

EARLY CAREER RESEARCH WORKSHOP

In conjunction with

IAD Summer Africa Conference, 2019 Africa's Grand Challenges: The Role of Research and Education Systems

August 6-7, 2019 , Livingstone, Zambia

On November 8-9, Cornell University hosted a Global Grand Challenges Symposium, during which participants and panelists “laid out some of the most pressing issues of our times, as well as possible paths to solutions.”¹ In expounding on what she termed the “war on facts”, Rachel Dunifon, interim dean of the College of Human Ecology at Cornell, identified “three steps that can contribute to the “defense of facts:” greater engagement in policymaking; improved communication of research; and giving researchers “time, funds and knowledge to collaborate with policymakers and practitioners.”² In the African context, the factual vacuum and the information and power asymmetries that exist as a result, make these challenges even more pernicious. Jerven pointed this out in his *book Poor Numbers: How We Are Misled by African Development Statistics and What to Do about It* (Cornell, 2013).

Several “grand challenges” exist on the continent. Climate change and food insecurity, migration and its complexities, inequality, access to justice, and trade asymmetries are some. Tackling these challenges involves getting the right information at the right time and in the right way. Indeed, accurate and adequate information necessarily precedes policy making and solution seeking. This conference interrogates the state of information seeking on the continent in the context of the grand challenges debate. The increasingly complex challenges of our time require relevant and robust information seeking methodologies and techniques. Where is the continent in this regard? How can the facts be obtained, shared and defended?

Call for Papers

We invite scholars, academics, researchers, writers and practitioners to join us in Livingstone from 6-7 August 2019 to discuss these issues. The first day is primarily for academics to discuss the Global Challenges themes, the second day is reserved for presentations of emerging scholars. This early-career research day provides the opportunity for a small group of early career academics to receive feedback and mentoring on research and publishing in their respective fields. The goal of this workshop is to strengthen research capacity among early-career African scholars.

¹ <http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2018/11/cornell-faculty-leadership-begin-tackle-grand-challenges>

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We welcome the submission of academic papers that focus on the broad themes outlined below:

Climate Change and Food Security

Papers that address the knowledge gaps and asymmetries related to climate change and food security in the African context, particularly but not limited to, to changing rain-fall patterns and the diminishing quality and quantity of water bodies are welcome. Papers that fall in this category must also address mechanisms that can strengthen the knowledge base in this area.

Migration

Migration is a highly complex, nebulous and contested phenomenon. In the context of the sensationalized “mass exodus” from and within Africa, and in the context of global realities like climate change and nationalism, what do the numbers and statistics actually tell us? Do we know? The World Economic Forum recently called for “a more balanced examination of African migration.” But what would this look like within the context of migration policy and research? What are the forces driving the imbalance? What is wrong, if anything, with popular research methodologies in this area? Papers on this and cognate topics are welcome.

Access to Justice

Access to Justice has become a touchstone of a free and fair society. But can justice actually be measured? If so, how? This sub-theme explores the information asymmetries inherent in so-called justice institutions and how these can undermine justice outcomes. Papers interrogating justice institutions, actors and justice system from an information gathering perspective, are welcome.

Trade

Recent research on global copper trade networks on the continent found that “with regard to Swiss trading firms...there remains a lack of evidence regarding such basic information as: the total number of people they employ, their turnover and profit, the taxes they pay to governments or the list of countries they operate in. This lack of information cannot be attributed only to our project’s limited funds, time and human resources: all things considered, the trading sector remains very secretive and has successfully maintained a low profile thus far.”³ Papers that address the knowledge deficits and (potential) solutions in this important area are welcome.

Theoretical and empirical papers, action research and case studies on the above themes using a range of scholarly approaches including qualitative, quantitative and critical methods with data-driven conclusions are welcomed.

³ Insert quote

Abstracts (approx. 500 words) must include the name, title, and institutional or organizational affiliation and full contact details of the person or persons submitting the document. Abstracts should be no longer than 500 words, contain five key words, and sent to marja.hinfelaar@saipar.org no later than 15 April 2019. If the abstract is accepted, full conference papers are due no later than 31st May 2019.

Limited funding is available to assist presenters with travel and accommodation costs.