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**New SALDRU director to pursue mission of challenging inequalities**



Newly-appointed Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) director, Reza Daniels. Photo: Supplied.

Newly-appointed [Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit](#) (SALDRU) director, Reza Daniels, has set out to pursue SALDRU's mission of "challenging inequalities through policy-relevant academic research".

Daniels, who takes over the reins from Murray Leibbrandt following his departure in December 2023, has been at UCT since 2005 and at SALDRU since 2010. Before being director of SALDRU, he was head of department for the School of Economics at UCT.

His vision for SALDRU is a space where continuous methodological innovation is normalised in the research processes and data that they generate and curate.

He further said that to fulfill SALDRU's mission requires that all staff must feel invested in what they do, how they do it, and why they do it, with no task seen as too small or insignificant. "It is important to note that SALDRU is a soft-funded organisation, meaning that we raise all our own funding. To achieve this vision and carry out our mission, we therefore have to ensure that we are financially sustainable, and that means we must continue to provide relevant and innovative research and data products to the world," he added.

Daniels underscored that SALDRU's value system with respect to research and data provision has always been to publish open source wherever possible. He said emerging researchers can also learn from the code that SALDRU uses to work with the data and generate results because the code is often published on its website or otherwise available online.

"The only time that we depart from our open access principles is when we are asked to generate or work with secure data, in which case we develop appropriate gate-keeping modalities to ensure that all of the legal rights concerning confidentiality are strictly adhered to. This altruistic service to the research and policymaking communities has not only built a deep trust between ourselves and our stakeholders, but has also provided the stimulus to develop unique and bespoke training courses for government and civil society," said Daniels.

Daniels is passionate about economics and how the discipline has evolved, including its interaction with other social, life and environmental sciences. He is a strong believer in the principles of the South African Constitution. He says he is motivated in the work that he does to help realise many of the constitution's more idealistic tenets in his lifetime.

Daniels will lead a diverse and dedicated team, currently numbering 66 individuals. This includes 18 researchers, 10 associates from the School of Economics, three support staff, and 35 project staff. Furthermore, SALDRU maintains a network of 24 local and international affiliates. Its researchers collectively constitute one of the strongest groups of quantitative

social scientists on the African continent. These academics are deeply invested in the welfare of [Africa](#), and their collective work makes a major contribution to the [University of Cape Town being ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the world in the field of Development Studies](#) in 2023.

Born in Alice, in the Eastern Cape in December 1974, Daniels holds a Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts (with first class honours) from the University of Auckland, New Zealand; a Graduate Certificate in Survey Methodology from the University of Michigan; and a PhD in Economics from UCT.

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