

# New Generation of Academics Programme (UCT)

## Newsletter #1

October 2017

### *NGAP at Mont Fleur*



*At Mont Fleur: From (left to right at back) Siphiwe Dlamini, Nicola Pallitt, Mochelo Lefoka, Tabisa Mayisela, Joel Chigada, Genevieve Haupt, Amanda Mtya, Philile Mbatha, Geney Gunston. (Front) Shanali Govender, Zuziwe Msomi, Kentse Mpolokeng.*

Bucketing rain and a cold front were a feature of the August NGAP writing retreat at Mont Fleur, Stellenbosch. A happy band of NGAP lecturers, mentors and writing collaborators gathered to focus on tasks that ranged from conceptualizing research papers and writing thesis chapters to preparing conference presentations and applying for visas.

This was the second NGAP retreat and the enthusiastic participation and productivity suggest that there will be many more. In fact the feeling is 'the more the merrier'! Amongst the other activities which made slightly lower demands on intellect were a walk up the mountain, games of billiards and a lot of light-hearted banter.

Robert Morrell, the NGAP manager, talked about his Southern Theory research and how this body of work raised questions about knowledge production for the new generation of South African scholars, particularly those in NGAP. Noting how knowledge production remains dominated by researchers in the well-resourced, industrial North, he suggested that being conscious of this geopolitical reality could provide young scholars with an opportunity to contribute new perspectives to global debates. They had the opportunity to frame questions that related specifically to Southern realities (including inequality and poverty)

and to work in ways that consciously departed from what some call the neoliberal ethos of highly individualistic and competitive, market-driven knowledge-production.

He added that the NGAP cohort provided a small example of creating new networks and generating new, collaborative and generous ways of doing research. This he said, would contribute to transforming not just South African modes of enquiry – who conducts research, how they conduct it, the questions they ask, where they publish and so on – but could also pioneer a new Southern way.

### *The Togetherness of writing retreats*

The intention of the retreats is primarily to support NGAP lecturers in their writing endeavours, be this working on their theses or preparing manuscripts for publication.

To focus effort and energy, each attendee is asked to identify the tasks for the retreat. Some have got this down to a fine art. Here is an example.

“A couple of months ago I submitted two manuscripts to different journals, one South African, the other international. Both papers come from my masters’ dissertation and form the basis of creating my scholarly profile. They have nothing to do with my PhD but I plan to work on them in parallel to my thesis. I reviewed feedback from both journals a week ago.

The feedback forms the primary basis of my writing goals for the workshop. Over the 2.5 half days I will work on reviewing comments from the South African Journal, which required minor revision that needed a bit of extra reading. I have already mapped out the comments and the literature review that is required to revise the manuscript. I intend to start writing late Monday afternoon, submit the revised document to the journal on the 23 August 2017, and then start working on the other manuscript.”

Pretty impressive and thoughtful!

The Retreats also allow for mentors to work with their mentees and for NGAPers who have collaborative writing projects to work with collaborators. There are many advantages of bringing people together in this manner. These include producing an environment where uninterrupted group writing and conceptualisation can occur, where new networks are formed and friendships cemented, where UCT’s silo-ed landscape is integrated and connected and where accelerated progress is made with particular tasks.

NGAPers really appreciate the opportunity that the retreats offer. Here are some of their responses:

1. We actually got an awful lot done and have much of a paper ready to go to colleagues for first readings! I have to admit that I also really enjoy meeting and interacting with colleague from other departments. There is a lovely energy to meeting new people.
2. I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend this writing retreat. Not only to have had the space to think and write, but also to get to know people outside of my

department. Working at an institution such as UCT can make one feel very isolated and being at an interdisciplinary writing retreat allows networking but also getting to know people you otherwise would not have met, who come from similar backgrounds and have similar areas of interest. So thank you again for allowing me to attend the NGAP writing retreat as a collaborator.

3. I managed to do more work on the retreat than I did in my office with all its distractions). Thank you.
4. This was the best time ever. I managed to be in control of my work and time with no distractions at all. I had a productive time with my mentor and also enough time to rest also knowing that I have one goal to achieve and put all my focus and undivided attention on this.
5. The retreat was amazing! I have been looking forward to these days and my mind was mentally trained (somehow) to make the best of it! I enjoyed working throughout the night and the environment is so refreshing that I have been productive even during the day. The little chores (we do in our homes) usually cut off my working mode and here at the retreat there is nothing to do other than work (while you're being taken care of with excellent service). I really do look forward to these sessions – the bulk of my research write up has been from the two retreats. The cherry on top is being surrounded by amazing young minds with brain stimulating conversations and picking from Rob's encyclopaedia. :)



*At Zevenwacht Writing Retreat: (From left to right) Asanda Benya, Phindile Ntiliziywana, Philile Mbatha, Zuziwe Msomi, Amanda Mtya, Tabisa Mayisela, Sipiwe Dlamini (partially hidden), Suraya Scheba, Sipho Mfolozi. Robert Morrell (front)*

## *Germany and Japan - Zuziwe spreads her wings*

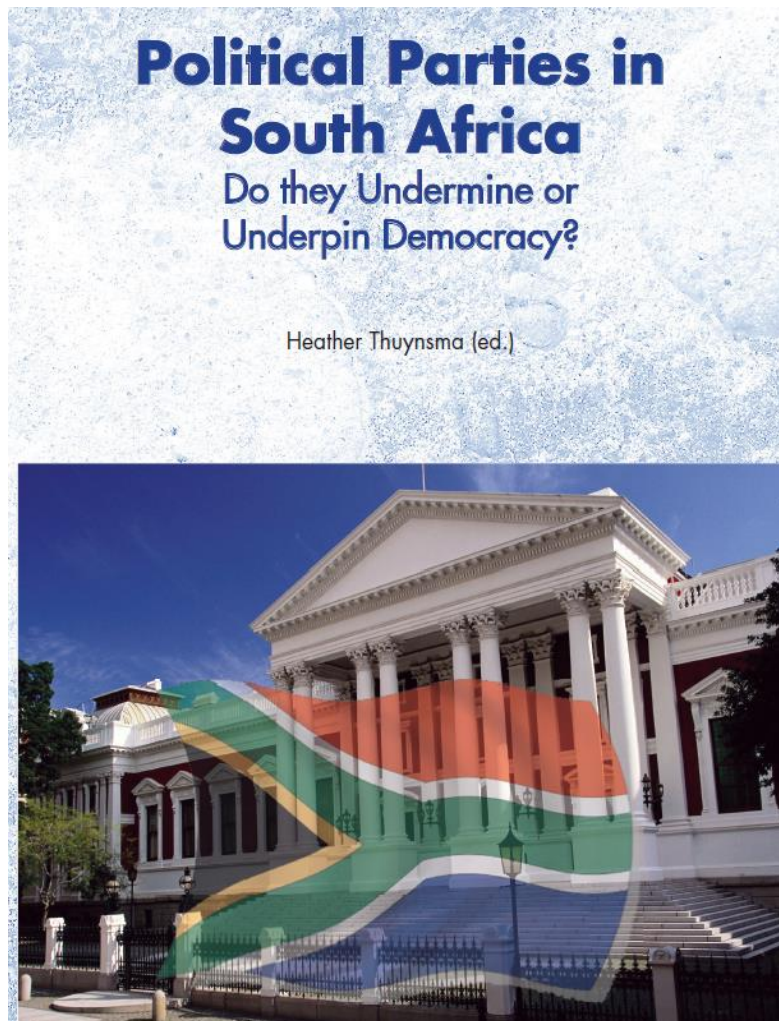
In June and August, Zuziwe Msomi travelled far to Germany and Japan respectively. In Germany she presented a paper at a conference titled 'The Global South on the Move: Transforming Capitalism, Knowledge and Ecologies'. The conference was held at the University of Cologne's Global South Studies Center (GSSC) Cologne. Zuziwe presented a paper titled "Whose eye matters?: thinking about whose voices and experiences we include in whiteness studies research".



Two months later Zuziwe was off to Japan as part of an NRF funded project led by Professor Francis Nyamnjoh which encourages research collaboration between South Africa and Japan. Amongst her activities was attending a symposium/workshop held at Shitennoji University. On this occasion, Nyamnjoh gave a paper on 'Rethinking Citizenship in 21st Century Africa'. In this paper he challenged the idea of the African citizen as an autonomous, rights bearing individual. Rather he argued that the African citizen often has intermediary solidarities and loyalties between themselves as an individual and the state. Often the ties are not by choice but by blood, and the state is caught between and betwixt corrupted cultural tradition and blighted modernity. The lived experiences of the African citizen thus suggest that we rethink citizenship beyond limited and narrow ideas of freedom as provided by constitutions, and our relationship with the state.



*Phindile contemplates Political Parties and Parliamentary Democracy*



Joining up with UCT Professor of Public Law Danwood Chirwa, Phindile Ntliziywana has recently published a chapter on “Political parties and their capacity to provide parliamentary oversight” in the book, *Political Parties in South Africa: do they undermine or underpin democracy?*

Chirwa and Ntliziywana acknowledge the development of oversight mechanisms and fundamental shifts in improving accountability since 1994. “Some good things have happened, especially in the way institutions can be called to account,” says Chirwa. “But it’s when it matters most – in calling the president and cabinet ministers to account – that the system fails.” Phindile explained: “If a party does not care about you, that’s the end of it. And because the party decides who goes to Parliament, MPs are expected to account to the party. Even if MPs feel strongly about an issue, they are expected to toe the party line, and those who don’t – as we have seen following the most recent vote of no confidence – are singled out for harassment.”

The full story can be found at: <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/news/research-office/-/article/2017-09-13-why-the-peoples-parliament-is-failing-the-people>

## *Recognition for Kentse*

Earlier this year Kentse Mpolokeng was identified as one of the Top 200 Young South Africans by the Mail and Guardian. Now, a few months later she has become a member of Golden Key International Honour Society. Kentse said she was very thankful for this recognition. “This is one of the lifetime opportunities, as we know Golden Key offers its members exclusive opportunities and connections through over half a million dollars in scholarships and awards, partnerships with major corporations, career advancement and graduate programs. The Society also works with university faculty and administrators to develop and maintain one of the highest standards of education in the world.”

Kentse received her award at a new recognition ceremony in September at her alma mater, the University of the Free State.



Robert Morrell

Office of the Vice-Chancellor

Editor