

First Interim Grant Report
on behalf of the African Research Universities Alliance

Mobility & Sociality in Africa's Emerging Urban

Grant Number 41600690

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Grant Report: 'Mobility & Sociality in Africa's Emerging Urban'

Progress Report

On 16 December 16, 2016, the Trustees of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation approved a grant of \$844,700 to the University of the Witwatersrand for use over approximately five years. The funds were dedicated to supporting a research and graduate development program on changing forms of social engagement in Africa's urban centres.

Although awarded to the University of the Witwatersrand, this initiative is effectively the first major research grant in support of the newly established African Research Universities Alliance.¹ It formally brings together five African Universities – a selected group of alliance members – dedicated to cultivating a generation of African scholars who can reshape global social theory and scholarly conversations on mobility, cities and social change. Selected due to their expertise on mobility and urban issues and previous collaborations, the five institutions together with their academic representatives and disciplinary affiliations are as follows:

- University of Cape Town, Francis Nyamnjoh, Anthropology and Sociology
- University of Ghana, Legon, George Owusu, Institute of Statistical, Social & Economic Research (ISSER)/ Centre for Urban Management Studies (CUMS)
- University of Nairobi, Elias Ayiamba, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies
- University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Loren B Landau, African Centre for Migration & Society (originally co-organised with Ingrid Palmary)
- University of Zimbabwe, Vupenyu Dzingirai, Centre for Applied Social Sciences

It is worth noting that the University of Zimbabwe is not a full member of ARUA. Although once a significant research university in Southern Africa, more than a decade of economic and political crisis has left the university at a considerable disadvantage. However, it retains a highly qualified academic staff with aspirations of rebuilding the institution. Combined with the rapid levels of human mobility and urbanisation

¹ ARUA members include, Addis Ababa University; University of Cape Town; University of Dar es Salaam; Cheikh Anta Diop University; University of Ibadan; University of KwaZulu-Natal; University of Ghana; University of Lagos; Obafemi Awolowo University; Makerere University; University of Nairobi; National University of Rwanda; University of Pretoria; Rhodes University; University of Stellenbosch; University of the Witwatersrand.

in the country, their inclusion represents an important opportunity to help rebuild the social sciences in Zimbabwe while generating insights into a relatively unexplored set of social phenomena.

In July 2017, the ACMS convened a two-day initiation meeting in Johannesburg oriented towards both substantive and administrative matters. As noted in the proposal, this was dedicated to ensuring that (a) the majority of the grant's resources would go to develop a new generation of interdisciplinary scholars oriented towards melding empirical and theoretical work; and (b) that there would be an adequate balance between coordination and institutional autonomy. The substantive outcome of that meeting is reflected in the second attachment to this report.

Upon consultation with the project leadership and partners, this was launched as a five-year, interdisciplinary, social sciences and humanities programme entitled 'Mobility and Sociality in Africa's Emerging Urban.' This initiative is a scholarly response to unprecedented levels of urbanisation and mobility driven by conflict, ambition, and respatialising economies. It is intended to develop African-based contributions to theories of human mobility and transforming modes of social engagement, authority, representation, and expression. Underlying this effort are a series of fundamental questions that will guide work over the grant period:

- What new forms of moral authority operate in rapidly urbanising contexts? What are the forms of alternative authority that emerge in contexts where the State is largely absent?
- How are these changing people's imagination of traditional hierarchies of age gender and family structure? How are these connected to new notions of morality rooted in age gender and social obligation?
- How are changing forms of violence legitimated? What becomes visible as violence and what is eclipsed?
- How does widespread translocalism and ongoing mobility reshape urban morphologies and residential patterns; social interactions; subjective understanding of citizenship; representation and civic identity: what is political society in spaces only loosely structured by states and formal markets?
- What cultural practices are being reshaped and reconceptualised by mobile urban residents? What are the practical enacted ethics that enable people to make sense of varied diversities and to

communicate and exchange across social divisions? How do people make sense of difference without shared histories or the disciplining institutions of common states, religion, or markets?

It promises to open new scholarly frontiers and enhance the quality of pedagogy and partnerships while positively transforming the continent's universities. The initiative is dedicated to fostering interdisciplinarity, engagement with the arts, and creative research and outreach methodologies.

Setbacks and Challenges

As you will note from the financial report, there was a remarkable underspend during 2017. This is largely due to administrative reasons associated with the organisation of the African Research Universities Alliance and its secretariat's relationship with the University of the Witwatersrand. An explanation follows.

As the grant award came at the conclusion of South Africa's 2016 academic year, work towards the project objectives only began in February 2017 when academic and administrative staff returned from the summer hiatus. During the initial part of the year, there was considerable effort to determine the appropriate modalities for administering the award. As its first major research grant, ARUA was not yet positioned to take on its expected role in managing the grant and coordinating its activities. As such, responsibility for doing unexpectedly fell to the two scholars who drafted the initial proposal to the foundation: Professors Ingrid Palmay and Loren at the African Centre for Migration & Society at the University of the Witwatersrand. (Professor Palmay subsequently accepted a position at the University of Johannesburg and is no longer involved with this initiative.) As this was not part of the ACMS 2017 work plan, there were few administrative or personnel resources in place to support the grant. There was consequently a short delay while the ACMS recalibrated its activities. By the middle of the year, leadership has now been transferred entirely to the ACMS and coordination began in earnest.

At this point it is worth noting that the ACMS/ARUA will likely request a no-cost extension by the end of 2018 to ensure that the students and post-doctoral fellows recruited are able to complete their work programme.

The team also recognises that while there is considerable disciplinary and geographic diversity among the team leaders, there is a remarkable absence of diversity in gender terms. Although this is a somewhat unavoidable artefact of the partnership, every effort will be made to remedy this balance through support for students and post-doctoral fellows.

Goals for Next Period

As currently conceptualised, the programme is divided up into three primary components. The first is a series of post-doctoral fellowships. The second is support for doctoral studies. The third is a series of thematic and methodological workshops intended to foster collaboration, professional development, and the 'field'. While the doctoral studies will be largely coordinated by the relevant institutions (recognising that students will be embedded in specific departments & universities with their own requirements), the other two elements will be jointly organised. All post-doctoral fellows will be vetted by the leadership team and the workshops – while at multiple locations across the grant period – will be coordinated by scholars from multiple institutions.

Following the initiation meeting, the remainder of 2017 was spent contracting the partner Universities. Given the multiple countries and institutions involved – and the limited administrative support from available at the coordinating institution – this proved more complex than originally expected. Alas, little substantive work could proceed without contracts in place. Most specifically, partners could make no commitments to post-doctoral or doctoral fellows without funding commitments to their own institutions squared away.

By early 2018, all the institutional contracts have been finalised and the ACMS has recruited a doctoral student, Ms. Kabiri Bule, to work as the project's *de facto* administrator. Advertisements and recruitment for doctoral students is underway. It is worth noting that the University of Zimbabwe which has already recruited three suitable doctoral students.

- **Owen Nyamwanza**, Topic: *Surviving a Rough Neighbourhood: A Phenomenological Study of Zimbabwean Migrants in Plastic View Informal Settlement, Pretoria South Africa*. The Study examines Zimbabwe migrants in an informal settlement in Pretoria, South Africa, with emphasis on how they forge links with local South Africans to guarantee security and access to resources in South Africa
Supervisors: Prof Dzingirai and Dr Chimanikire, Department of Political Science and Administration
- **Johannes Bhanye**, Topic: *The Dynamics of Migration and Land Access In the Peri-Urban: The Case of Malawian Migrants in Norton Area of Zimbabwe*. Focusing on informal settlement on the outskirts of Norton town, the study looks at how migrants negotiate for urban space and how they ensure continued settlement in an environment they are considered squatters
Supervisors: Prof Dzingirai and Prof I. Chirisa, Department of Rural and Urban Planning.

- **Rufaro Mushonga**, Topic: *Social Integration and Wealth Accumulation among Nigerians in Harare, Zimbabwe*. The study looks at West African migrants in Zimbabwe and strategies to accumulate wealth in the informal sector of Harare. **Supervisors:** Prof Dzingirai and Prof L. Sachikonye, Centre For Applied Social Sciences

The team has now decided to readvertise, with an announcement already recirculated with the application deadline has been extended until 1 March. Selection and recruitment happening after that. We are devising a recruitment plan in which all project leaders have an input, but that the potential hosting institution has both more say and ultimate veto power. A telephonic interview process may be undertaken before final offers are made. Plans are also underway for the first collaborative workshop to be held later in 2018.

Evaluations

None

Publications and Press Articles

None

Additional

None

Budget narrative

The project considerably underspent during its first year as a result of administrative confusion and concerns. As such, the only substantive expenditure – slightly over budget – is associated with the planning meeting described in the narrative above. Although the ACMS was actively involved in the project coordination, it has not claimed time against the grant as the other partners – still not formally contracted to ACMS – were not able to do so.

Attachments:

1. Financial Report
2. Inception Meeting Report
3. Call for Post-Doctoral Researchers