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New Generation of Academics Programme nGAP, University of Cape Town

Newsletter #3, November 2018

As we approach the end of the academic year and feel the summer heat descend upon Cape Town, it is time for a third 2018 nGAP newsletter. Since the last newsletter we have had two writing retreats which I describe below. In September we had a site visit from the Department of Higher Education and Training during which warm endorsement was given of the health of nGAP at UCT. It was particularly heartening to hear of DHET's enthusiasm for our newsletters and their support for a system that expands the benefits of nGAP to other early career staff which they suggested might be called nGAP Lite. This would be a way of increasing the reach of the programme, expanding the cohort and ultimately impacting nationally on developing a new stream of academic excellence in South Africa.

nGAP (UCT) has from the start sought to build a cohort by inviting early career researchers to join the cohort as associate members. I am pleased to welcome Dr Walter Nevondo from the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IDM) as our most recent nGAP associate. You'll find his biography together with that of Refilwe Lepelle (School of Economics), another recently enrolled Associate, in this newsletter. Asanda Benya, yet another Associate, recently received the prestigious recognition from UCT's College of Fellows as a 2018 Young Researcher. Her path-breaking work on women working underground in the platinum mines of the North West is described below. Mochelo Lefoka, nGAP Associate in the Department of Construction Economics and Management, excelled at a conference in Singapore, winning the award for best paper. As usual, nGAP members have been busy and industrious. Phindile Ntliziywana was part of a panel that included the Auditor-General (Kimi Makwetu) to discuss local governance issues. Siphwe Dlamini presented papers in Glasgow (Scotland) and Boston (USA). Kentse Mpolokeng presented work she did with medical students and won a prize for her paper but the bigger prize was being a central part in her sister's wedding in the Free State!

In July a writing retreat was hosted jointly by the Emerging Researcher Programme (ERP) and nGAP at Mont Fleur. This productive two and a half day event confirmed the close working collaboration enjoyed between nGAP (UCT) and the Research Office and particularly Dr Gaelle Ramon who manages the Researcher Development cluster. During one of the writing retreats at Mont Fleur, we were pleased to welcome Suraya Scheba, nGAP associate, plus her husband, Dr Andreas Scheba (who works in the Economic Performance and Development Unit, HSRC) and her two children, Samir (5) and Adam (5 months). Historically, UCT has discouraged family members from attending writing retreats but in the wake of global gender developments that have sought to break down the work/family divide and the pioneering moment of the New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, breastfeeding in parliament, we welcomed Suraya and her whole family. Coincidentally, Dr Ameeta Jaga of the School of Management Studies, Commerce Faculty, and a member of the Next Generation Professoriate, is busy with research to encourage breast-feeding in the workplace. In South Africa labour law requires employers to enable breastfeeding at work.

Mont Fleur Writing Retreat with UCT's Emerging Researcher Programme



Back row: Zareena Parker, Xolisa Guzula, Liesl Pieters, Sanet Steyn, Refilwe Lepelle, Sophia Allie, Maps Motimele, Alecia Ndlovu, Gudrun Oberprieler, Dheshnie Kheswell, Amanda Mtya, Sonja Spamer, Thebello Thabane, Silindile Buthelezi, Front Row: Maxwell Rani, Robert Morrell, Musa Nxele, Kenny Mudenda, Jacki Job, Katleho Limakatso [Photo: Ricardo Adams]

Despite it being mid-winter fourteen emerging researchers from UCT and four staff members enjoyed bright weather for this collaborative writing retreat that brought the ERP and UCT's nGAP together. Those who attended were members of the ERP who were currently working on their doctoral theses and members of nGAP. Support was provided during the workshop by Drs Dheshnie Kheswell, Charles Masango, Robert Morrell and Gudrun Oberprieler. Apart from the chance to connect with one another, to form new friendships and unwind in this beautiful spot, a lot of productive writing was achieved. The one lament of participants was that the retreat was only two and a half days. People enjoyed it so much they wanted to go on and on!



Comments from participants included:

“This was a timely retreat and an excellent space to write. I have made good progress on my thesis chapter. I like the flexible nature of the retreat.”

“Was a good space to catch up on my research and write.”

“Thanks for the opportunity – it was very useful.”

“A great way to recalibrate and network.”

“Thank you so much for the opportunity for focused time, input and writing time. The venue, facilities and atmosphere were lovely. Networking and conversations were very stimulating and helpful. Maybe a full day on the last day would be useful to consolidate gains”.

[Photo: Robert Morrell]

Mont Fleur Writing Retreat, October 2018



*From Left to Right: Walter Nevondo, Xolisa Guzula, Mochelo Lefoka, Tabisa Mayisela, Musa Nxele, Kentse Mpolokeng, Philile Mbatha, Suraya Scheba, Maano Ramutsindela; Front: Robert Morrell, Sipiwe Dlamini
Unfortunately Phindile Niliziywana had to slip away for lecturing duties at UCT so he's not in the picture.
[Photograph: Eunice Charles]*

This Mont Fleur writing retreat included invitations to the mentors of each nGAP lecturer but in the end, only Robert Morrell and Professor Maano Ramutsindela were able to attend. We welcomed Walter Nevondo to his first nGAP function and Suraya Scheba added domestic depth to proceedings, accompanied as she was by her husband and two sons (see story below). Sartorial elegance was provided at the event by Sipiwe and Robert wearing their slippers.

As usual, the retreat included a walk to the Lourensford saddle with Mont Fleur's Michael Galant which unfolded the natural beauty and bird life typically associated with spring.



Cape Grassbird



Swee Waxbill

Suraya Scheba – Being an academic and a mother

Suraya is an nGAP Associate and lectures in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences (Faculty of Science). She also recently completed a postdoctoral fellowship within the African Centre for Cities. She has an MPhil in Development Studies from UCT, and a PhD in Human Geography from the University of Manchester.

In her work she aims to understand the contested political processes shaping cities (of the south); focusing on the manifestation of urban challenges, infrastructure development, socio-economic inequalities and access. Conversely, she is also interested in the possibilities that support more just, sustainable and equitable futures. In examining these themes, she has conducted research on the politics of water provision in the City of Cape Town – more recently in the context of crisis; decision-making processes around desalination technology adoption in the Western Cape; and modes of everyday life in Delft, a peripheral neighbourhood, in Cape Town. She recently presented her work at UCT in a seminar entitled "Overcoming water scarcity for good? Querying the adoption of desalination technology in the Knysna Local Municipality".

Suraya recently became a mother for the second time. Her husband, Andreas, and her two children, Samir and Adam, accompanied her on a writing retreat to Mont Fleur. Suraya was very appreciative of the opportunity: "I loved being with my nGAP colleagues. They were so welcoming of my family and accepting of my special circumstances", she said. Some nGAP members were particularly keen to help with childcare! She added: "I think it is very important for UCT to pioneer steps that support working mothers. We've seen how this move has gathered pace around the world in the recent period, a shift which I think is essential and should be encouraged and supported. For this reason I was gratified that the nGAP manager, Dr Robert Morrell, and DVC (Transformation), Professor Loretta Feris, made it possible for me to attend this retreat. I also think that more support of this kind should be offered to women in the workplace, including academia, so that the 'motherhood penalty' can truly become a thing of the past". "Having an infant is time and energy-consuming. So it was great that I was able to have my husband join me at the retreat so I could find time to return to the writing that has been a bit neglected in the last few months".



Andreas, Adam, Suraya and Samir (Photograph – Robert Morrell)

Asanda Benya – nGAP Associate

Asanda is a lecturer in the Sociology Department. She recently was inducted as a UCT Young Researcher, a prestigious award by the College of Fellows that recognises “significant contributions to research in their fields”. Asanda undertook her university studies at Wits University and completed her PhD (“Women in Mining: Occupational Culture and Gendered Identities in the Making”). Her work focussed on women miners in the Platinum mines of the North West Province. Before 1996 women were legislatively prohibited from working underground but in 2002 the prohibitive legislations were repealed. Since then close to 53 000 women in South Africa work underground in mines.



Asanda underground challenging the gendered division of labour [Photograph: Provided]

Asanda was intrigued by the ways women miners navigated the masculine occupational culture in mines. For three months in 2008 and ten and a half months, between 2011 and 2012, she worked in the mines and lived with mineworkers at a Platinum mine in Rustenburg. She worked with different teams that had women in their complement. Together they lashed ore, installed ventilation and water pipes, cleaned stopes, connected blasting cables and winched blasted ore. Women’s inclusion in a world like underground mining historically dominated by men is both politically important and academically interesting.

For the change to happen, there has to be disruption, first at the legal and policy level and then at the level of practice. The disruption challenges what has long been held to be a natural alignment between men and mines, masculinity and mining productivity, mine culture, and the ideal mineworker. The presence of women in mining, therefore, challenges and changes the eternalised and naturalised coupling of particular spaces with specific types of bodies. It raises questions about gender and power relations in mining and also makes possible the theorisation of gender as a performance in the mines.

Asanda’s research exposes the nuanced barriers to the inclusion of women in mining and illustrates the ways in which women challenge these invisible barriers while working *with* and *on* them and how others tactically reproduce them as a means of surviving the everyday masculine underground world.



Asanda operating a scraper winch underground. A winch pulls ore from the blasted face to the tip. [Photograph: Provided]

Refilwe Lepelle – nGAP Associate

I am an aspiring academic. I trace my interest from growing up in a family where majority of my family members are teachers. I grew up in the East of Johannesburg, where unemployment, inequality and poverty were rampant. I am an only child and was fortunate to attend a good model C school where my passion for knowledge was developed. But, at the same time, I became aware of the huge inequalities between the suburbs and townships and concerned about the social ills associated with inequality. This is when I developed my interest in economics. I wanted to understand how the economy works and why there is such vast income disparities.

I matriculated at Springs Girls' High School. I obtained my B.Com degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics and B.Com honours in Financial Analysis and Portfolio Management at UCT. I pursued my Master of Commerce in Economics with the University of Witwatersrand part-time and graduated in 2011. I worked in the private sector namely Investec and Citigroup from 2004 to 2007. From 2008 to 2012 I worked as an Industry Analyst at the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), where I was responsible for compiling research reports on specific industries/sectors and for research within Africa in the form of country risk assessments and country investment strategies. I contributed to the formulation of strategies for industry/sector development and participated in economic research projects of a varied nature, including research oriented towards socio-economic development, regional development and cluster development.



[Photograph provided.]

In 2013 I began a PhD at UCT. My thesis, titled “International Trade and the Local Labour Market, the Case of South Africa” examines the effects of international trade on local labour markets in South Africa during the post-apartheid period. Much has been written about the effect of trade at a national level, but not much at the sub-provincial level. Industries are clustered in certain regions and therefore face differential trade exposure which may explain regional inequality in terms of employment and job opportunities. As such, I believe that it is important to analyse the impact of trade policy on the labour market at a regional level. My supervisors are Professor Lawrence Edwards and Professor Murray Leibbrandt who are experts in the fields of international trade and inequality respectively.

In 2016 I joined the UCT School of Economics as a lecturer. I was excited when I got appointed because I have always been passionate about education however I didn't see myself being in academia at this period in my life. I thought that it would be something that I would do when much later in life. However, when the opportunity came, I had to take advantage of it. Initially I found teaching quite challenging because I had no prior experience as a lecturer. I am now feeling more comfortable and I enjoy both the teaching and research aspects of my job. My teaching philosophy is student oriented. I'm happiest the most when I see that my students are enjoying and actually understand what I'm teaching them.

I am also a Graduate Associate at South African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU). My research interests are international trade, labour economics, development economics and gender.

In May 2018, I attended the Jobs and Development Conference in Bogotá, Colombia. The aim of the Jobs and Development conference was to present and discuss the latest policy-relevant research to foster the creation of multi-sector, multi-disciplinary solutions based on empirical evidence to challenges with regards to jobs creation around the world. The conference presented useful topics on labour economics and development. The conference was attended by 98 participants from 24 countries. It was an ideal platform for me to present my work to an international audience consisting of policymakers, researchers and academics who are experts in labour economics, labour markets and development. I presented one of my thesis chapters which together with Professor Lawrence Edwards and Dr Asha Sundaram are converting into a journal article. The conference was a valuable learning opportunity for me because I interacted and discussed our research findings with other participants. In addition, I also shared views with labour experts on general issues related to job creation. Consequently, I have enlarged my network and now know a number of academics and researchers from different countries who have similar research interest.

I am pleased to be an nGAP associate because I get to engage with other academics and emerging researchers. The group forms part of my support structure which is vital as I navigate my way in academia.

Walter Nevondo – nGAP Associate



Walter at Mont Fleur (Photo: Robert Morrell)

I was born and raised in Limpopo province, Africa's Eden. I was born third amongst five boys, who were raised by a single mother. I started school at Matondoni primary in Tshikunda, a village surrounded by some of the most sacred sites of Vhavenda, including the great Lake Fundudzi, Phiphidi waterfalls, and the indigenous Thathe Vondo forest. As it was with most of my peers growing up in the 80s, I played soccer in the streets of Itsani Village, swam or fished in the ponds and dams, and hunted in the wild. I was most intrigued by the mysteries and beauty of nature, and as such, I chose the science stream when I later went to study at Magalannge Secondary. Besides science, my other big interest was literature. I took much pleasure in the works of Tshivenda wordsmiths such as E.T Maumela, A.N Milubi, and M.R Nevhutalu.

I matriculated in 1999 and went on to study Biological Sciences at the University of Limpopo, where I was funded by a scholarship from Kellogg's foundation. I graduated with an honours degree and two awards in microbiology. With no more access to funding for further studies, I then took a job as a laboratory analyst at a spice manufacturing firm in Brits North West Province. Initially, it was exciting to learn the different techniques in analytical chemistry, but I soon grew tired of the routine protocols. So, in 2011, I took my savings and headed to Cape Town, where I enrolled for an MSc in Biotechnology at the University of the Western Cape. My thesis focused on microbial metals uptake systems such as ATP-type transporters and related permeases. I continued to complete my PhD thesis at the same institution, where I focused on the development of a high throughput cell-free metagenomic screening platform using Next Generation Sequencing (NGS), in vitro gene expression and microfluidics systems. While still writing my PhD, I joined the HIV Diversity Research group at the University of Cape Town as a Scientific Officer. This endeavour took me out of my comfort zone, which is industrial molecular biotechnology, and introduced me to molecular virology. At UCT, I worked on two HIV cure projects under the supervision of Prof. Carolyn Williamson: (1) the sizing of the HIV latent reservoir in African Women and (2) the timing of HIV latent reservoir establishment.

Upon completion of my PhD, I was recruited as a lecturer at the Institute for Microbial Biotechnology and Metagenomics (IMBM), University of the Western Cape (UWC). There, I also managed the Single Cell Genomic (SGS) platform, which includes Whole genome amplification, Illumina Miseq, and FACSaria III. I stayed for only one year and then returned to UCT to continue HIV cure research. I am currently a post-doctoral fellow at the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IDM), University of Cape Town. My current research project is on understanding the mechanisms of HIV-1 latent reservoir persistence using transcriptomic technology. This strategy will uncover how HIV manipulate our genomic and molecular systems to hide from immune and ART clearance, bringing us closer to developing HIV cure initiatives.

I recently joined the nGAP group as an associate. My first excursion with the UCT nGAP team (management, associates, lecturers) was on a writing trip to Mont Fleur. My writer's block afforded me only two paragraphs in those two days, but my encounters with different members of this inspiring group gave me a billion ideas to ponder on for the rest of my life. There, I met thought leaders and community builders from all walks of life, and by association, I have become part of a new and dynamic discourse with the potential to transcend the transformation agenda in academia.

Phindile Ntliziywana shares the stage with Auditor-General

In a joint UCT-UWC seminar in October, the Auditor General, Mr Kimi Makwetu highlighted the impact of accountability failures on South Africa. His keynote address, "Building a Capable Developmental State: Enforcing public finance law and ethics", was the basis for contributions from Ms. Fazela Mohamed (Integrity Commissioner: North West Provincial Legislature and former Registrar of Members' Interest, Parliament), Prof Nico Steytler (SARChI Chair in Multilevel Government, Law and Policy), Dr Phindile Ntliziywana (UCT) and Prof Derek Powell (ACSL, DOI). The focus was on the enforcement of public finance laws in a context of massive failures of compliance, professionalism and ethics at all levels, in spite of a legal framework admired across the world. In his address the Auditor General specifically highlighted the impact of accountability failures. He noted that accountability and transparency were not yet enabled by credible financial and performance reporting. People tend to engage in corruption when the possibility of getting caught is small, the penalty is mild, and the pay-off is large. Panel discussion that grappled with the following questions: Why is compliance with the public finance legislation and ethics essential for building a capable developmental state? What are the causes of persistent non-compliance, and how can enforcement be improved? What needs to happen for a culture of compliance, professionalism and ethics to take root in financial governance?



Mr Kimi Makwetu, Auditor General



Dr Phindile Ntliziywana

Siphiwe Dlamini and the Question of Meat



“Fancy meeting you here”

Siphiwe (far left) with fellow PhD project members, Melissa, Dwayne and Kevin, at the AMA in Boston. (Photo Supplied)

A journey of understanding about what drives consumers to seek non-meat alternative took me to Glasgow, Scotland on the 29th of May 2018. It was the home of the 47th European Marketing Association Conference. One of the leading marketing conferences in the world. Since it was my first international academic conference I was overwhelmed with the urge to be in every session, event and network. I had the opportunity to present work that I had supervised with my 4th year students. We wanted to understand whether consumers would look for non-meat alternatives in hopes of protecting animals. Vegetarianism is advocated as one response to global warming as domesticated animals (particularly cattle) contribute by their emissions to the production of the greenhouse gas methane. Methane accounted for about 16% of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2015, according to the IPCC. Our findings were that consumers are not particularly concerned about animal welfare or the environment but would seek non-meat alternatives for health reasons. So, health over the environment was the driving factor. We then wanted to understand if the results would differ across gender.

This took me all the way to Boston, United States on the 9th of August 2018 to present the second part of the study at the American Marketing Association (AMA) Summer Conference. Getting accepted to the conference was a big deal, as the association is the publisher of the top-rated *Journal of Marketing*. Here, I presented the findings in a paper titled “The influence of gender effect on the determinants of environmentalism and sustainability of the purchase of non-meat alternatives”. The findings were that females are more likely to seek non-meat alternatives. This was not surprising because the consumption of meat is positively associated with manly expectation and behaviour.

On the social side, I had the honour to be part of the PhD project (see photo above). The PhD project identifies and supports African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans embarking on doctoral degrees in marketing to transform the profession and increase diversity. My meat journey also took me on a short vacation to Amsterdam and London in June, as well as New York in August. One must work hard and play even harder.

Mochelo Lefoka – nGAP Associate strikes Gold in Singapore

Mochelo is a member of the Department of Construction and Economics Management (CEM) in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment. At the 42nd Annual Australasian Universities Building Education Association (AUBEA) conference, Mochelo Lefoka and his co-author, Associate Professor Abimbola Windapo, won the Singapore Institute of Building Limited (SIBL) Best Paper Award. The conference theme was Educating Building Professionals for the future: Innovation, Technology and Sustainability in the Global market.

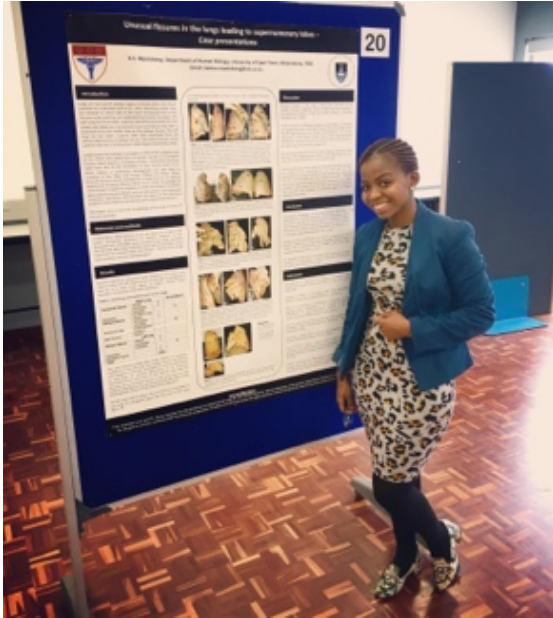
His paper was titled “Causes of variation between estimated and actual labour productivity output in the construction industry”. When a construction project begins, an estimation is made of efficient labour output in order to calculate the overall anticipated costs. This target is not often matched by the observed/actual labour productivity output. Observed labour productivity outputs are often used in establishing whether a construction project is successful, and this observed output is seldom compared to the target set at the beginning of the project thus resulting in a conclusion that the project is inefficient based on only one observation. Mochelo’s work examined the factors causing variation between estimated and actual labour productivity and found that actual labour productivity observed on construction projects differs significantly from targets set as the benchmark on the onset of the construction project. Explanations for this discrepancy include project complexity, material shortages, environmental conditions, geographical context, unrealistic programmes, rework and lack of equipment. The study concludes that labour performance on construction projects operate amidst circumstances that are not always factored in at the pre-construction development stage. In future such factors should be considered.



Mochelo receives the award at a gala dinner held at the Fullerton Hotel in Singapore [Photo provided]

Kentse Mpolokeng – Two Kinds of Prize

Kentse walked off with second prize in the Faculty of Health Sciences' Human Biology Research Day in September. She successfully competed against postgraduate students, postdoctoral fellows and junior staff. Her abstract was titled "Unusual fissures in the lungs leading to supernumerary lobes" and it reported on the observations that she made during dissection sessions when they were working with Year 2 MBCHB students on the respiratory system.



Left: Ms. Kentse Mpolokeng with her prize winning poster. Right: Ms. Kentse Mpolokeng (Second prize), between Ms. Kerri Keet (Anatomy assistant Lecturer – First Prize, staff category) and Mr. Devin Finaughty (1st prize student category) – all from the Division of Clinical Anatomy and Biological Anthropology within the Department.

Possibly eclipsing her professional achievement in terms of family significance and happiness was Kentse's role in her sister's September wedding in Clarens, Free State on 29 September. Dieketseng Mpolokeng, the bride, is Kentse's younger sister. She met the bridegroom, Mohau Makatsa, when Kentse took her for the first time to church in Tableview. He was (and is) busy with a PhD in the Pathology Department, in UCT's Health Sciences Faculty. Kentse was central to the wedding planning as maid of honour, involved in liaison with the wedding venue managers, design of wedding favours, cake, deco, and menu-selection. "I am sad that she will no longer be staying with me", said Kentse, "but I'm more happy for my sister and know that she will be well taken care of. I might have lost a friend (Mohau) but it was to an upgrade that I have gained a very good and decent brother".



Robert Morrell, nGAP (UCT) Manager and Editor