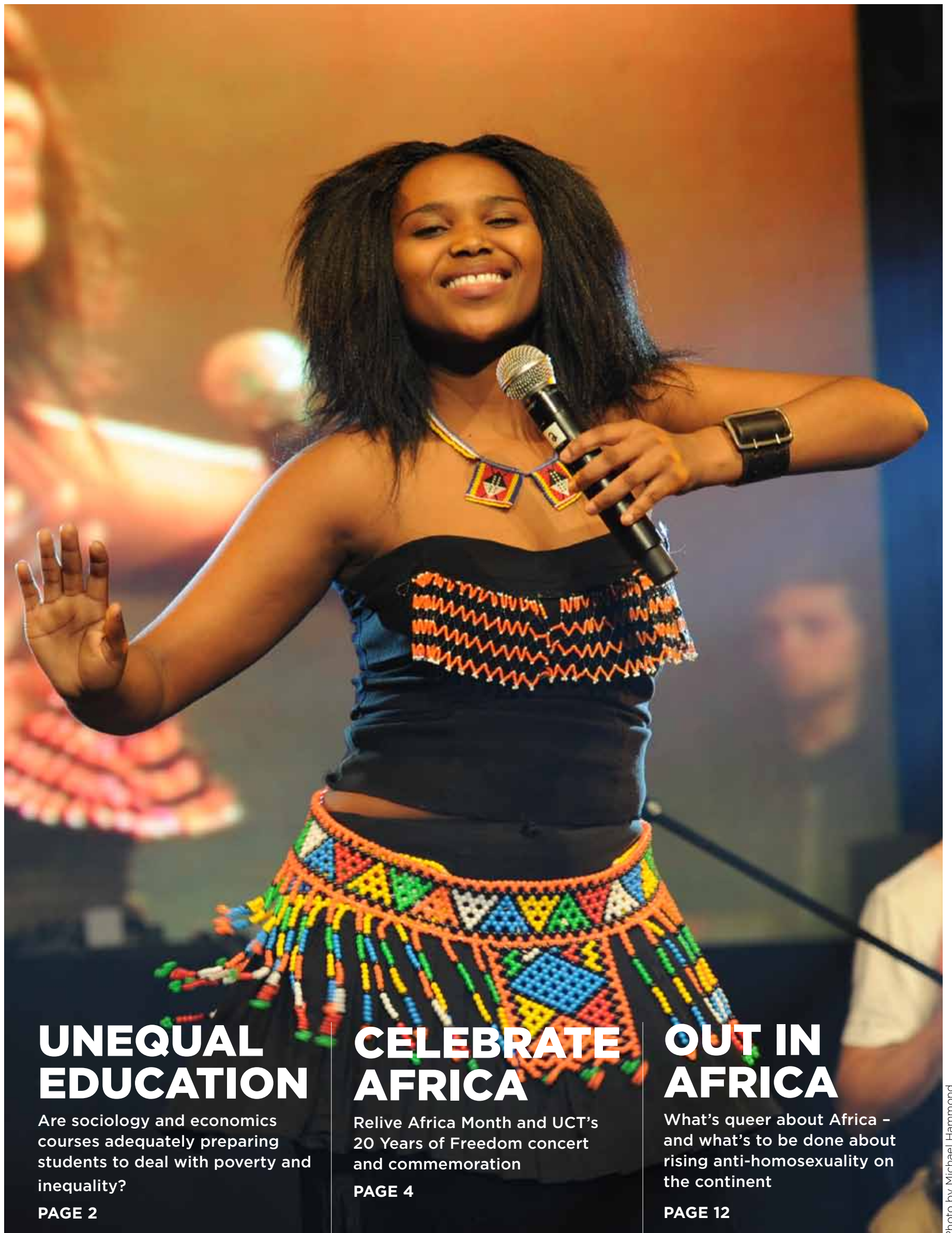


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UNEQUAL EDUCATION

Are sociology and economics courses adequately preparing students to deal with poverty and inequality?

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CELEBRATE AFRICA

Relive Africa Month and UCT's 20 Years of Freedom concert and commemoration

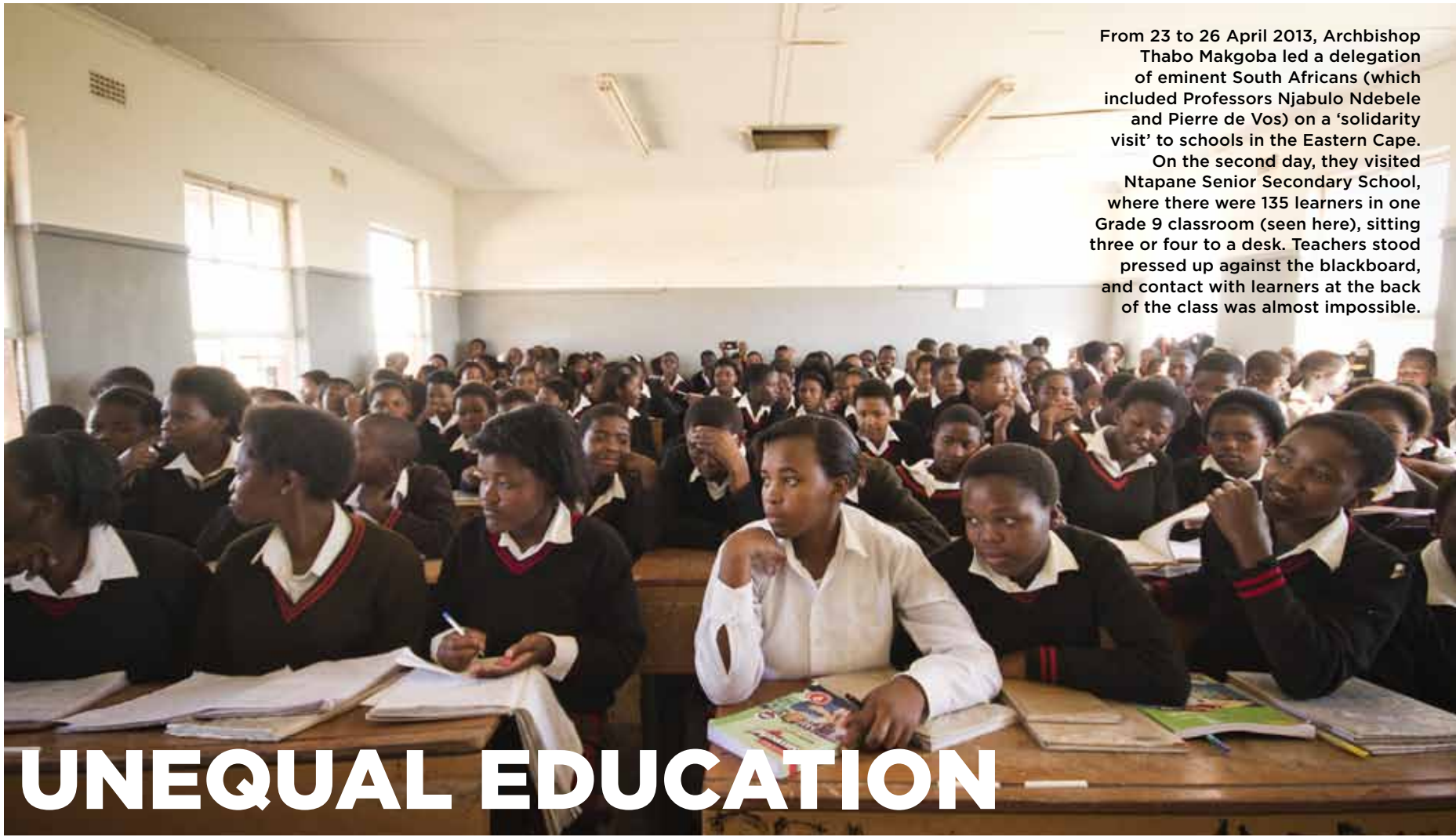
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OUT IN AFRICA

What's queer about Africa - and what's to be done about rising anti-homosexuality on the continent

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Photo by Michael Hammond



From 23 to 26 April 2013, Archbishop Thabo Makgoba led a delegation of eminent South Africans (which included Professors Njabulo Ndebele and Pierre de Vos) on a 'solidarity visit' to schools in the Eastern Cape. On the second day, they visited Ntapane Senior Secondary School, where there were 135 learners in one Grade 9 classroom (seen here), sitting three or four to a desk. Teachers stood pressed up against the blackboard, and contact with learners at the back of the class was almost impossible.

UNEQUAL EDUCATION

Story by Yusuf Omar
Photo by Sydelle Willow Smith

Do courses in economics and sociology adequately prepare students to deal with issues of poverty and inequality in society? Professors Nicoli Nattrass, Ari Sitas and Associate Professor Edwin Muchapondwa debate the point.

Economic theories that justify the status quo dominate curricula – to the detriment of students’ ability to navigate the real world, says Professor Nicoli Nattrass, a professor in UCT’s School of Economics and a researcher at the Centre for Social Science Research (CSSR).

Speaking at a seminar devoted to interrogating whether the university’s economics and sociology curricula are adequately preparing students to deal with issues of poverty and inequality in society, Nattrass was joined on the panel by Professor Ari Sitas, head of the Department

of Sociology at UCT, and Associate Professor Edwin Muchapondwa, head of the School of Economics.

A space for radical political economy

Neo-classical economic theories – which gained near-hegemony during Margaret Thatcher’s reign as British Prime Minister in the 1980s – are simply assumed to be the only logical way to think about the world, argues Nattrass; and as such, students are not properly exposed to alternative ways of thinking.

“For me, the persistent blind spot is political economy ... What [economists] don’t take seriously is the kind of radical political economy, the old Marxist tradition,

which tends to be dismissed as, ‘Oh, that’s just wrong’. But the trouble is, it resonates really strongly in other disciplines and in society.

“And the thing about radical political economy – and you don’t have to believe in Marxist labour theories of value; in fact, there’re a lot of Marxist economists who use fairly mainstream economic tools – is that it takes a broader look at power. It looks at power more like Marx used to talk about it.

“There’s an economic base and a superstructure, and this superstructure is serving particular interests at a class level, whereas economists tend to push that away as an embarrassing afterthought, and look at the individual. Everything

“Let me put it bluntly. Most students are not interested in poverty. ‘Give us identity, give us multiple identities, give us sexuality, give us whatever, but this poverty nonsense?’ Either they’re escaping from it, or they’re not concerned.”

Prof Ari Sitas

“We always say that the pie’s getting bigger, but we never ask if somebody is actually getting a bigger slice of the pie, or if it’s just the same people that are going to get the bigger slices.”

Joshua Budlender

boils down to how individuals behave, and the way they ascend to [the superstructure].

“The trouble is, if you ignore that whole tradition of political economy, it gives economics – including economics at UCT – a very one-sided feel, especially when viewed from other disciplines. It diverts attention from the political and other superstructures that interact with economic power, and shape distribution.”

Another “blind spot” is the near-absence of economic history in the course work, says Nattrass: “There’s no compulsory economic history of capitalism in the School of Economics, or of how political and economic struggles affected the way that incomes are distributed, and the kinds of social insurance that have been implemented in the world over time.”

This gap means students are not taught that there are multiple paths to economic growth, when this is certainly the case, says Nattrass.

Inequality in all disciplines

By its very nature, suggests Sitas, sociology tackles inequality: “It’s about an unequal, interconnected, patterned and evolving sociality. It’s to be expected that sociology would teach something about inequality ... Well, it does. If you take away sociology and social development and some other centres in other faculties, [the teaching of inequality] will disappear.”

Sociologists at the university are pondering the high failure rate of their courses, and Sitas offered one explanation.

“Let me put it bluntly. Most students are not interested in poverty. ‘Give us identity, give us multiple identities, give us sexuality,

give us whatever, but this poverty nonsense?’ Either they’re escaping from it, or they’re not concerned.

“In the subjects that teach inequality, you have disinterest. They’re doing it; they’re making time, and [students] fail not because they’re stupid – many of them are clever – but [because] they think very little of it.” This is not to say that all students are uninterested in researching poverty and inequality, says Sitas; but in the main, this is what he has observed.

It doesn’t help that there is a “total urban bias” in the course content – not just in sociology, but across most of the university, says Sitas.

There are also pedagogical issues that need addressing: “Inequality is taught too economically sometimes. It’s [reduced to] doing bad economics in sociology, really, whereas there are other inequalities, vital inequalities.

“Finally, as sociologists, we can do only this much,” says Sitas, holding his hands slightly apart. “It would be fantastic if these themes were being taught differently, and through different lenses in other spaces – and not only that they were taught, but that we *knew* they were being taught; in other words, that we could communicate with each other.”

Explicit economics

Meanwhile, Muchapondwa agreed that while the economics curriculum did address issues of poverty and inequality to an extent, it could do so more explicitly.

“In most of our courses, you probably won’t see a section explicitly spelled out as ‘poverty and inequality’, and it’s because of the approach we’ve tried to take. In most of our courses, particularly the

macro-economic courses, ‘growth’ and ‘development’ are two terms that you will almost always come across.

“Poverty is central when thinking about economic growth. The way we think about it is that you have a cake, and this cake must be divided. Some people can get larger pieces, some people can get smaller pieces.”

The ‘traditional’ way of solving the problem was to make the cake bigger, says Muchapondwa. Much of this way of thinking came from theories that posited the separation of ‘efficiency’ and ‘redistribution’, with a focus on efficiency until the cake was big enough for it to be distributed equitably.

He agrees with Nattrass that neo-classical economics dominates the scholarly landscape at present, and that there’s a need for an economic history component.

“Of course, we recognise that there are different models which explain how nations grow,” he points out, adding that this is why “high-level” courses expose students to both neo-classical and alternative models.

Furthermore, the undergraduate curriculum does expose students to issues of poverty and inequality, says Muchapondwa, but the next step is ensuring that these bits and pieces dovetail and add up to a coherent foundation of knowledge that students can put to use.

Let them eat cake

Joshua Budlender, an economics honours student present at the debate, agreed there was not enough debate about economic theories at an undergraduate level: “There’s no real attempt to engage with South African issues [in class]. For example, why is it the case that throughout my undergrad there were always snide comments coming from lecturers and students, about COSATU, say – ‘Oh, these are the unions; they’re the troublemakers; they’ve got no interest in developing South Africa; it’s all about their own interests’.

“That’s something that permeates your entire undergraduate career.” Another example was the

unquestioned assumption that the youth wage subsidy is ‘obviously’ a good thing: “Maybe it is and maybe it isn’t. But the point is there is a legitimate debate that goes on about real issues, and it isn’t entertained.

“We always say that the pie’s getting bigger, but we never ask if somebody is actually getting a bigger slice of the pie, or if it’s just the same people that are going to get the bigger slices,” observed Budlender.

Emeritus Professor Francis Wilson used his position as chair to suggest that teachers needed to give students a “gut sense” of what poverty was about. He observed that students tend to confuse analytical thinking with being skilful in technique, which is detrimental to how they approach problems that require innovative solutions: “This society has operated for 100 years in such a way that the very way we have generated wealth has generated poverty. [The] way in which we used the migrant labour system generated poverty in the rural areas ... So it’s no use talking about growth. You’ve got to talk about how you shift the dynamics at work in a society, and I don’t think we do enough about that.”

“This society has operated for 100 years in such a way that the very way we have generated wealth has generated poverty. [The] way in which we used the migrant labour system generated poverty in the rural areas ... So it’s no use talking about growth. You’ve got to talk about how you shift the dynamics at work in a society, and I don’t think we do enough about that.”

Emeritus Professor
Francis Wilson



Third degree: (from left) Professors Edwin Muchapondwa, Ari Sitas and Nicoli Nattrass debate best practice for teaching sociology and economics, with a view to preparing students to grapple effectively with societal issues. Photo by Michael Hammond

BRIEFS

Multi-million rand grant for ACC study

UCT’s African Centre for Cities (ACC) has recently been awarded approximately R35-million from the ESRC/DfID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research (Poverty in Urban Spaces theme). Led by Professor Vanessa Watson, the research team will focus on urban poverty, specifically through the lens of food, in three secondary cities in Africa: Kisumu in Kenya, Kitwe in Zambia and Epworth in Zimbabwe. This work builds on existing ACC networks and partnerships, including the African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN), the Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS), and Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO).

GSB academic to advise Presidency

UCT Graduate School of Business’ Emeritus Professor Norman Faull is set to become an advisor for the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) within the Presidency, and will set in motion a programme to improve government departments’ operations management, with the ultimate aim to boost service delivery in South Africa. Founder of the Lean Institute Africa (LIA) at the GSB, Faull will help the DPME roll out an Operations Management Support Programme on a trial basis. The programme is still in its initial stages, and consideration will be given to the most appropriate approaches in order to foster service delivery improvements while building the public service managers’ skills.

AWARD boosts agricultural research in Africa

Jacqueline Kariithi, a PhD researcher from Kenya in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science at UCT, is one of 70 women to receive a two-year African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) Fellowship in 2014.

Currently supervised by Professor Michael Meadows, Kariithi’s specialisation is ecotourism, a field that includes agritourism and nature-based tourism, and which – like other forms of niche tourism – has become a growth industry in many parts of the world. Her research is about managing natural resources via an integrated approach to nature-based tourism in the Mount Elgon region of Kenya and Uganda, which is renowned for its hot springs and caves.

UCT a ‘flagship’ African university

A report on eight universities in Africa has judged UCT the only university of those studied to meet a set of ‘flagship goals’. The other seven universities, each included as the highest-performing university in its country, were Botswana, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique), Makerere (Uganda), Nairobi (Kenya), Ghana and Mauritius.

The report found that two of the ‘flagship goals’ of each of the eight universities were firstly to engage in high-quality research and scholarship, and secondly to deliver knowledge products that will enhance national and regional development.

UCT actuarial scientists win top award

A paper on healthcare costs in the final year of life, authored by senior lecturer (actuarial science) Shivani Ramjee and research assistant Matan Abrahams, has won a ‘best in category’ prize at the 2014 International Congress of Actuaries (ICA) in Washington. The paper was one of two South African actuarial studies singled out for awards among the 225 actuarial papers and presentations delivered at the congress. Of these, only 16 papers received awards. The UCT academics highlighted key methodological considerations in an investigation into the costs incurred by health insurers as a result of the provision of benefits during the 12 months preceding a beneficiary’s death.

UCT finalists compete for annual NSTF-BHP Billiton Awards

Eleven UCT researchers out of a total of 56 finalists nationally have been nominated for the prestigious NSTF-BHP Billiton Awards for 2013/14. The national awards celebrate outstanding contributions to Science, Engineering, Technology and Innovation (SETI) in South Africa.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research Prof Danie Visser believes the nominations reflect the strength and depth of UCT’s research, as well as the exceptional commitment of UCT researchers. UCT finalists include Eric Bateman, Jean Cleymans, Valerie Mizrahi, Keertan Dheda, Genevieve Langdon, Paul Barendse, Thomas Scriba and Grant Theron. The winners will be announced at the NSTF-BHF Billiton Awards Gala Dinner on 3 July 2014.

CELEBRATING AFRICA

Photos by Michael Hammond, Raymond Botha and Scruffy Dog Communication

Billed as 'the antidote to Afro-pessimism', this year's Africa Month affirmed our continental connectedness. It marked a moment to celebrate diverse cultures, while also highlighting issues of common concern.



Africa Month kicked off with intra-varsity games in the Sports Centre. The theme was Celebrating Africa Through Sport, and there was plenty of that as basketball players (pictured) slammed some impressive dunks. • Johnny Oriokot (in green) of Easoc vies for possession with Obi Chigozie of eventual winners Ghanasoc in UCT's third annual Mini Africa Cup of Nations on 17 May. • About a dozen children, aged six to 12, engage in singing games, known as *ukuqula*, in a demonstration of traditional African games on Jammie Plaza. • Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo, who spearheads UCT's Afropolitan drive, shares some words of encouragement with staff who participated in the painting and beading workshop to celebrate Africa Month.



Music legends and UCT honorary alumni Letta Mbulu and Caiphus Semenya perform some of their best-loved hits for an appreciative audience at the UCT Alumni Concert held at the Baxter Theatre Centre.



Music student Zinzi Nogavu sings a traditional lament, *Vukani Noba Nillele*, in honour of Mandela's life, at UCT's 20 Years of Freedom concert.

“Our grandfathers of humanity, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Tata Nelson Mandela, and the man who lived in South Africa and planted the seed of reconciliation, Mahatma Gandhi ... taught us that there is wisdom in forgiveness. If you learn to forgive, you learn to live with more calmness within your innermost [being] and you become more free. If you don't forgive, you are the one who is suffering the most. You are like your own prisoner. You become like the bitter leaf that can just be squashed or be swept away by the wind any time. Forgiveness is important, and we should all wear it like a crown.”

Vusi Mahlasela



Master of ceremonies Deputy Vice-Chancellor Thandabantu Nhlapo officiates over the formal part of the proceedings at the Freedom Concert on 22 May, which saw the UCT community celebrate 20 years of democracy and pay tribute to Nelson Mandela's legacy. • Guitarist and alumnus Shen Winberg loses himself in Vusi Mahlasela's music. • Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price unveils the commemoration plaque to mark the renaming of Ring and Rugby roads as Madiba Circle / iSekile kaMadiba / Madiba Sirkelpad. • Perennial favourites Freshlyground wow the crowd. For some of the alumni in the band, including lead singer Zolani Mahola (left) and violinist Kyla-Rose Smith, UCT is home turf. • Award-winning house sensation Mi Casa ended the concert on a high note.



Gumboot dancers show how it's done – Africa-style – on Jammie Plaza, as part of Societies Plaza Day.



African cuisine being sampled by the UCT community as part of the annual Societies Plaza Day on Jammie Plaza.



At the Law in Poetry event, doctoral student Anthony Diala recites his *Bring Back Our Girls* poem, in which he expressed outrage at the abduction of more than 200 Nigerian schoolgirls by Islamic extremists Boko Haram.

“Bring back our joy!
Were it your child, your sister, your friend
You would act with promptness
What madness is this?
What nation kills its young?”



Mama Gloria (centre) from the Khumbulani Centre, which provides a holistic educare programme for families affected by HIV/Aids in Khayelitsha, accepted a donation of cash, clothes, food, toys, stationery and other much-needed items collected from commerce staff and students at the faculty's colourful Africa Day celebration on 27 May.



Students celebrate the completion of a 12-week beginners' course in Xhosa. This year some 60 participants, most involved in community outreach work, received their certificates indicating their basic understanding and proficiency in the language.



Law staff and students in traditional African attire hold up a #Bringbackourgirls placard at the Postgraduate Law Students' Council's celebration of all things African. The #Bringbackourgirls campaign was launched to pressurise the Nigerian government and the international community to prioritise the girls' rescue. • Panellists participating in the Big African Debate examined the space where sexuality and the law collide following their concern over increasingly oppressive anti-gay laws passed earlier this year in Uganda and Nigeria. The speakers were (from left) Dr Barbara Boswell, Adewale Maja-Pearce and Professors Pierre de Vos and Julia Stewart.



“ And I had done an hellish thing,
And it would work ‘em woe:
For all-averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow...”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

‘SCARE LINES’ REDUCE ALBATROSS DEATHS BY 99%

Story by Helen Swingler
Photos courtesy of Dr Ross Wanless

A 30m length of strong rope with five to 10 paired lines of visible streamers attached; that’s all it takes to make a ‘scare line’, instrumental in the dramatic decline of seabird mortality through trawl fishing off our coasts.

Seabirds, especially albatrosses and petrels, are drawn in their thousands by the offal discarded from onboard processing factories. While they’re scavenging, they become tangled in the thick cables holding trawler nets in place, and drown.

A seven-year research project, recently published in the international scientific journal *Animal Conservation*, has shown a 90% reduction in seabird deaths and a 99% reduction in albatross deaths since 2006, using ‘scare lines’ – a 30m length of strong rope with five to 10 paired lines of visible streamers attached.

These scare lines work by distracting and confusing the birds, keeping them away from the trawl cables.

Accidental deaths

Accidental seabird deaths during fishing pose the single biggest threat to these populations, says the co-author of the paper, Dr Ross Wanless, seabird division manager and the Africa co-ordinator of the BirdLife International Marine Programme. (Wanless is also a UCT research associate and alumnus.)

As a result of fishing, fifteen of the 22 albatross species off our coasts are under extreme threat of extinction, along with many other seabird species.

Research showed that annually some 10 000 seabirds were being killed accidentally by the trawl fishery, 70% of which were albatrosses. (Globally, 300 000 seabirds, including

100 000 albatrosses, are lost in this way each year.)

Scare lines mandatory

Scare lines are based on the ‘tori line’, invented by a Japanese long-line tuna fisheries captain. While these weren’t successful for tuna fishing, scare lines have proved to be very effective for the trawl industry. They’re now mandatory for the South African fisheries industry.

The scare line is tied to the back of the moving trawler and a road cone (traffic cone) at the seaward end provides drag that tensions the line and keeps it aloft behind the vessel, usually parallel with the trawl cables.

They’ve become part of everyday life at sea, and are testimony to the importance of stakeholder relationship-building.

Partnerships

“We’ve worked closely with the hake fishery since the early 2000s to demonstrate that avoiding seabird by-catch is good for business and for the environment,” says Bronwyn Marce, Albatross Task Force leader for BirdLife SA.

In 2004 the hake trawl fishery became the first fishery in Africa to obtain Marine Stewardship Certification. This ensures fished stocks remain stable and healthy, that ecosystem-wide impacts are minimised, and that there is continued monitoring of – and compliance with – prescribed fishing regulations.



“As a condition of certification, the fishery had to assess the risk of seabird by-catch,” says Wanless.

The road was long – and not without bumps; but in the end, the trawl industry didn’t want to be seen to be damaging the environment.

“Everyone – from the deck hands, to the skippers, to the CEOs – bought into the idea,” says Wanless.

It’s a good-news story all round, not just for its happy ending. Sponsored by Total South Africa, the scare lines are built in

collaboration with the Ocean View Association for Persons with Disabilities, and provide an income to people such as Aubrey, a former fisherman who came to the centre after an accident put him out of work.

“Conservation success stories are hard to find,” says Wanless. “Rarely are they the result of simple, elegant solutions that are truly win-win.”

“ Conservation success stories are hard to find. Rarely are they the result of simple, elegant solutions that are truly win-win.”

Dr Ross Wanless

FISHERIES’ FOOTPRINT

Story by Helen Swingler
Photo courtesy of Assoc Prof Colin Attwood

An experiment in the Atlantic Ocean 100 nautical miles off Hondeklipbaai on the west coast of South Africa will tell UCT marine researchers how long the seabed – and its ecosystem – takes to recover after hake trawling operations.



The Benthic Trawl Experiment is a joint research project with the South African Deep Sea Trawl Industry Association, the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON), and the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. It’s the first in a series of experimental surveys of the impact of bottom trawling on the benthic communities – organisms that live in or on the seafloor – of the outer shelf of South Africa’s west coast, says chief scientist Associate Professor Colin Attwood. These will be conducted annually, though Attwood says it will take longer than the allotted

four years for previously trawled lanes to bounce back.

Monitoring change

SAEON’s Lara Atkinson, who is managing the project, says: “We have been planning for a long time to get this experiment under way, and we’re very excited about this opportunity to be able to monitor for any changes in the benthic communities in the areas where trawling has stopped.”

The experiment established a 6-by-15-nautical-mile block (within one of the fisheries’ commercial blocks) and divided this into five

lanes, two of which will remain open to trawling. The remaining three will be closed over the project’s lifespan.

Data recovered during repeated surveys over this time will give researchers a clearer idea of recovery among seafloor species – and of the ocean floor itself, which becomes churned up by metal trawl ‘doors’ (some weighing up to 10 tons) angled to hold open the net mouth as it’s pulled along.

A towed camera and a Van Veen grab (instrumentation used to collect sediment) will be used to sample the benthic epifauna and infauna respectively.

New footage

Two-and-a-half hours of video footage of the seabed, shot during the first of the experimental surveys on board the research vessel *Ellen Khuzwayo* in February, show marine life previously not seen on the seabed: jacobever, spiny eels, starfish, anemones and other crustaceans – and hake.

“The footage is very clear; it’s the best and most systematic video we have of life in the trawl lanes,” says Attwood.

Hake live in deep water during the day, the bulk at depths of 350-600m; and because of their

inaccessibility, they aren’t often observed in their wild habitat. But they migrate vertically, coming up to feed at night. As such, much of the trawling is done during the day when the fish are near the seabed.

“Mass food production has an environmental impact, and it’s great that we have the fishing industry’s co-operation on this experiment,” says Attwood. “They understand that we need to limit harvest to replenishable numbers, and that it’s important to work with the ecosystem.”

OPINION

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

Harald Winkler & Samantha Keen,
Energy Research Centre

Despite climate action so far, annual emissions of global-warming greenhouse gases (GHGs) continue to rise – more rapidly than in the decade before, 2000 to 2010.

About half of historical cumulative greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have occurred in the last 40 years. One has to ask: how can this be? Where is the growth in emissions coming from? As part of one of three working groups contributing to the IPCC’s fifth assessment report on mitigation, 235 experts overseen by 38 review editors assessed nearly 10 000 publications to find answers.

As it turns out, three quarters of the growth in GHG emissions is from energy supply and industry – much of this from fossil fuel combustion, cement production, and flaring. Two key drivers of these emissions are economic growth, and – to about roughly half the extent – population growth. Simply put, the problem of emissions growth is due to the affluent population. Most worryingly, the trend of gradual decarbonisation of energy supply from 1970 to 2000 has been reversed; and the carbon intensity of energy has increased from 2000 to 2010, due to more

coal being used. The efforts to improve energy efficiency and find alternative energy options are being outweighed by the opposite trend: we (as a planet) have been burning dirtier fuels (coal and oil), and lots more of them!

High-income countries (the IPCC’s report on mitigation uses World Bank country classification by gross national income per capita) are responsible for disproportionately large per capita emissions. The poorer half of these countries emit more than six times the per capita emissions of the poorer half of the lower-income countries. Within the income groups there is glaring inequality in per capita emissions between the poorest and the richest, especially in high- and lower-income countries. However, emissions per capita in upper-middle income countries are increasing – pointing to the carbon footprint of the global middle class, including in South Africa. The report points out that upper- and lower-middle-income country

emissions are in part for products exported to, and consumed, in high-income countries.

The trend of growing emissions means we are way off track in limiting global warming to 2°C above pre-industrial levels, let alone strengthening that politically agreed goal to 1.5°C. Without increased mitigation, current emission trends put us on a path to 3.7° to 4.8°C above by the end of this century. Even assuming the climate action described in the Cancún Pledges – if extended at that low level of ambition into the future – average global temperature increase above pre-industrial levels is likely to near 3°C. Clearly, more and urgent action is needed.

We need to decarbonise electricity far faster than we have, in all sectors of society: government, industry, business, and individuals – and, most urgently, the high emitters. Improving energy efficiency and reducing energy demand is important, but is not enough on its own. Low and zero-carbon technologies play an essential role in

climate-change mitigation. Negative carbon technologies – such as bio-energy with carbon capture and storages (BECCS) – will be a critical component of a global emissions pathway to warming levels within 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

Decarbonisation requires large changes in investment patterns – a 20% decline in carbon-intensive sectors, and double the past levels of investment in low-carbon energy. Renewable energy technologies are maturing; we need to scale up deployment rapidly, as these are the most sustainable resource alternatives. Co-benefits, such as improved air quality, further offset the cost to society of shifting investment.

Technology and investment form part of the plan; but the most instantly implementable mitigation option is that of behaviour. Behaviour change is the most cost-effective (and equitable) mitigation option, and it is essential for reducing energy demand and emissions without compromising development.

UCT Professor Harald Winkler, assisted by Samantha Keen, and Professor Dave Dewar joined authors and expert reviewers from more than 55 countries in assessing scientific, technological and socio-economic literature relevant to tackling climate change for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s fifth report, ‘Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change’. Key findings of the Working Group III’s contribution to the IPCC 5th Assessment Report (AR5) were presented at a public seminar hosted by the Energy Research Centre on 14 April, the day after its release in Berlin. The evening was well attended, and the audience heard responses to the report from government, business and civil society. This event followed the African Climate and Development Initiative open discussion meeting on 2 April, where key insights and challenges were shared from the IPCC Working Group II’s contribution to AR5, ‘Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability’.



The geometric tortoise is critically endangered and now restricted to a tiny habitat in the Wellington-Porterville area. It is now estimated that only 700 to 800 geometric tortoises survive in the wild. Photo courtesy of capenature.co.za.

REPTILES UNDER THREAT

Story by Helen Swingler

South Africa and its neighbours Lesotho and Swaziland have the world's third most diverse reptile fauna – a population documented in the Animal Demography Unit's most recent atlas. But the conservation of almost one-fifth of these species and sub-species is of extinction concern, because of habitat destruction and alteration.

UCT's Animal Demography Unit (ADU) has co-ordinated and recently launched their fourth atlas, *Atlas and Red List of the Reptiles of South Africa, Swaziland and Lesotho*, published as the first monograph of the new South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) Suricata series on various South African animals.

The atlas lists the conservation status of the Southern African region's 422 species and sub-species of snakes, lizards, tortoises and turtles, some 45% of which are endemic to this area.

Data-rich, it includes information on the distribution and habitat of each species, as well as the threats to its survival, and the conservation measures needed to ensure it stays off the endangered species list.

Words and pictures

Featuring distribution maps for, and photographs of, each reptile (a first), the publication is the product of 135 512 records, gathered by leading reptile scientists and citizen scientists, under the auspices of the South African Reptile Conservation Assessment (SARCA).

As such, it's the most thorough assessment of reptile conservation ever completed in Africa, says ADU director Emeritus Professor Les Underhill.

And long overdue – the last Red Data Book was compiled by Bill Branch and published in 1988. Since then, 200 additional species have been recognised – an increase of 50% on previously recognised diversity.

"Many taxa were previously considered sub-species, but have been elevated to full species," says Underhill.

Some 405 taxa were assessed, 90% of which had never been assessed before, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (ICUN) Red List system, an internationally endorsed scientific approach to assessing species' extinction risks.

Until now, many maps for reptiles had been based partly on data, but largely on guesswork. For the first time, maps are available for each species showing only the places where it has actually been found. Such pin-point species information provides the foundation for conservation plans.

The conservation message is paramount, Underhill emphasises.

Conservation crucial

Because most reptiles are predators and help control populations of pest species such as rats, mice, mosquitoes, flies and termites, they have a large impact on ecosystems.

"SARCA sprang from the realisation that reptiles as a group have largely been ignored in conservation planning – not only in South Africa, but globally," says Dr Marienne de Villiers, SARCA project manager and one of the atlas's seven editors.

"This is largely due to a lack of information. To conserve something you need to know what you have, where it occurs, and how well or poorly it's doing, and what is threatening it.

"In 2003, when Professor Graham Alexander of Wits and ADU's James

Harrison incubated an innovative plan to address these issues, it was evident that much of this information was missing for the reptiles of the region. There was information on the distribution of species, but it was scattered, and not easily accessible."

The atlas gives a much clearer picture: that one in every five of the region's species is of conservation concern; two are extinct and 36 are threatened with extinction. The loss of the two extinct species, both lizards, can be attributed to afforestation in one case and urban

development in the other. Both originally had restricted distributions.

In common with the findings for many other groups of species, the main threats to reptiles are habitat degradation and loss through agriculture, afforestation, alien invasive vegetation and urbanisation.

But the publication is not a field guide, says Underhill. It's intended for conservation planners and managers, researchers, legislators and environmental consultants; as well as professional and amateur herpetologists.



UCT's Animal Demography Unit co-ordinated the recently launched the *Atlas and Red List of the Reptiles of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland*. It joins works on birds, butterflies, insects, and frogs.

GOOD FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES

Author and herpetologist Marius Burger, who led the Southern African Reptile Conservation Assessment (SARCA) field surveys during the Animal Demography Unit's *Reptile Atlas* project, speaks to Helen Swingler about the adventures – and misadventures – of a fieldworker.

How many years of fieldwork did you put in for the *Reptile Atlas*?

The fieldwork component stretched over three summer seasons, during which time I travelled to priority sites all over South Africa, and clocked in excess of 100 000km.

Why the fascination with reptiles?

Ah, reptiles – my good friends in low places! Well, I guess it's a group that's generally shunned by most people, and I was fortunate to develop an alternative stance at a young age. Once I realised the fascinating ways of reptiles and their substantial diversity, I started searching for them at every opportunity. I must admit that initially it was a snake fascination. But after rolling thousands of rocks in search of snakes, or snake food, I gradually became besotted with the likes of lizards, tortoises, and frogs. In no time my fetish matured, and 'herping' became my lifetime career.

Favourite reptile?

The first contender that springs to mind is the barking gecko. These fellows gave me a good run for my money when I first tried to home in on a 'calling' individual. They

seem to be expert ventriloquists, and will send you criss-crossing the desert at night in the hopes of locating the little clicker. They call from a tiny burrow in the sand, and will pull back when you approach too closely. So, in essence, you have to search for a little hole in the sand and then lie down quietly for perhaps ten minutes, while trying not to breathe. With some perseverance – and luck – you'll be rewarded when a little head pops out of the hole and stares unblinkingly into your torchlight. And then suddenly it will lick its eyeballs with its tongue – windscreen wipers for the desert dust. Other favourites include chameleons, of course. And the Gaboon viper is out to impress.

You've had a too-close encounter with a puff adder during your fieldwork. Are you okay now, or missing body parts?

I could have done without that ordeal. We were in the Waterberg region, en route to the Soutpansberg. The night before, we'd done some road cruising and collected a young African rock python, and this damned puff adder. The plan was to photograph them in the morning and then release

them. But that puffie changed the schedule. Ten days in a hospital in Pretoria, four surgical procedures later, and five months for the wound to heal ... I'm happy not to have lost the thumb. It's thin and stiff, and without much sensation, but it's still there. There's no glory in getting bitten. In fact, it's an embarrassment, and an inconvenience. I would love to have reached 50 years into my herpetological career and be able to boast a bite-free track record. There goes that plan...

Favourite anecdote from the *Reptile Atlas*? exercise?

I enjoyed the SARCA way of life; we got to travel vast distances to explore areas that – herpetologically speaking – were poorly known. Our gap analysis would pinpoint the areas of interest, and typically I would phone an agricultural co-op in the nearest town and inquire about accommodation on a nearby farm. I loved those conversations: "Hello. My name is Marius Burger. I want to catch snakes and lizards on your farm. And I need cheap accommodation or camping for four persons for ten days. It's for a good cause." After a longish pause I was usually asked to repeat

my request again; but invariably we were swamped by hospitality, and in many cases the new friendships became lasting ones. And speaking of new friendships, a total of 61 volunteers joined me on the SARCA fieldtrips. A few, I think, have recovered reasonably well after they received post-SARCA therapy!

What's the value of citizen scientists in an endeavour like this – I imagine the general public would have been more comfortable gathering data for the butterfly or bird atlases?



Reptile Atlas author Marius Burger chats to locals about lizards and other reptiles during a fieldwork trip. Fieldwork spanned three summer seasons.

CITIZEN SCIENTISTS: THE POWER OF SMALL NUMBERS

Story by Helen Swingler

The Kalahari plated lizard (*Gerrhosaurus multilineatus*), featured in the recently launched *Reptile Atlas*, lives in holes between roots of shrubs in the bushveld and Kalahari sandveld of Namibia. Until recently it had never been photographed. But thanks to the efforts of citizen scientists, there's now a visual record of this handsome lizard.

Public participation is being harnessed by the Animal Demography Unit (ADU), co-ordinators of the *Reptile Atlas*, to provide a reach far beyond formal fieldwork. Such is the power of the humble citizen scientist.

"[Citizen scientist] contributions are invaluable," says ADU director Emeritus Professor Les Underhill. "The wealth of data and information contributed by these people, collated and curated at the ADU, and analysed by its students and staff, has greatly improved biodiversity conservation in Southern Africa."

Detailed reports of reptile finds, with photographs and GPS co-ordinates, stream in to the

ADU's Virtual Museum (vms.adu.org.za) – and each is identified by a panel of experts. These records not only provide information on species distribution, but also yield useful information on rare species.

In April, citizen scientist Laurenda van Breda submitted a report and photograph of a black percher (*Diplacodes lefebvrii*), a tiny dragonfly she'd spotted at the Cape Flats Nature Reserve. Experts confirmed that her find is not only very rare in the Western Cape, but also that the black percher had never before been recorded on the Cape Peninsula – the few records for this species range from Citrusdal to East London.

The data went straight into the Virtual Museum.

The growth in public participation has been spurred by developments in digital photography and GPS units, which have revolutionised data collection and made virtual museums possible.

Now, anyone with a digital camera can become a citizen scientist.

"They help us fill in a lot of gaps," says Underhill.

"By becoming involved in these projects, people learn an enormous amount about the natural world," says ADU postdoctoral research fellow Sally Hofmeyr, whose interest is science communication.

"One of the ways I've participated is by recording a bird list every time I walk from my flat to UCT."

Around 1 360 citizen scientists contributed to the South African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP2) database. Of these, 43 submitted 500 or more checklists, at least one every five days since the project began. Collectively, they've submitted 37 000 checklists, some 37% of SABAP2's database. The impetus has taken the ADU's Virtual Museum to a new milestone: 80 000 entries.

Hofmeyr is investigating the role of translational research communication, looking at the

The concept of citizen scientists has been well established in Europe for some decades already, but it's relatively new in SA. Some faunal groups are obviously more popular, like birds. But I must admit I was pleasantly surprised to see more-than-expected interest in SARCA, and specifically the SARCA Virtual Museum. Citizen scientists contributed a substantial chunk of the SARCA dataset, and as our society is continually transforming over the years, I anticipate that these interest groups will continue to grow.

UCT TO BECOME RESEARCH-INTENSIVE

UCT's size-and-shape strategy commits it to becoming a research-intensive institution, where postgraduate students make up 40% of the student body. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Danie Visser explains the university's research plans and ambitions.

The month of May saw a celebration not only of things African, but also of research – a primary preoccupation of UCT – during the institution's first Research Week, running from 12 to 16 May.

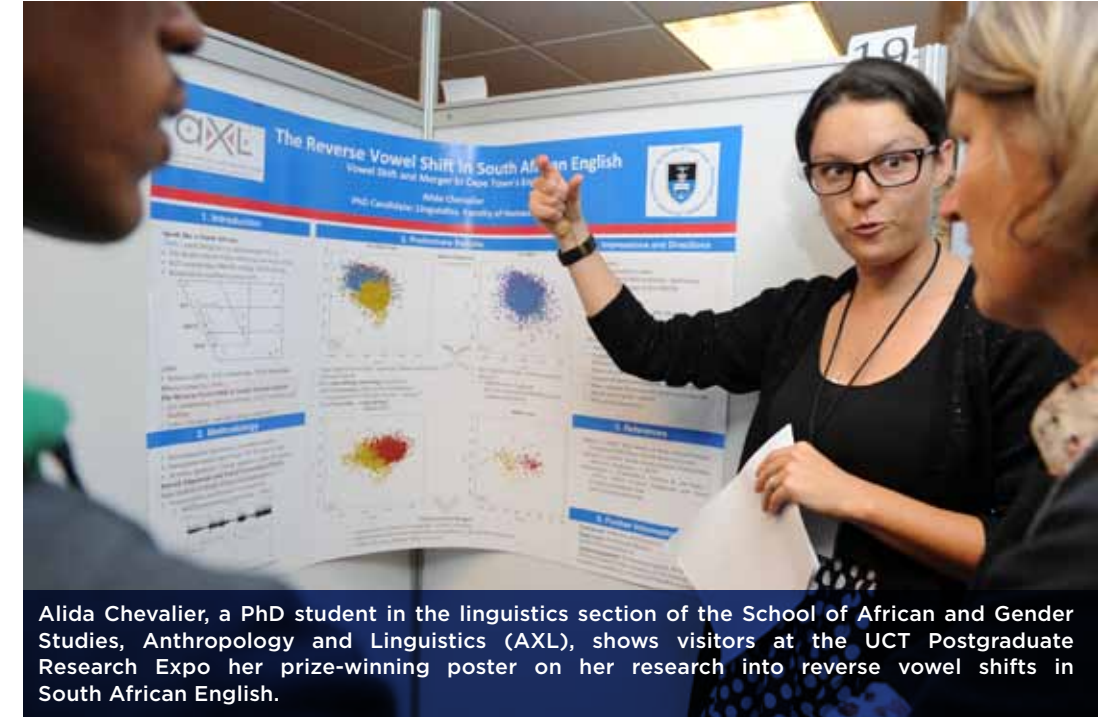
Professor Danie Visser, deputy vice-chancellor responsible for research, used the opportunity to speak about UCT's intention to become a research-intensive university.

"The university is currently known as a research-led institute, but this doesn't mean that we concentrate on research at the

expense of teaching. We live the Humboldtian ideal, where you create new knowledge, impart it to students and then work with students to create more new knowledge," he explained.

Visser was speaking at the Harry Oppenheimer Library at the opening of UCT Research Week, a time focused on research and publication in South Africa, on research ethics, and on promoting access to open scholarship opportunities.

According to Visser, one of the markers of a research-intensive university is that postgraduate



Alida Chevalier, a PhD student in the linguistics section of the School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics (AXL), shows visitors at the UCT Postgraduate Research Expo her prize-winning poster on her research into reverse vowel shifts in South African English.

students make up more than 40% of the student body. He also pointed out that the university's research income totalled R975 million last year, while new research contracts signed came to R978 million. "When an institute is successful in drawing in money from outside funders, then it is doing research that people care about – [it is an indication] that the research is relevant and making a contribution in real terms."

He also highlighted the various ways in which the university is providing support to researchers. The university is in the process

of creating a research portal, which Visser described as being a "one-stop-shop for all electronic resources researchers might need". He also pointed out that the portal is set to become a single repository for researchers' details, so that when they submit applications for grants through university structures, for example, their information can be drawn automatically instead of their having to provide the same details each time.

Visser also emphasised the university's commitment to interdisciplinary study by mentioning

its plans to establish a Hasso Plattner Institute School of Design Thinking (HIPI D-School). Only two other institutions in the world have so-called D-Schools – the University of Potsdam in Germany and Stanford University in the United States. A school for design thinking provides a space for students from all the faculties to "learn to think in order to be innovative" while grappling with real-world problems put to them by industry. In August, a group from the University of Potsdam will come to UCT to present training courses and start the process of establishing a D-School at UCT.

RESEARCH WINNERS

The university-wide research week culminated in a Postgraduate Research Expo, at which 46 postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows showcased and elaborated on their research in front of a judging panel consisting of representatives from all faculties. Here's a dip into the research of the event's first-prize winners.

Synthetic fuel using cobalt crystallites

Anna Petersen, a PhD student in chemical engineering, won in the category for technology, engineering and the built environment for her research into alumina-modified cobalt catalysts for the Fischer-Tropsch synthesis. In the Fischer-Tropsch process, a catalyst is used to produce valuable hydrocarbons, such as synthetic fuel, from very basic starting materials – hydrogen and carbon monoxide. These starting materials can be derived from alternative carbon sources such as coal, gas or biomass. Thus, the Fischer-Tropsch process could secure access to transport fuels and bulk chemicals essential for the chemical and pharmaceutical industry long after depletion of crude oil reserves. Cobalt is a fantastic catalyst for the Fischer-Tropsch process, but is very expensive. That's why small cobalt crystallites are typically used to optimise its activity, at minimal cost. To maintain a small cobalt crystallite size during the process, a catalyst support is used. This support is a ceramic (such as alumina) that acts as a solid sponge over which the metal is dispersed. Typically, the support comprises 80 to 90% of the weight of the total catalyst, and only 10% is the actual catalytically active metal compound.

The most endangered language of South Africa

Dr Sheena Shah, a postdoctoral fellow who obtained her PhD at Georgetown University in the US, won in the Africa-specific research category for her poster on the Nǀng Language Project – part of the activities conducted by the Centre for African Language Diversity (CALDi) in the School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology & Linguistics. With five remaining speakers, Nǀng is the most endangered language of Southern Africa. Nǀng – with its Eastern !ʼAu variety and Western Nǀuu variety – is the last related language to !Xam (which features prominently on South Africa's coat of arms). Shah's poster highlighted one aspect of the Nǀng Language Project, namely the development of a practical orthography (the conventional spelling system of a language) that will help the community maintain their language. Another major component of the project is to make archived audio and text files on this language accessible to the community.

Can public transport lead to a healthier lifestyle?

Clare Bartels, a doctoral student from the UCT/Medical Research Council's Research Unit for Exercise Science and Sports Medicine, won first prize in the science and health sciences category with Siketha Ukuba Nempilo ("We choose to be healthy"), a project that explores whether taking public transport can lead to a healthier lifestyle. According to the World Health Organisation, an estimated 1.9 million deaths worldwide are caused by insufficient physical activity. Transport-related physical activity, such as walking and cycling, can contribute to getting a community more physically active. Bartels' study describes the profile of MyCiTi bus users and quantifies the impact of active commuting on their daily physical activity. A total of 1 473 MyCiTi bus passengers and non-users were interviewed; unsurprisingly, MyCiTi users accumulated significantly more time in active transport and total physical activity than non-users.

The changing shape of South African English

Alida Chevalier, a PhD student in the linguistics section of the School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics (AXL), won the commerce, law and humanities category for her work on reverse vowel shifts (a change in the pronunciation of a vowel) in South African English. According to Chevalier, "Language is something, through which we humans communicate, however unwittingly, our histories and contexts – they're alive, and changing continuously." In post-apartheid South Africa, English as spoken by the middle classes in particular is converging, with young people speaking an English very different to the often ethnically-identifiable varieties spoken by their parents – a process Professor Rajend Mesthrie has termed 'deracialisation'. It is the aim of Chevalier's research to track the vowel shift happening in Cape Town English; and thereby, determine the extent of the deracialisation of South African English via the degree of participation in this change by various Capetonians.

CLASSIFIEDS

VACANT POSTS

EXECUTIVE AND ACADEMIC POSTS:

Lecturer (2 posts), Department of Construction Economics and Management, Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, Closing date: 16 June 2014

Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, Department of Commercial Law, Faculty of Law, Closing date: 20 June 2014

Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor, Tax Law, Department of Commercial Law, Faculty of Law, Closing date: 20 June 2014

Senior Lecturer, Percy FitzPatrick Institute of Ornithology, Faculty of Science, Closing date: 27 June 2014

Lecturer/Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor, Language Development Group, Academic Development Programme, Centre for Higher Education Development, Closing date: 27 June 2014

Lecturer, Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, Faculty of Science, Closing date: 30 June 2014

Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, Chinese, School of Languages and Literatures, Faculty of Humanities, Closing date: 7 July 2014

Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Closing date: 12 July 2014

Professor, Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Science, Closing date: 15 September 2014.

RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT POSTS (PASS) POSTS:

Project Manager, Teaching and Learning, Centre for Higher Education Development, Closing date: 09 June 2014

Clinical Research Officer (Medical Doctor), South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Initiative, Faculty of Health Sciences, Closing date: 16 June 2014

Principal Research Officer (Medicinal Chemistry Programme), H3-D Centre, Chemistry, Faculty of Science, Closing date: 30 June 2014

Senior/Chief Research Officer (Head of Computer-Aided Drug Design), H3-D Centre, Chemistry, Faculty of Science, Closing date: 30 June 2014

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Zambian artist
Milumbe Haimbe
explains the concept
of her art piece *The
Revolutionist* – a digital
illustration/print.

OUT IN AFRICA?

Story by Abigail Calata
Photo by Michael Hammond

Africa Month ended on a high note with a host of events under the Queer in Africa banner. ‘Queer’ artists and activists from around the continent gave their interpretation of what it means to be African at – among other events – an exhibition, a panel discussion and a whole-day symposium.

A pan-African problem that embarrasses us all is how Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price described the upsurge of homophobic sentiment across the continent at the opening of the *Queer in Africa: Confronting the crisis* symposium. This one-day conference on June 2 saw African scholars and activists coming together to try and make sense of the “rising hatred and anti-humanist turn in the continent”. It was the culmination of a series of events on the Africa month calendar that included the *Critically Queer* exhibition and a panel discussion titled *How and what is queer about Africa, and why now?*.

Price pointed out that in South Africa the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people were protected by law, “but the attitudes, the practices and the extent to which there is hate speech and action as well as discrimination directed at such individuals continues, and in

some cases, might be worse than in previous years.”

Growing prejudice

He called on universities, their presidents and vice-chancellors from around the world to stand up for the rights of their LGBTI students and staff. “We need to recognise that these are our students and that these students are at risk upon their return home; and that we need to do something to protect and defend them and change the environment they live in,” he urged.

The *Queer in Africa* events come after increasingly oppressive anti-gay laws were passed in Uganda and Nigeria earlier this year, bringing the number of African countries with anti-gay laws on their books to 38 of the 54 states.

Price shared his delight with the fact that the events leading up to the symposium were “multi-disciplinary and multi-focal, (where)

art and music, poetry and discussion combined to ensure that what might come across as remote, aloof and a bit ivory-tower to activists and artists is opened up and made accessible to them.”

Queer culture

Performances by poets and musicians accompanied the opening of the *Critically Queer* exhibition at the Centre for African Studies (CAS) Gallery at the end of May. In her keynote address there Dr Stella Nyanzi, a medical anthropologist from the Makerere Institute of Social Research at Makerere University in Uganda, explained that the crisis facing the LGBTI community in Africa is legal, political and cultural.

“In Uganda to be anti-gay, homophobic and anti-trans is to be patriotic. So, how can queer Ugandans be true to themselves when they are labelled unpatriotic? Nationalism is necessarily anti-

queer in very many African locations,” said Nyanzi.

Kenyan academic Dr Keguro Macharia, in his dissection of the recently published *Queer African Reader*, urged his audience at the panel discussion to remember that the emergence of queer studies is linked with Aids and death.

“We need to remember that ‘queer’ begins not as a term of celebration or inclusion, but as a term of mourning. In queer there is always a proximity to death and dying and disposability. It’s a very necessary reminder that the way we use queer might have an ethical focus that’s linked to disposability, and linked to the bodies and lives we throw away.

“It’s worth noting that nobody talks about queer marriage, but gay marriage. The word ‘queer’ is an uncomfortable term. We have to be consistent, the meaning of these terms is not just a given. We have to fight for the meaning associated with these terms.”

“We need to recognise that these are our students and that these students are at risk upon their return home; and that we need to do something to protect and defend them and change the environment they live in.”

Vice-Chancellor
Dr Max Price