



**Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), mobility
and the reconfiguration of marginality in Southern Africa**

**Coordinator: Professor Francis B. Nyamnjoh, Department of Social Anthropology,
University of Cape Town**

Members:

- **Dr. Volker Winterfeldt** Namibian university, Windhoek, Namibia
- **Dr Roukaya Kasenally, Senior Lecturer, Head of Social Studies Department,
Faculty of Social Studies and Humanities, University of Mauritius, Reduit,
Mauritius**

This Comparative Research Network project is at the intersection of the following priority areas identified in the CODESRIA call for applications: Re-thinking (African) Development; Re-thinking Democracy (in Africa); African Encounters with the Global System; Migration Dynamics and the Making of New Diasporic Communities; Changing Rural-Urban Linkages; New Regionalist Impulses in Africa; Conflict and Reconstruction in Africa; Law, Politics and Society; State, Political Identity and Political Violence; and Political Pluralism and the Management of Diversity.

This project investigates the diverse transformations wrought by new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), in particular mobile phones, in socially marginal populations within and between today's Southern African societies where mobility has become a prominent feature. The project questions how, when and why ICTs generate new configurations of marginality. The project focuses on social categories described as 'mobile margins' of the population that are both mobile and politically and economically marginal and whose members are engaged in maintaining social networks across localities. The research gathers empirical data that will enable the researchers to interrogate stakeholders and users views regarding ICTs. The results will contribute to on-going discussions on migration, marginality and ICTs in Southern Africa.

The premise of this study is that ICTs transform social relationships for the mobile margins. Our special interest is in transformations among marginal mobile populations: Do ICTs lead to new socio-economic relations? If yes, how? With what impact for marginal mobile populations? Do ICTs redefine socio-political relations? If yes, how? With what outcomes for the mobile margins targeted in this study? Do ICTs relate to development of the marginal (mobile) populations in Southern Africa? And if so how? Do ICTs mitigate social distance for mobile communities? What gender differences in ICT use, if any, are? If such differences in use exist, what are the consequences on gender relations?

The overall objective in this project is to investigate the reconfiguration of marginality wrought by new ICTs, in particular mobile phones, in populations within southern Africa rendered mobile by multiple socio-economic, cultural and political factors. Reconfigurations appear both at the level of social interaction and social structure, reflecting transformations in gender and generational relations.