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ACEIR
AFRICAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
FOR INEQUALITY RESEARCH



ARUA
African Research
Universities Alliance



ACEIR is a research centre of the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA). With country partners in eastern, western and southern Africa, ACEIR aims to contribute to deep, multidimensional and interdisciplinary understandings of inequality in each country context, and a continental and global understanding of how inequalities can be overcome.



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ACEIR NEWS BULLETIN

March 2023

We share this first quarter news bulletin with stimulated minds but exhausted bodies.

As evidenced below, 2023 has offered us many exciting developments, accelerating conversations, and invigorating collaboration and networking opportunities.

One key moment was the international multisectoral symposium – hosted in March with partners from another ARUA centre of excellence at the University of Cape Town – on climate change, sustainable livelihoods, and multidimensional poverty and inequality. The research presented dealt with a critical question for responding to climate change: how can climate actions be deliberately targeted to address poverty and inequality, especially in the African context?

Other highlights of the past three months include:

- A forward-looking gathering with management teams from all 13 ARUA centres of excellence.
- A senior World Bank official's visit to our team at the University of Nairobi.
- Hosting several high-profile intellectuals for public talks, including Adam Tooze.
- University of Cape Town colleagues celebrate a new book on South Africa's employment, income inequality, and inclusive growth conundrum.

Also in this bulletin is the third in a series of reflections on growing partnerships and collaborations. This time we focus on our ongoing and fruitful partnership with the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). Read about ACEIR contributions to a forthcoming AFD–World Bank book on inequality in Africa; and an update on new inequality diagnostics that are underway.

We also share details on University of Bristol-curated course materials on advanced poverty research methods which are now online; the thought-provoking and excellent seminars by visiting intellectuals who ACEIR recently co-hosted; and our researchers' footprint in online articles and at knowledge exchanges.

PARTNERSHIPS IN FOCUS| Agence Française de Développement



The African Centre of Excellence for Inequality Research is celebrating its fifth year in 2023. Befittingly, it is also the year in which ACEIR will reach a new milestone of having developed five inequality diagnostics for different African countries. Another milestone on the horizon is that a team of ACEIR researchers are contributing chapters to a new book on inequality in Africa as part of the Africa Development Forum Series that is published jointly by the World Bank and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). These important contributions to the global evidence base on African inequality are largely being realised through ACEIR's partnership with the AFD – a supportive collaboration since ACEIR's inception in 2018.

NEWS | How to transform social inequalities through inclusive climate action?

It has been three years since two African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) centres of excellence, both based at UCT, embarked on a joint research project to investigate the intersection between some of the biggest challenges of our time: climate change, sustainable livelihoods, and multidimensional poverty and inequality. The multidisciplinary teams of researchers associated with ACEIR and the ARUA Centre of Excellence in Climate and Development studied how climate change action can be socially transformative in three contrasting African countries: Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. Recently they presented preliminary findings from this research at an international multisectoral symposium hosted by the project. The gathering focused on a critical question for responding to climate change: how can climate actions be deliberately targeted to address poverty and inequality, especially in the African context?



ACEIR research who presented at the symposium were:

- University of Ghana: Prof. Damiano K. Manda; Prof. Abena D. Oduro; Prof. Robert D. Osei; Prof. Nkechi S. Owoo (virtual); Dr Monica Lambon-Quayefio
- University of Nairobi: Dr Moses Muriithi; Dr Reuben Mutegi
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics: Paul K. Samoei (virtual)
- University of Cape Town: Dr Fabio Andrés Díaz Pabón; Faaika Hartley; Arindam Jana; Prof. Murray Leibbrandt; Prof. Vimal Ranchhod; Dr Muna Shifa



Photos: Group photo by Michelle Shields, ARUA-CD; Prof. Sue Harrison, UCT Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Internationalisation (captured via Zoom); panel chaired by the AFD's Dr Anda David; (Zoom); and captured by Charmaine Smith are Faeza Meyer, African Water Commons Collective; presentation by Prof. Abena D. Oduro; and research posters on exhibition.

[READ MORE](#)

NEWS | Taking stock with ARUA's Centres of Excellence



Photo: African Research Universities Alliance [website](#)

A workshop was held for the ARUA centres of excellence (CoEs) at the University of Mauritius earlier this year. The event brought together all the directors and managers of the 13 CoEs to discuss ARUA’s plans for the centres, including their evaluation, future projects, and other developments. ACEIR was represented by its Director, Prof. Murray Leibbrandt, and Manager, Haajirah Esau. ACEIR’s presentation on planned capacity building activities, including strengthening postgraduate training on the centre’s thematic themes, was well-received by the workshop attendees.

[READ MORE](#)

NEWS | World Bank Global Director visits ACEIR Kenya node



A collage of photographs from the public lecture. Credit: Dr. Luis Felipe Lopez-Calva on Twitter.

In mid-February, Dr. Luis Felipe Lopez-Calva, The World Bank Group’s Global Director for

the Poverty and Equity Global Practice, gave a public lecture at the University of Nairobi. He presented findings from the World Bank report, [Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2022: Correcting Course](#), whereafter ACEIR Kenya's Germano Mwangi, a Professor of Economics at the university, was given the opportunity to respond to the presentation.

[WATCH EVENT RECORDING](#)

NEWS | New book on South Africa's employment, income inequality and inclusive growth conundrum



Murray Leibbrandt speaking at the REDI3x3 book launch event. Credit: Lerato Maduna, UCT News.

A book, *A Measurement of Our Ills – and How We Might Fix Them*, was launched in late January at UCT's School of Economics. The publication covers a wealth of research, synthesising the Research Project on Employment, Income Inequality and Inclusive Growth ([REDI3x3](#)) papers, as well as proceeds of policy conferences. REDI3x3 was an independent, five-year South African research project run by the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) where ACEIR's South Africa node is based. Prof. Murray Leibbrandt was the Project Director of REDI3x3 and Haajirah Esau the Project Administrator.

[ACCESS HERE](#)

CAPACITY BUILDING| Advanced poverty research methods course materials

In November 2021, an intensive online course was organised by the Bristol Poverty Institute, at the University of Bristol, in partnership with ACEIR and the Universidad

Nacional Autónoma de México. The purpose of the course was to provide participants with a thorough technical and practical introduction to advanced quantitative poverty research methods, and with a particular emphasis on multidimensional poverty theory and measurement. It provided participants with the knowledge and skills needed to undertake poverty relevant research using cutting-edge quantitative methodologies. The course content has now been curated at the University of Bristol. The course, led by Prof. Dave Gordon from Bristol Poverty Institute, is aimed at PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, and academic staff who are interested in poverty-relevant research.

This is a fantastic resource.

- Prof. Murray Leibbrandt, National Research Foundation Chair in Poverty and Inequality Research, School of Economics, University of Cape Town.

[ACCESS COURSE MATERIALS](#)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS: International Association for Feminist Economics Annual Conference



As shared in our last news bulletin, ACEIR will host the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) 2023 annual conference that takes place at UCT from 5 – 8 July 2023. The theme of the conference is “Envisioning feminist economics strategies for an equitable and sustainable world”. This hybrid gathering will bring together academics, practitioners, advocacy groups and policymakers from around the world to present their visions of what a world defined by the principles of feminist economics would look like.

The call for papers has closed, but conference registration is open until 1 June (in-person attendance) and 1 July (virtual attendance). Visit the IAFFE 2023 website for registration details.

[CONFERENCE WEB PAGE](#)

RECENT EVENTS: Development economist Lant Pritchett explains approaches to the “National Development Agenda”

Prof. Lant Pritchett is the Director, Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford; Research Director at LaMP (Labor Mobility Partnerships); and a Fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science. This public lecture was hosted jointly in Kenya by the Department of Economics and Development Studies, University of Nairobi; the ACEIR Kenya node; and the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC).

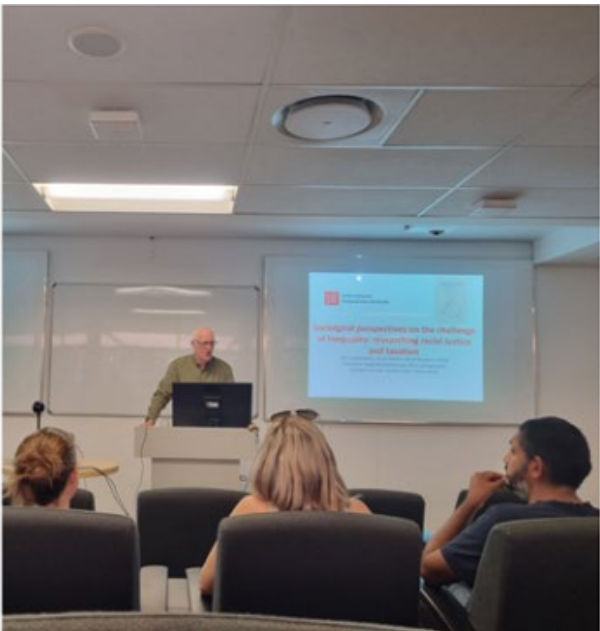
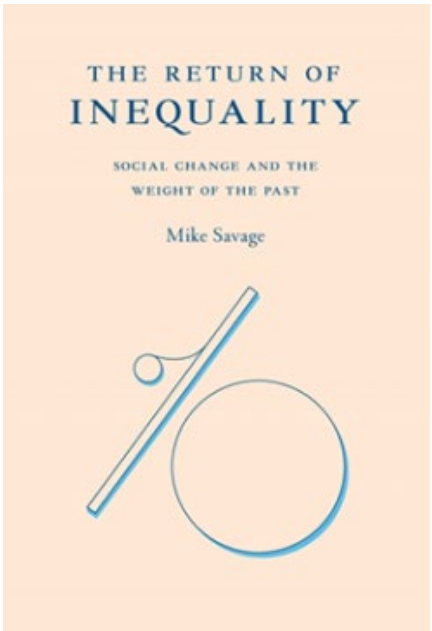
RECENT EVENTS: Adam Tooze on the global economy, climate change and inequality



Adam Tooze is the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Professor of History at Columbia University, USA, and the Director of the European Institute. During this well-attended seminar, Prof. Tooze spoke on the global economy, climate change, and inequality. He mentioned some important impacts that climate change mitigation will have on Africa and highlighted the potential of African countries to participate in the global mitigation and adaptation landscape. The public talk was jointly hosted by SALDRU, the UCT School of Economics, the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, and the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies, University of the Witwatersrand.

[WATCH](#)

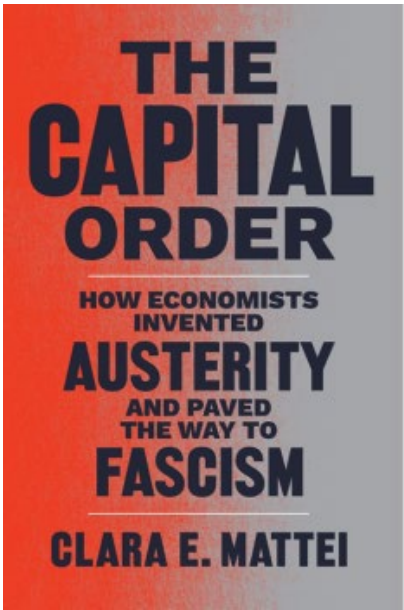
RECENT EVENTS: Sociologist Mike Savage on researching racial justice and taxation



Mike Savage is the Martin White Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and a former director of the LSE’s International Inequalities Institute. He introduced themes from his recent book, *The Return of Inequality: Social change and the weight of the past*, and shared interesting research on those claiming non-domiciled status in United Kingdom tax returns. The event was hosted jointly with SALDRU at UCT’s School of Economics.

WATCH

RECENT EVENTS: In conversation with Clara E. Mattei on using history to understand contemporary political economy



Clara E. Mattei is an Associate Professor in Economics at The New School for Social Research, New York City, and was a member of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton during 2018–2019. In this talk, she discussed topics from her recent book, *The Capital Order*, which traces the origins of austerity and its use over time. She explained that austerity acts as a buffer to capitalism and reminded attendees that politics and economics are inseparably intertwined. Hosted jointly with SALDRU at UCT's School of Economics.

WATCH

NEW PUBLICATIONS BY ACEIR RESEARCHERS | Online articles

[South Africa's relief grant: how it can be used to help young people into jobs](#)

The Conversation, 23 February 2023

COVID-19 worsened already high unemployment in South Africa. In response to heightened financial constraints of many during the pandemic, the South African government introduced a Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant, which was recently extended until November 2023. There has been much debate around this extension. The authors of this article, Dr Kate Orkin, Prof. Ingrid Woolard, Maya Goldman and Prof. **Murray Leibbrandt**, discuss their review of the job assistance literature. They argue that whatever replaces the SRD grant should be combined with job-search assistance programmes as these reduce unemployment by helping the labour market function better.

[Economic growth is not a magic wand for Africa](#)

D+C (Development and Cooperation), 16 February 2023

In this article, Dr **Fabio Andrés Díaz Pabón** explains that millions in Africa have been plunged deeper into poverty due to the multiple and compounded socio-economic crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and inflationary pressures brought by war in Europe. He says that it is now important that we do not parrot slogans about how economic growth is either nefarious or heavenly for Africa – things are more complicated than that.

[Inequality in access to basic services is a major problem in sub-Saharan Africa – but progress is being made](#)

The Conversation, 30 January 2023

Dr. **Muna Shifa** shares findings from research on spatial inequality in sub-Saharan Africa in this article. The research found high levels of within-country spatial and overall national (interpersonal) asset inequalities. Further, in 18 countries, regional inequalities accounted for at least one fifth of overall national inequality. While spatial and national inequalities in access to basic services have declined significantly over time in most of sub-Saharan Africa, the level of inequality and the change over time varies across countries.

[Perú casi dos meses y más de 60 civiles muertos después \(article in Spanish – English translation: Peru after two months of turmoil and more than 60 deaths\)](#)

The Conversation, 27 January 2023

The political tensions emerging in Peru since the end of 2022 reflect the fault lines of inequality, marginalisation and political representation as protests in the Andean nation and repression from the state continue. Dr. **Fabio Andrés Díaz Pabón** and Roland Alvarez Chavez explain that these tensions highlight the need for states to address the challenges of poverty, inequality and representation.

OUR FOOTPRINT | Other recent events



Jobs and development conference

[#Jobs4Dev](#) was held in mid-December last year. It is a global event co-organised by the World Bank, IZA (Institute of Labor Economics), UNU-WIDER, and the Network on Jobs and Development (a partnership of research institutes from various regions of the world). The [#Jobs4Dev](#) session on informality was chaired by Prof. Murray Leibbrandt. A member of ACEIR’s Ghana research team, Prof. Nkechi S. Owoo, spoke on “Differential earnings, household division of labour and fertility choices: An application of the ‘Doing gender hypothesis’ in Ghana” at a G²LM|LIC (Gender, Growth, and Labour Markets In Low Income Countries Programme) research session of the conference.

CONFERENCE RECORDINGS

Think WIDER webinar: How can tax-benefit systems support households through crisis?

Prof. Leibbrandt was one of a panel of experts who joined the Think WIDER Webinar Series on 13 December 2022. The panel offered insights on tax-benefit systems in the Global South and their ability to support citizens in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RECORDING

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We are encouraging our readers across the continent and beyond to share ACEIR news with colleagues and associates. If they want to stay connected, they also can [sign up](#) for future news from the us.

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