

Report on the STIAS University and Society Workshop, 29 and 30 January 2018, Stellenbosch

Introduction

There has been a national crisis in institutions of higher learning in South Africa in the past two years. This STIAS project - one of seven research themes at STIAS - aims to look at this from a higher level than crisis management particularly informed by global trends and making these relevant to local and continental conditions. In this regard a concept note was developed incorporating four focus areas.

Theme: University and Society: Disruption, Discourse and New Directions. The theme focuses on four areas of enquiry:

- *Understanding the colonial legacies and post-colonial realities of the university*
- *The entanglements of knowledge traditions and transitions in the university*
- *Understanding the contemporary university*
- *The university of the future*

(for more details, see <http://stias.ac.za/research/themes/university-and-society/>).

STIAS Theme projects unfold and are structured in different ways and clarity is needed from these discussions on how to structure this particular project. The aim of this workshop was therefore to operationalise this concept. This includes looking at the ground-level assumptions around the value of higher education in society.

Main discussion themes

The following were the main issues discussed by participants over the two days.

President's free education statement

The following background was provided on President Zuma's December statement on free education:

- The fee system still exists and students will still be charged.
- However, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) loan system has been converted into a bursary system.
- The household income level has been raised from R120 000 to R350 000 – which opens up this funding to 90% of households.

- Of the current 208 000 annual vacant places in the university sector – it is likely that 35% will be filled by first-time entering students who qualify for financial aid under this scheme.
- It is full-cost funding and bursaries will follow the placement of students in universities.
- Treasury knew about the statement but not when the President would make it.
- There was no consultation with the universities.
- The initial budget is estimated at R12.5 billion – this comes with the assumption that 35% of first-time entering students will qualify. By 2019 the numbers will probably double and will eventually reach about R60 billion. There are unanswered questions around the likely sources of this funding.
- The bursaries are not linked to field of study and the value and return on investment of different fields/occupations at a society level or which university the student will attend.
- The full cost of study is university dependent.
- It is not clear how the freeing up of funding will affect capacity planning at universities or how universities will afford the increased demands for human resources and infrastructure necessitated by more students. There is already a backlog in infrastructure spend and it is possible that some institutions could end up with no buildings in which to teach. There are university capacity development grants available but not all universities are using these grants. Other modes of structuring universities – like more distance learning/e-learning therefore will have to be considered
- There is also a need to understand the extent of private bursary funding and to ensure there isn't double funding.
- Currently the debt book of all the universities is about R7 billion.

Available data

See: Van Broekhuizen H, Van Der Berg S, Hofmeyr H. *From matric into and through university: Higher education access and outcomes in South Africa*. Research on Socio-Economic Development (ReSEP), Stellenbosch University, 2016.

This study followed the 2008 matric cohort for a six-year period and contains detailed information and data.

The main findings highlighted include:

- Very few matriculants obtain university qualifications.
- Nearly a third of matrics who receive bachelor's passes never go to university.
- Among bachelor passes, university access is not skewed against black students and less skewed against lower-quintile schools than commonly believed.
- Many students take a long time to complete university qualifications.
- University dropout, though high, is not as high as is often reported.

Additional points raised:

The majority of bachelor passes occur in fee-paying schools. This means that 'free' higher education could actually be anti poor.

It would be important to understand in more detail why one third of these students never went to university despite obtaining bachelor's passes. There is a need to understand which schools they attended, and why they go or don't to university. Is it really about financial constraints? The school is currently not taken into account for bursary allocation – this may be false logic.

The study conducted at Rhodes by Mike Rogan and John Reynolds would also be useful in this regard.

See: http://www.lmip.org.za/sites/default/files/documentfiles/LMIP%20Report%2018%20Eastern%20Cape%20WEB_0.pdf

[http://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/iser/documents/Schooling%20inequality,%20higher%20Education%20and%20the%20labour%20market%20-%20Michael%20Rogan%20and%20John%20Reynolds%20\(2015.3\).pdf](http://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/iser/documents/Schooling%20inequality,%20higher%20Education%20and%20the%20labour%20market%20-%20Michael%20Rogan%20and%20John%20Reynolds%20(2015.3).pdf)

It would be extremely useful to unpack these data further and to do another study of this kind with a later cohort to understand what changes have occurred. For example, data have shown that females have a higher success rate – it would be useful to understand why.

It would also be important to understand which universities and which departments are better at converting intake into graduates as well as which aspects of their programmes are linked to this success. Understanding which universities succeed in changing the inequality level of incoming students and reducing the racial gap among students would also be very useful.

It would be useful to link the 2008 cohort to SARS and PERSAL (Personnel and Salary system) data to understand if these graduates have jobs and, if so, in what fields.

There are currently no comparable data from the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system and it would be important to include this to understand the full higher education sector. It is believed that there are very low throughput rates in this sector.

These are not expensive studies to do and the data obtained could feed into current policy discussions and decisions made before the next election.

Strengthening democracy

There has to be understanding of the role of universities in contributing to the strengthening of a democratic society by expanding intellectual and imaginative horizons, developing intellectual skills and providing opportunities for disciplined inquiry and creativity. The university in a post-colonial nation is an engine of transformation and modernisation for all its students, for their communities and for society as a whole. Aspects like future effects on fertility, migration, race relations, values, trust should all be measured.

Universities must contribute to debates on what higher education policies make sense.

Economic aspects and relationship with the labour market

There is a need to understand the return on investment of higher education and specifically universities for both individuals and society overall.

The relationship of the design of the higher education system to labour market needs is a vital discussion. There is somewhat of a legitimacy gap – with industry thinking universities are not providing graduates with real skills. In this regard it's important to understand the different roles of different types of universities. Universities generally don't train for specific jobs but impart skills while technical universities have a much clearer link with industrial skills. Internships could be a valuable tool in this regard.

There are also entire towns that are dependent on higher education facilities and this should be considered in policy-making decisions.

The education of teachers is a neglected area that requires specific attention. There have to be a greater incentives to encourage young people to take this profession on.

Transformation

Economic growth in South Africa has benefitted only a small percentage with widening inequality and poverty levels. There must be increased understanding of the role universities can play to enhance the quality of human life and to act as engines of transformation. Universities should not be serving a labour market that benefits only a few. The broader role of universities as a site of transformation for individuals, households, families and communities must be incorporated. Many graduates are, in a sense, community representatives. This has not been properly measured. The perceived versus the actual role of universities in transformation must be determined.

Fees

There is a broader global discussion on how universities will construct their fees in the future – it would be important for this work to inform that discussion. There needs to be full understanding of the true costs of providing higher education; regulating fees and justifying increases. The workload of academics must also be factored into these discussions. Different ways to look at the economics of higher education are needed.

Massification and implications for future graduates

Currently degreed graduates experience employment levels on a par with other developed countries which is not necessarily the same in other African countries (in some of which up to 80% of graduates are jobless). However, there is a need to understand what they are doing in the labour market to understand the efficiency of the system. There are currently discussions under way with Stats SA to include questions around graduate employment destinations in the census. The current unemployment rate of bachelor graduates is about 6% to 9% - but there is a need to understand what happens if you double these numbers and also which fields lead to greater employment potential. A detailed risk analysis is needed to understand if there will be a displacement to more unemployed graduates. There is currently a high skills premium so the increase is unlikely to be immediate.

There is also the issue of trained people leaving the country – South Africa cannot afford to be training for the export market.

Educational transformations are the result of social transformations. Universities have a sorting and developmental role which are often at odds with each other. The developmental role is distorted by employer's needs making it difficult for the education system to focus on development. The impetus for massification comes from perceived benefits in the labour market but won't necessarily achieve this especially if we are massifying the cheapest form of higher education.

Massification generates many of the bureaucratic and management issues currently being experienced. Here is therefore a need to think through all the unintended consequences.

Research

There is also a need for discussion on who decides on the research done by universities – sometimes this reflects the priorities of funders, in particular, foreign donors. An example is the fact that there is currently no research chair on African literacy – yet most Grade 4 children can't read in any language. There is also a need to understand how research engages communities. The work of universities of technology specifically in making a difference in people's lives has not been showcased. South African universities have to take responsibility for producing knowledge about their context and engaging with reality. There is deeply embedded local community knowledge and the legitimacy of the higher education system depends on the local knowledge project. The role of higher education includes teaching, research and engagement – engagement should not be an extra. Engagement must emanate from and return benefits to research and teaching.

Entrepreneurship

The entrepreneurship/creativity aspects of universities must be fully quantified. The future of South Africa's economy depends on small-scale industrial development/entrepreneurship and the role of the university in fostering that must be unpacked. There is a lot going on especially at the small universities but often there is a desperate need for this to be connected with industry. The number of companies and jobs created by graduates should be included in outputs.

Whose university?

Multi-versity instead of uni-versity - the fact that the student profile has changed over the past 20 years is an important consideration. There is a sense of having a right to be at a university and the corresponding need to make everyone feel comfortable as a student. The perspective of students must be included and specifically how this has changed in the past few years. It is important to address the question of what universities should be from different perspectives. However, in the crisis there was an assumption that the students know what is best which is not necessarily the case.

The future of academic staff is also an important area for consideration and study. Academics are stressed and questioning their future in higher education.

The need to bridge the gap between students and experts

During the crisis no one spoke for the universities but the universities. Social discontent and the dislocation between higher education and society is not unique to South Africa – there is an angry underclass everywhere in world who don't see the public good of universities. This means that charismatic leaders are coming to the fore. It's important to understand the value of experts and evidence, and to bridge the gap between students and experts.

What universities are good at and good for

There is a need to understand why the current system is the way it is and how it came to be that way. We need to articulate both what universities are good at and what they are good for. There is a

disconnect between society and higher education, and research is needed in the context of the larger conceptualisation.

The question what are universities good at is relatively easy to answer with evidence while what are universities good for is a broader, more complex debate.

In the 1980s the knowledge economy concept was introduced with the idea that the wealth of nations will come from knowledge. For hundreds of years universities supplied knowledge but now there is an emphasis that although that is good it is not sufficient and there is a need to focus on the demand side. Universities must become responsive to the needs and demands of society and contribute to addressing the big challenges. There is a moral imperative for every university to be able to say what their contribution to society is.

It's important to remember that we are educating a new generation for a world we can't yet imagine.

Universities need to position themselves in line with their comparative advantage. Some of the work academics write about has nothing to do with local or regional challenges. The fashionable debates should be questioned and replaced with a solid ethical epistemic basis and responsibility.

The question of the methodological determination of what a university is good at must also be addressed. The current ranking systems are methodologically flawed but are still used to determine decision making.

The networking function of universities also cannot be overlooked – the right university provides the right networks.

Universities as contested sites

The idea of universities as a contested site/battlegrounds needs further elucidation. This is a global phenomenon but is particularly prominent in the South African context. Historically universities facilitated the elite linking with elite – acting as sites for middle-class formation. Universities in Africa are a mirror of the colonial project. There is a need to rebuild universities that give us back our humanity.

Day 1 – Quantitative research

Aim: To explore the various ways that the value of the university to society can be explained through quantitative methods, by considering the following questions:

1. What are the types of research questions we need to ask or themes we need to establish in order discuss the contribution of universities to society?
2. What is currently taking place in terms of research in South Africa?
3. What are the data sets that exist that can facilitate a better understanding of the benefit of universities to society?
4. What are the types of data/information that are ideal to access? Are they currently available?
5. Who are the right people/institutes/organisations to involve?
6. What are the timeframes for research and how do we activate people in this regard?

The aim was to outline types of research needed particularly around mobilising data to articulate ways in which universities contribute to the country's development. This includes understanding what data

currently exist, what research is possible and which questions are answerable as well establishing timeframes. The aim is to consolidate best-available evidence.

The overall framework is a background of increasing access, quality and equality.

Research questions identified

- 1) Why does the higher education and post schooling landscape look the way it does and does it serve SA the best?
 - a) What are the historical factors and conditions?
 - b) What are the purposes that higher education actually serve rather than what it supposedly serve?
- 2) Where are we heading as a society? And how does higher education/university community and its future fit with that direction?
- 3) Impact of having a degree on individual's trajectory in South Africa.
- 4) If NSFAS is going to be a grant system what about other existing grants in the country? What are the ramifications of shifting the NSFAS system from one of loans to grants?
- 5) What is impact of free higher education on social mobility? Will poorer students get access or will they be displaced by better-performing students?
- 6) What is the impact of the gender imbalance in higher education for the labour market?
- 7) What is the role of expanding private higher education?
- 8) Intergenerational effect of individual receiving a degree – future, family?
- 9) What is the rational basis for dealing with an equitable and rational fee structure?
- 10) Measure deficiency of universities – what are the cost structures of South African higher education?
- 11) What happens to higher education graduates in the job market/ By discipline and degree programme and university?
- 12) How would a national graduate survey be constructed?
- 13) How does higher education contribute to democratic development and society?
- 14) How do the limitations of literacy inhibit access to the public sphere?
- 15) How do the priorities, cultural values and political preferences of those with degrees differ from those without a degree?
- 16) What is the value of a degree? Money value – graduate remit? Earnings advantage?
- 17) What contribution does the higher education sector make to the local, national and regional economies?
- 18) What is impact of research on society? Research assessment exercises in UK universities – lots of data on impact of research on society.
- 19) Universities to ask themselves what they are good at. What are we good at/what is our comparative advantage?
- 20) What are we good for? How do we respond to societal challenges? What challenges to universities, individuals, respond to?
- 21) What is the societal impact of throughput?
- 22) What is the social support that universities give to students (e.g. lunch)
- 23) What is the cost of academic support?
- 24) How are universities relevant in local/micro economic contexts? E.g. Rhodes
- 25) How is higher education embedded in society?
- 26) What are the levels of access that the HE sector can manage?
- 27) What happens to students in the system? – throughput and success, student experience?

- 28) How do HE institutions promote epistemic access and justice? Need to look to the past.
- 29) How does the schooling system impact on the HE sector?
- 30) How do you improve access and what barriers do students face in accessing higher education?
- 31) What is free higher education? (Fees only part of the cost)
- 32) How do we practically measure decolonisation, Africanisation, transformation of the HE sector in the context of internationalism?
- 33) How do we practically make higher education more inclusive? Shift international culture towards decolonisation/Africanisation and transformation?
- 34) How do universities understand, measure and contribute to the next generation of citizens? The new citizen?
- 35) How do you measure the impact of higher education on the economy and society? For every rand invested what do we get?
- 36) What is the actual cost of higher education in SA? What is the cost to produce an engineer/ What are the cost implications for student support activities across different degrees?
- 37) What is driving student activism in South Africa? How do you insert into higher education a strong social justice agenda? What is the impact of this on the knowledge project of universities?
- 38) Who owns our universities/don't belong to people of South Africa. Why is there a perception that universities are not in the service of and owned by the people of South Africa?
- 39) How do you reimagine and reconceptualise a higher education system that serves the people and is deeply rooted in a social justice agenda?
- 40) Are there new ways to organise the post-school education system that makes sense for the South African context? Can we redesign?
- 41) In a developmental state what kind of higher education system do we require? Universal access?
- 42) What is the value of public funding of higher education? Labour market connection? What is the return on investment? Contribution to infrastructure?
- 43) Does the broadening of access precede or follow economic development. How does broadening access to higher education influence economic development?
- 44) What are the drivers of student and social discontent with higher education/universities?
- 45) How do universities influence transformation in South Africa?
- 46) Universities contribute to the strengthening of a democratic society by expanding intellectual and imaginative horizons, developing individual skills, and providing opportunities for disciplined inquiry and creativity. The university in a post-colonial nation is an engine of transformation and modernisation for its students, for the communities around them, and for society as a whole.
 - Is this an accurate description of the university system we would like to have?
 - Does our university system as currently configured answer to this description?
 - If not, what description does it answer to?
 - What purpose does the current system serve and what are the most likely results of continuation?
 - What are the arguments for and against change?
 - If the consensus is against continuation, what should be done to change the system?
 - What are the basic principles, values and goals we wish to set for the higher education system, and what are the best means of achieving these?
 - What consequences can be expected from such a change?

Day 2 – Qualitative research

Aim: To explore the various ways that the value of the university to society can be explained through qualitative methods by considering the following questions:

1. What are the types of research questions we need to ask or themes we need to establish in order to discuss the contribution of universities to society?
2. What is currently taking place in terms of research in South Africa?
3. What sort of research exists more broadly that can facilitate a better understanding of the benefit of universities to society?
4. What are key ways to frame the debate of the university-society relationship?
5. Who are the right people/institutes/organisations to involve?
6. What are the timeframes for research and how do we activate people in this regard?

The following overall themes were identified:

- university and city growth, university as employer;
- university as knowledge generator and innovation hub;
- universities and professions including deprofessionalisation;
- universities as centres for social debate and critique,
- universities as lifestyle choices and health improvements;
- universities as political interests, growth of democracy, globalisation of talent;
- R&D and industrialisation;
- the colonial project of the university (Africanisation); and,
- universities as networking organisations.

Existing research and new research ideas

- 1) Changes in the university classroom – re-imagining the classroom, teaching methods that are more inclusive, including technology (already under way Ruksana Osman).
- 2) Question of institutional autonomy/academic freedom.
- 3) Social justice and the university – inclusion/exclusion, ownership, empowerment – how the university operates on basis of understanding it internally and operationalising it outside through training students – producing critically empowered citizens.
- 4) How universities avoid producing jobless graduates? Lessons to be learnt from African experience.
- 5) Epistemic access and justice – re-imagining university in a way that ensures epistemic justice (equity in terms of distribution of justice, delivery modes, leadership and governance, student experience).
- 6) Higher education architecture (system) and governance structure/how universities interrelate, how universities are regulated.
- 7) Institutional fora at universities – not functional – governance structures get hijacked – need to understand how institution engages properly.
- 8) How the landscape developed?
- 9) Transformation of the academic profession – in particular around race (already under way Beverley Thaver).

- 10) Idea of the university – regulated over time - feudal social relations (already under way Beverley Thaver).
- 11) Institutional culture (book project) - critique on how students are viewing higher education in South Africa at the moment (already under way Beverley Thaver).
- 12) University and the innovation system – unique position of university research and teaching in the system of innovation (includes social innovation).
- 13) University and borders and barriers – what does decolonisation mean in particular in terms of South Africa’s position in Africa, we should be learning from African colleagues, disciplinary borders/interdisciplinarity.
- 14) University and economic freedom – including access and mobility, networks, gender.
- 15) University and government/governance – funding instruments, private higher education which will change landscape dramatically/distance learning online.
- 16) Understanding conceptions of the public good role of higher education – in South Africa, Ghana and Nigeria (already under way Stephanie Allais).
- 17) Higher education and how it shapes the broader skills formation of the country - how the system interacts with itself and labour market – in South Africa, Ethiopia and Ghana (already under way Stephanie Allais)
- 18) 4 PhDs theses – community engagement role; academic notions of higher education; how higher education in development is measured; the knowledge debate and the role of universities (Stephanie Allais).
- 19) Innovation systems in specific systems and how universities are supporting or not (already under way André Keet).
- 20) Access, student experience, impact of graduates on society – (already under way Stephanie Allais).
- 21) Effect of the post-truth society - universities have lost esteem – loss of certainty and respect for truth and rationality – engage from different disciplinary perspectives/loss of esteem for experts.
- 22) Supra Institutional Mellon Foundation Grant – work already being done in seven universities (Ruksana Osman).

Potential researchers

Sioux McKenna (Rhodes), André Keet (NMU), Saleem Badat (Mellon Foundation), Zolani Ngwane (Haverford College), Judith Butler (University of California, Berkeley), Mahmood Mamdani (Columbia University and Makerere University)

Action points (Lenin’s list)

- Conduct workshops on re-imagining South African higher education/post schooling.
- What should higher education be doing?
- TVET research
- Entrepreneurship/jobs
- Develop a data pamphlet for clarification of free education statement
- Establish a repository/depository on the STIAS website – core set of literature
- Collection of essays on the future of the university - Dr Hsuan Chou and David Hornsby as potential authors

- Develop a portfolio of success stories.
- Systematic review – who is working and on what
- PHD student conference in March in Bloemfontein – get this project onto the agenda of that meeting.
- Conduct Seminars in universities with PHD students on the future of universities.
- OpEds and articles in *The Conversation*.

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APPENDIX: Mapping of questions from Workshop and subsequent emails with four areas of enquiry (sub-themes)

Sub-theme 1: Understanding the colonial legacies and post-colonial realities of the university

- 1) Why does the higher education and post-schooling landscape look the way it does and does it serve SA the best?
 - a) What are the historical factors and conditions?
 - b) What are the purposes that higher education actually serves rather than what it supposedly serves?
- 2) How the landscape developed?
- 3) What are the drivers of student and social discontent with higher education/universities?
- 4) What is driving student activism in South Africa? How do you insert into higher education a strong social justice agenda? What is the impact of this on the knowledge project of universities?
- 5) Universities and the growth of democracy in society (Osman)
- 6) Universities and the growth of the middle class (Osman)

Sub-theme 2: The entanglements of knowledge traditions and transitions in the university

- 1) How do HE institutions promote epistemic access and justice? Need to look to the past.
- 2) Epistemic access and justice – re-imagining university in a way that ensures epistemic justice (equity in terms of distribution of justice, delivery modes, leadership and governance, student experience).
- 3) How do you reimagine and reconceptualise a higher education system that serves the people and is deeply rooted in a social justice agenda?
- 4) Idea of the university – regulated over time - feudal social relations (already under way Beverley Thaver).
- 5) How do we practically measure decolonisation, Africanisation, transformation of the HE sector in the context of internationalism?
- 6) How do we practically make higher education more inclusive? Shift international culture towards decolonisation/Africanisation and transformation?
- 7) How do universities understand, measure and contribute to the next generation of citizens? The new citizen?
- 8) Effect of the post-truth society - universities have lost esteem – loss of certainty and respect for truth and rationality – engage from different disciplinary perspectives/loss of esteem for experts.

Sub-theme 3: Understanding the contemporary university

- 1) Impact of having a degree on individual's trajectory in South Africa.
- 2) If NSFAS is going to be a grant system what about other existing grants in the country? What are the ramifications of shifting the NSFAS system from one of loans to grants?
- 3) What is impact of free higher education on social mobility? Will poorer students get access or will they be displaced by better-performing students?
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- 18) How does the schooling system impact on the HE sector?
- 19) What is the actual cost of higher education in SA? What is the cost to produce an engineer/ What are the cost implications for student support activities across different degrees?

Sub-theme 4: The university of the future

- 1) Where are we heading as a society? And how does higher education/university community and its future fit with that direction?
- 2) How does higher education contribute to democratic development and society?
- 3) What is the value of a degree? Money value – graduate remit? Earnings advantage?
- 4) What contribution does the higher education sector make to the local, national and regional economies?
- 5) What is impact of research on society? Research assessment exercises in UK universities – lots of data on impact of research on society.
- 6) Universities to ask themselves what they are good at. What are we good at/what is our comparative advantage?
- 7) What are we good for? How do we respond to societal challenges? What challenges to universities, individuals, respond to?
- 8) How is higher education embedded in society?
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- 14) Are there new ways to organise the post-school education system that makes sense for the South African context? Can we redesign?
- 15) In a developmental state what kind of higher education system do we require? Universal access?
- 16) What is the value of public funding of higher education? Labour market connection? What is the return on investment? Contribution to infrastructure?
- 17) Does the broadening of access precede or follow economic development. How does broadening access to higher education influence economic development?
- 18) How do universities influence transformation in South Africa?
- 19) Universities contribute to the strengthening of a democratic society by expanding intellectual and imaginative horizons, developing individual skills, and providing opportunities for disciplined inquiry and creativity. The university in a post-colonial nation is an engine of transformation and modernisation for its students, for the communities around them, and for society as a whole.
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 - What are the arguments for and against change?
 - If the consensus is against continuation, what should be done to change the system?
 - What are the basic principles, values and goals we wish to set for the higher education system, and what are the best means of achieving these?
 - What consequences can be expected from such a change? (Geoffrey Harpham)
- 20) Changes in the university classroom – re-imagining the classroom, teaching methods that are more inclusive, including technology (already under way Ruksana Osman).
- 21) Question of institutional autonomy/academic freedom.
- 22) Social justice and the university – inclusion/exclusion, ownership, empowerment – how the university operates on basis of understanding it internally and operationalising it outside through training students – producing critically empowered citizens.
- 23) How universities avoid producing jobless graduates? Lessons to be learnt from African experience.
- 24) Higher education architecture (system) and governance structure/how universities interrelate, how universities are regulated.
- 25) Institutional fora at universities – not functional – governance structures get hijacked – need to understand how institution engages properly.
- 26) Transformation of the academic profession – in particular around race (already under way Beverley Thaver).
- 27) Institutional culture (book project) - critique on how students are viewing higher education in South Africa at the moment (already under way Beverley Thaver).
- 28) University and the innovation system – unique position of university research and teaching in the system of innovation (includes social innovation).

- 29) University and borders and barriers – what does decolonisation mean in particular in terms of South Africa’s position in Africa, we should be learning from African colleagues, disciplinary borders/interdisciplinarity.
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- 33) Higher education and how it shapes the broader skills formation of the country - how the system interacts with itself and labour market – in South Africa, Ethiopia and Ghana (already under way Stephanie Allais)
- 34) 4 PhDs theses – community engagement role; academic notions of higher education; how higher education in development is measured; the knowledge debate and the role of universities (Stephanie Allais).
- 35) Innovation systems in specific systems and how universities are supporting or not (already under way André Keet).
- 36) Access, student experience, impact of graduates on society – (already under way Stephanie Allais).
- 37) Supra Institutional Mellon Foundation Grant – work already being done in seven universities (Ruksana Osman).
- 38) The university and borders/barriers – including transformation of curriculum; Inter- / trans-disciplinary work; Africanisation/decolonisation; Level of impact: local or national or continental or global?; students from Africa/faculty from Africa – Department of Labour laws that prevent Africanisation (Johan Fourie)
- 39) The university and economic freedom – including access to university; network formation and life-long connections; impact of free higher education on social mobility; gender bias in graduation rates; university graduates and the labour market / jobless graduates (Johan Fourie)
- 40) The university and governance/government including university structure; NRF system / other funding mechanisms; impact of private higher education; what about TVET colleges; reconceptualisation of the university space in South Africa (Johan Fourie)
- 41) Universities and the growth of cities (Osman)
- 42) Universities as employers at various skill levels (Osman)
- 43) Universities as knowledge generators and as innovation hubs (Osman)
- 44) Universities and the professions (Osman)
- 45) Universities as epicenters of social debate and critique (Osman)
- 46) Universities and life style choices and health improvement (Osman)
- 47) Universities and political interest (Osman)
- 48) Universities and the globalization of talent (Osman)

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