# *Platform: in theory*

In 2021, **Platform** editors argued that an important collaborative investigation of change could be undertaken through a '*keywords'* approach. Such a project would assist in revealing the operation over time of social, political and cultural power through the changing sense of 'words' – spoken, written, in pictures. 'Keywords', in other words.

> Through exploring 'keywords/key-words' in sense-making in society our hope is to extend discussion. This is, of course, one of the prime purposes of any platform for ideas and debate. In commissioning this essay [that by John Higgins], we hope that our readers, especially new voices concerned with understanding, rather than just describing the everyday, to become collaborators in a Platform project on keywords.

In essence the following questions underpin this project: what are the current terms employed by those who have the power to describe the social world? What is the intention, and the effect on individuals as citizens? Do the meanings that these keywords carry enable us to identify, understand and act on essential problems and the catastrophic conditions within which the large majority of people find themselves?

What was said then remains firmly in mind as a rich and imaginative approach to discussions on the **Platform: in theory**. John Higgins introduced the topic in 2021; now we present a review article by Grahame Hayes. Hayes highlights an approach employed by Ian Parker that starts with periodisations, and then explores clusters of keywords that reflect changing approaches to power in each time frame. Hayes, himself, offers an example of such periodisation in the South African context (see below), for debate and possible stimulus to select representative keywords.

**Platform** welcomes collaborations in the keywords project through individual words, or through the periodisation approach.