

**Michael Degani**  
**Assistant Professor of Anthropology**  
**Johns Hopkins University**  
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### **Education**

- 2008 – 2015     Yale University PhD Program in Anthropology  
Dissertation (awarded with Distinction): *The City Electric: Infrastructure and Ingenuity in Postsocialist Tanzania.*  
Adviser: Mike McGovern
- 2006 – 2008     University of Florida, MA, Department of Anthropology  
Exam Fields: Political Economy, Urban Anthropology, Critical Theory  
Adviser: Brenda Chalfin
- 2001 – 2005     Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College at Florida Atlantic University  
BA Anthropology and Philosophy

### **Employment**

- 2015 – Present     Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Assistant Professor

### **Research and Teaching**

African Studies, Urbanism, Energy and Infrastructure, Socialism and Postsocialism, Anthropology of the State, Design, Dwelling, Materials

### **Publications**

- 2022             *The City Electric: Infrastructure and Ingenuity in Postsocialist Tanzania.*  
Forthcoming with Duke University Press.
- 2022             "The Flickering Torch: Power and Loss After Socialism."  
Forthcoming in *Critical Times*.
- 2021             "Cutting Without Cutting Connection: The Semiotics of Power Patrols in  
Urban Tanzania." *Signs and Society*, 9 no. 2: 176-203.
- 2020             "Air in Unexpected Places: Metabolism, Design, and the Making of an  
'African' Aircrete." *Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 38 no. 2: 125-  
145

- 2020 "Fuelling Capture: Africa's Energy Frontiers." Co-authored with Brenda Chalfin and Jamie Cross. *Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 38 no. 2: 1-18.
- 2019 Review of *Bottleneck: Moving, Building, and Belonging in an African City* by Caroline Melly. *Anthropology Quarterly*, 92, no.1: 259-262.
- 2018 "Shock Humor: Zaniness and the Freedom of Permanent Improvisation in Urban Tanzania." *Cultural Anthropology*, 33, no. 3: 473-498.
2018. "Becoming Infrastructural: An Interview with Michael Degani." With Scott Ross, Cultural Anthropology Website, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/becoming-infrastructural-an-interview-with-michael-degani>
- 2018 "Disservice Lines." Chokepoints. *Limn 10*.
- 2017 "La Véranda, le Climatiseur et la Centrale Électrique." *Afrique Contemporaine*, no.261-262: 103-121.
- 2017 "The Electric Fan." Theorizing the Contemporary. *Cultural Anthropology* website. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1264-our-electric-air>
- 2017 "Modal Reasoning in Dar es Salaam's Power Network." *American Ethnologist*, 44(2): 300-314.
- 2017 "Race and Electricity in Post-Socialist Tanzania." *The Corridor*, Cityscapes Magazine.
- 2013 "Emergency Power: Time, Ethics, and Electricity in Postsocialist Tanzania." In *Cultures of Energy: Power, Practices, Technologies*. Sarah Strauss, Stephanie Rupp and Thomas Love, eds. Left Coast Press.

### **Awards and Fellowships**

- 2021 Johns Hopkins University TOME (Towards an Open Access Monograph Ecosystem) Subvention Grant
- 2018 American Council of Learned Societies Postdoctoral Fellowship
- 2014 Mellon/American Council of Learned Societies Dissertation Writing Fellowship
- 2011 National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant
- 2011 Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Research Fellowship
- 2011 Wenner Gren Dissertation Fieldwork Grant
- 2011 U.S Student Fulbright Program, Alternate
- 2011 MacMillan Center Dissertation Research Grant [declined]

2010	Yale Agrarian Studies Summer Research Fellowship
2010	Council on African Studies Lindsay Theme Group Collaborations Grant Youth and Conflict in Africa
2009	Yale Macmillan Pre-Dissertation Grant
2009	Yale Lindsay Fellowship for Research in Africa
2008	Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad for Intensive Advanced Kiswahili in Tanzania
2007 / 2008	Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship Kiswahili, University of Florida [Declined 2008]
2006 / 2007	Grinter Fellowship, University of Florida

### **Invited Talks**

Sep 2019	The Flickering Torch: Blackouts and Phatic Communication in Urban Tanzania. Presented at Department of Anthropology and Sociology Fall Speaker Series, Concordia University.
Mar 2019	The Flickering Torch: Blackouts, Phatic Communication, and the Politics of Data in Tanzania. Keynote Address to “Futures,” MEDUSA Graduate Conference, University of Toronto
Mar 2019	Of Meters and Metis: Electricity Disconnection in Postsocialist Tanzania. Presented at Department of Development Sociology Seminar Series Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.
June 2018	Following the Current: Reflections on Ethnography On and Of(f) the Grid. Presented at Untangling the Grid, Toward an Anthropology Electric in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany.
Jan 2018	Personhood as Infrastructure: Derivation, Extension, and Self-Making Among Dar es Salaam’s “Street Electricians.” Presented at Carolina Seminar in African Ecology and Social Processes, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Oct 2016	Modality and Stupidity Across Dar es Salaam’s Electricity Network. Presented at History and Sociology of Science Workshop, University of Pennsylvania
March 2016	Hatchets, Thresholds, and the Moral Economy of Infrastructure in Peri- Urban Tanzania. Presented at George Washington University Anthropology Colloquium

March 2016 Of Meters and Metis: The Politics of Electricity in Urban Tanzania. Presented at Florida Atlantic University, Wilkes Honors College Anthropology Speaker Series

### **Presentations**

- Nov 2022 Chair, "Woven Strands: Crime, Capitalism and the State." American Anthropological Association Meetings.
- Oct 2020 Chair, "Vital Signs: Grids, Galvanisms, and the Sociopolitics of Electricity." Presented at the History of Science in Society/Society for the History of Technology (HSS/SHOT) Annual Meetings.
- Mar 2020 Co-organizer, Sense, Sentience and Sensors: An Interdisciplinary Conversation on Sensor Technology." JHU Mellon Sawyer Seminar: Precision and Uncertainty in a World of Data.
- Sep 2019 Modes, Mods, and Modesty: the Semiotics of Power Disconnection in Africa. Presented at Society for Social Studies of Science Annual Meetings.
- Mar 2019 Adventures in Aircrete. Presented at Energy Futures, Carter Conference for African Studies, University of Florida.
- Mar 2019 Panel Discussant, "Aggregate Futures." MEDUSA Graduate Conference, University of Toronto.
- Apr 2018 Shock Humor: Zany Aesthetics in Dar es Salaam. Video Essay presented at Displacements Online Conference, Society for Cultural Anthropology Biennial Meetings.
- April 2018 Panel Discussant, "Ritual Attunements." JHU Anthropology Graduate Students Conference, Being with Others in More-than-Human Worlds.
- Mar 2018 The Flickering Torch: Power and Loss After Socialism. Presented at Afrotopias Workshop, Zanzibar Institute for Research Public Policy, Stone Town Zanzibar.
- Nov 2017 A Grid of Three Colors: Race and the Political Economy of Electricity in Postsocialist Tanzania. Presented at the American Anthropological Association Meetings.
- Mar 2017 Panel Discussant, "Biomedical Objects in Africa: Production, Testing, and Distribution." Biomedical Objects in Africa workshop at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.
- Nov 2016 Hatchets, Networks and Precarity in Dar es Salaam's Electricity Grid. Presented at the American Anthropological Association Meetings
- Aug 2016 On and Off the Grid: An Ethnography of Tanesco Field Patrols. Presented at Rethinking Infrastructure Systems in East Africa, Ardhi University, Dar es

## Salaam

- Mar 2016 A Grid of Three Colors: ‘Asian’ Finance as Emergency Power in Tanzania’s Postsocialist Electricity Reforms. Presented at Inhabiting the Corridor Conference, Max Planck Institute for Religious Studies, Göttingen Germany
- Nov 2016 Emergency Power: A Recent History of the Tanzanian Energy Sector. Presented at American Anthropology Association Meetings
- Nov 2014 Panel Co-Organizer and Presenter. “Africa On and Off the Grid.” American Anthropology Association Meetings
- April 2014 Of Meters and Metis: Negotiating the Tanzanian Power Grid Presented at Yale Council for African Studies Brown Bag Lecture Series
- Mar 2014 From Commodity to Social Infrastructure: *Vishoka* and Self Realization Presented at Infrastructural Worlds conference, Duke University
- Nov 2013 Blackouts and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion in Tanzania Presented at American Anthropology Association Meetings
- Apr 2013 Bodaboda: Some Notes on Motorcycles and Youth in Dar es Salaam Presented at Agrarian Studies Spring Series; Association of American Geographers Meetings
- July 2012 Bodaboda: China/Africa Objects at Different Scales Presented at the Yale China Africa Diasporas Research Group Conference
- Dec 2011 The Moral Economy of Electricity in Dar es Salaam Presented at the University of Dar es Salaam Sociology and Anthropology Department
- April 2011 The City Electric: Infrastructure and Ingenuity in Postsocialist Tanzania. Presented at Yale Ethnography and Social Theory Colloquium
- April 2011 Commentator, “Modernity and Its Alternative: Colonial and National Identities in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Kenya” by Timothy Parsons. Transitions to Modernity Colloquium at Yale University
- Nov 2010 Bricks, Bikes and Batteries: Part-time Infrastructure in Peri-Urban Tanzania. Presented at American Anthropology Association Meetings
- Oct 2010 Electricity, Infrastructure, and Peri-Urbanism in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Presented at Agrarian Studies Research Fellows Panel
- Oct 2010 Commentator, “The White Men Bought the Forests: Conservation and Contestation in a Guinea- Bissau Park” by Marina Temudos. Agrarian Studies Colloquium, October 2010
- Dec 2009 Ethics and Energy Consumption in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Presented at American Anthropology Association Meetings
- Nov 2009 Postsocialist Ethics and Energy Consumption in Dar es Salaam Presented Yale Council for African Studies Brown Bag Lecture Series

March 2009 Panel Discussant, “Discourses on Neo-Imperialism: Globalization, Development and Debt.” Neo-Imperialism in Post-Independence Africa: Definitions, Case Studies and Human Impacts Conference at Yale University

### **Fieldwork**

May 2018  
–Aug 2018 Chanika ward, Dar es Salaam: Research on alternative building materials.

May 2016  
–Aug 2016 Chanika ward, Dar es Salaam: Research on peri-urban settlements and infrastructure.

May 2014 Dar es Salaam: Interviewed government officials and donors on Power Sector reform.

Aug 2012 Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Morogoro: Organized Yale China-Africa Diasporas Group research trip on Chinese commercial and agricultural initiatives in Africa.

Dec 2012  
– June 2011 Dar es Salaam: Dissertation research on electricity infrastructure. Participant-observation with national power utility Tanesco, contractors and electricians. Household surveys and energy diaries with power consumers. Preliminary research on motorcycle taxi drivers.

Aug 2010 Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Yi Wu: Yale China-Africa Diasporas field research on diasporic African communities

July 2010  
– June 2010 Chanika ward, Dar es Salaam: Research on peri-urban settlements and infrastructure.

Aug 2009  
– June 2009 Kariakoo market, Dar es Salaam: Pilot research on urban electricity consumption.

### **Other Scholarly Activities**

2016 – Pres Executive Board Member, Center for Africana Studies, Johns Hopkins University

2021 Reviewer for *Environment and Planning D, Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology, Social Anthropology*.

2020 Reviewer for *Energy Research and Social Science, Social Anthropology, HAU, Cultural Anthropology, Africa*.

2018 Team Member of ADHINCRA: Addressing Hypertension Care in Africa Study to test the feasibility of a multilevel, nurse-led, mobile health enhanced intervention in patients with uncontrolled hypertension in Ghana. Collaborative research partnership with Bloomberg School of Public Health and Johns Hopkins School of Nursing.

2019 Reviewer for *Cultural Anthropology*; National Science Foundation DDRIG.

- 2018 Reviewer for *American Ethnologist*; *Cultural Anthropology*; *History and Anthropology*; *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*; Bloomsbury Academic; National Science Foundation; Economic and Social Research Council UK
- 2017 Reviewer; *Cultural Anthropology*; *American Ethnologist*; Bloomsbury Academic.
- 2015 Reviewer; *Environment and Planning A*; *Journal of Asian Studies*; *Journal of East African Studies*.
- 2014 Co-Contributor; “Political Economy Analysis of the Energy Sector in Tanzania.” International Law and Policy Institute. Research report.
- 2010 – 2014 Yale and Hong Institute for Social Research: China Africa Diaspora Research Group.

### **Languages**

Kiswahili – Fluent

French – Elementary