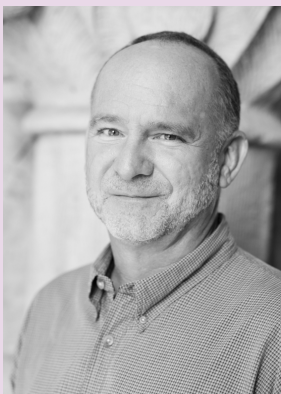
Thursday 26 March 2015 at 5pm

Room LG17, Faculty of Law

10 West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DZ

Followed by a reception in the atrium of the Law Faculty

In recent years, new and expanded programs of cash transfers have transformed the landscapes of poverty, social assistance, and citizenship (both within southern Africa and across the global South), yet scholars have often failed to grant these developments the attention they warrant. This paper argues that this inattention derives from deeply rooted ideas about the relative value of production and distribution - ideas that are becoming ever-more out of step with contemporary social and economic realities. It begins by reviewing the ubiquity of anti-distributionist sentiment in the domains both of scholarship and of practical policy-making, and explores the masculinist and misogynistic bases of such hostility toward distribution. It then notes certain reasons to believe that this state of affairs may be changing. Exploring recent distributive struggles in South Africa and Namibia as a window onto these new political possibilities, it argues that a new politics of distribution is emerging, in which citizenship-based claims to a share of national wealth are beginning to be recognizable as an alternative to both the paradigm of the market (where goods are received in exchange for labor) and that of "the gift" (where social transfers to those excluded from wage labor have been conceived as aid, charity, or assistance).



James Ferguson is the Susan S and William H Hindle Professor in the School of Humanities and Sciences and Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University. His research has focused on southern Africa (especially Lesotho, Zambia, South Africa, and Namibia), and has engaged a broad range of theoretical and ethnographic issues. These include the politics of "development", rural-urban migration, changing topographies of property and wealth, constructions of space and place, urban culture in mining towns, experiences of modernity, the spatialization of states, the place of "Africa" in a real and imagined world, and the theory and politics of ethnography. Professor Ferguson is the author of *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1990), *Expectations of Modernity* (1999), *Global Shadows* (2006), and *Give a Man a Fish* (2015).