

## ‘History can teach us about labour markets today’ – Naidu

Economists are not really comfortable talking about ‘exploitation’, but they have all the tools to measure it. Just as in the past, monopsony firms today can ‘exploit’ workers by paying them less than the value that these workers add to the firm. The surprising thing is: it is often the best paid workers that are are ‘exploited’ the most.

These were just some of the insights from the fourth LEAP Lecture, titled ‘Terms of Service: Monopsony from American Slavery to Amazon Mechanical Turk’, presented on 9 October by prof Suresh Naidu. Naidu is professor of Economics at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs.

This is not Naidu’s first visit to South Africa. In fact, South Africa is one of his favourite countries to visit. He has for long been interested in South African history and the wealth of its archives. While he is very enthusiastic about the research opportunities which the archives open, he also noted the often-perverse reasons for having such rich archival collections, being rooted in oppressive governments’ desires to collect and categorise.

One of his current research interests is the indentured labour flow to Natal and late nineteenth century legislation which led to their disenfranchisement. With interests in labour and development in particular,



**MONOPSONY TALK:** *Prof Naidu delivers the fourth LEAP Lecture*

much of Naidu’s work engages with coercion. He is renowned in the field for his research on slavery in the US South, ranging from the use of slave collateral and the impact of runaways, to employee and employer power in contemporary labour markets.

South African economics students are likely to encounter Naidu’s work more and more in future, as Stellenbosch University and others adopt the new undergrad textbook he is working on (CORE). Naidu is especially excited to see the impact on the field as the divisions between heterodox and mainstream neoclassical approaches to economics are broken down, which is one of the aims of project.

## ISG joins LEAP week

From 9 to 11 October, LEAP hosted the annual LEAP week. This year, Stellenbosch students were joined by several scholars from the International Studies Group at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein.

A methods training workshop was held on Wednesday, followed by two days of student presentations. The combination of the LEAP and ISG groups showed the breadth and vibrancy of economic and social history in South Africa.

## *LEAP chooses five values to guide future research endeavours*

At a special LEAP meeting in June, the team adopted a set of five values which will guide all our research and research-related activities. This was in response to concerns about the ethical standards of research, notably in social science.

The following five values were chosen: originality, courage, credibility, collaboration and compassion. According to Fourie, ‘these values challenge us to main-

tain the highest standards of ethical conduct in our research, following international trends such as accessible data and code. It also challenges us to keep on producing innovative research, and have the courage to ask difficult questions. Most importantly, LEAP is a collaborative environment; research can be a very lonely place, and we want to be an environment where staff and students feel supported and energised.”

# MA History students present their work

On 27 September, all MA History students presented their research to the staff and students of the History department.

Four sessions took place over the day with members of the Biography of an Unchartered People Project well represented with a range of topics. Lesego Mabapa spoke about

her findings from the 'Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum in Life in Turbulent Times: The Inhabitants of the Asylum in Question, 1890 - c.1910', Beaural Visser presented on 'Land, Education & Participation: The Persistent African Middle-class of the Cape Colony Queenstown, 1872-1909', Leila Bloch spoke on 'Integrity in the Compro-

mised Institution: the Biography of Dr Hannah-Reeve Sanders (b. 1928)' and Laura Richardson on 'Respectability Reconfigured: Illegitimacy and Bridal Pregnancy in the Mother City, 1900-1950'. This was an excellent opportunity to connect and network with fellow Masters students, and to get valuable feedback.



**PHD DAY:** Dr Bodhi Kar (UCT), Nobungwele Mbem and Dr Kate Ekama

## Nobungwele best presenter

In early August PhD candidates in the history department took part in a workshop designed specifically to give them an opportunity to present their research in a conference-like setting, chair a session, and practice giving constructive feedback to their peers. LEAP and Biography proj-

ect students Amy Rommelspacher, Nobungwele Mbem and Lloyd Melusi gave excellent presentations, with Nobungwele being awarded the prize for best presentation at the end of the day. Well done to all three of them and we wish them all the best as they continue their projects.



**SMILE:** Pablo Cebrian

## Pablo visits

Pablo Fernandez Cebrian spent two months in Stellenbosch as a visiting student. Pablo is a PhD student at the University of Barcelona in Spain. "I was at LEAP from mid-August to mid-October, working primarily on the first paper in my PhD thesis, which focuses on primary school education in Mozambique during the colonial period. I have had the opportunity to present my work at two different seminars and work with multiple LEAP scholars. The feedback received has been great, and I go back with many new ideas that will shape both my first paper and the rest of the thesis moving forward."

Pablo has not only enjoyed the academic rigour, but as a rugby player, he has also enjoyed the social touch rugby games on Sundays. On invitation of Calumet Links, Pablo and Johan Fourie also completed the Barnabas Shaw-hike, a 33km route from Bethalsklip to Leliefontein in the Northern Cape.

"I would like to thank Professor Fourie for extending the invitation, and all of the people at LEAP who have really gone out of their way to make me feel welcome and part of life in Stellenbosch. This has been a great professional and personal experience."

# Biography project launches five themes

The Biography of an Uncharted People project, generously funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, has organically grown into five distinct themes. The five themes were revealed in September when the new website was launched.

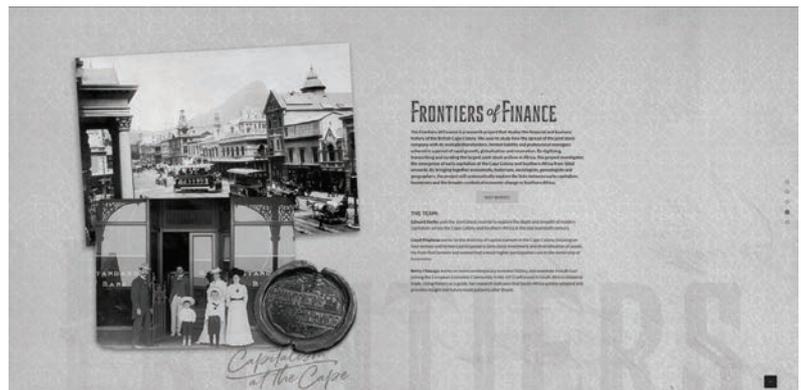
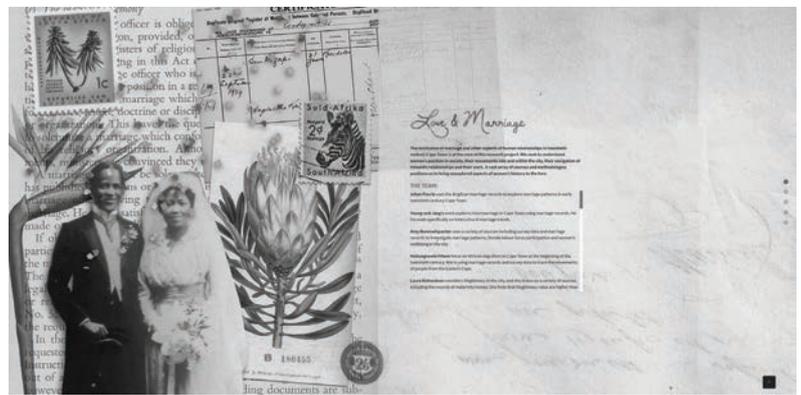
The first theme – Love and marriage in the Mother City – focuses on the social and economic conditions of Cape Town residents during the first half of the twentieth century. The project seeks to understand women's position in society, their movements into and within the city, their navigation of romantic relationships and their work. One postdoc, two PhD students, one Masters student and two Honours students are linked to this project.

The second theme – Democracy and Disenfranchisement – examines the development of political participation and exclusion during a key period of political and economic transition in the British Cape Colony (1854-1909). A team of historians and economists use an interdisciplinary approach to study the effect of developing relatively more democratic institutions on governance, the politics of exclusion, and the consequences of disenfranchisement. They draw on a number of government publications, such as Voters' Rolls, the Blue Books of the Cape Colony, and parliamentary records.

The third theme – Capitalising on emancipation – is headed by Kate Ekama. Emancipation of the enslaved in the Cape Colony brought about a transformation in society that some historians liken in impact to the mineral revolution, or the ending of apartheid. This project seeks to understand that transformation from slavery to freedom for the enslaved themselves as well as for the economy of the colony more generally. In this way it contributes to research on the life trajectories of the former slaves and apprentices, to the growing international fields of financial history and to legacies of slavery. This project also links closely with the Cape of Good Hope Panel project.

The fourth theme – Frontiers of Finance – uses the limited liability company records of the late nineteenth century as its main source. It aims to study how the spread of the joint stock company, with its multiple shareholders, limited liability and professional managers, ushered in a period of rapid growth, globalisation and innovation. By digitising, transcribing and curating the largest joint-stock archive in Africa, this project investigates the emergence of early capitalism at the Cape Colony and Southern Africa from 1862 onwards.

The final theme – Life and death in South Africa – use death and patient records to investigate the lived experiences of people that are often excluded from the archives.



# Buying yogurt instead of milk – all part of the Swedish experience

Every year, about 300 Matie students participate in Study Abroad programmes at Stellenbosch University partner institutions across the world. Earlier this year Thokozi Gausi got the opportunity to travel to Lund University in Sweden for a semester exchange at Lund School of Economics and Management. Here is what she writes about the experience.

“My decision to go to Lund was based on my interest in economic history. As such, applying to go to one of the biggest economic history departments in the world was a suitable fit. Right from the beginning of my application process the international coordinators both at Stellenbosch University and Lund University gave me all the required assistance and provided me with the necessary information. I also did a lot of research about Lund University through their website to help set the expectations of where I was going.”

“I arrived in Lund on the official arrival day. I was welcomed by student mentors at the airport who assisted us to get to campus for arrival day activities after which they drove us to our respective housing areas. I experienced my first cultural shock that same day when I found out that almost everything in the grocery store was in Swedish. It is very easy to go to a shop and come out with yogurt instead of milk! Google translate will be your help in such times.”

“There are two main differences I noted between the academic systems here at Stellenbosch and Lund University. First, there is a lot of group work in the form of seminars where students are required to discuss and present on a particular subject. For most of the courses, the final course grade is made up of participation in seminars, take-home exams and in some instances a sit-down exam. If you do not prefer sit-down exams and are more comfortable with take-home exams and seminars then you will fit right in! The second difference is that the course work is split into two; you only study two courses at a time in each term of the semester.”

“I finished my coursework a month

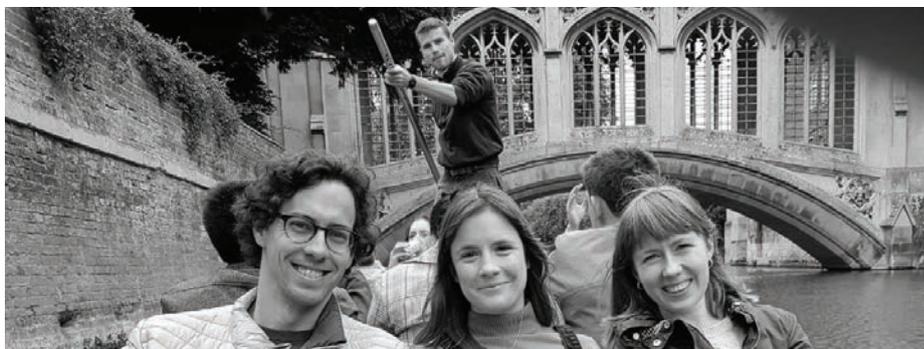


**VISITING EUROPE:** *Thoko Gausi and her sister in Paris*

before the time I was meant to return to Stellenbosch. During the time before my departure, I managed to keep busy by working at the department of

economic history where I was a research assistant. My sister also came to visit me towards the end of my exchange, and we took a mini Europe tour where we traveled to six countries in six days! This was quite an adventure for both of us.”

“Leaving Sweden was such a bitter-sweet moment for me. I had become so fond of living in such a quiet and cozy town. The realization of coming to a cold and rainy winter in Cape Town made leaving the nice spring weather in Lund even more difficult. Coming back home to friends and family has been refreshing but a bit challenging at the same time. I was used to living alone and spent a lot of time by myself, therefore, integrating myself to a larger space of people has been quite overwhelming. But I am glad to be back in Stellenbosch and I am looking forward to finishing my Masters.”



**PUNTING:** *Johan Fourie, Laura Richardson and Amy Rommelspacher*

## Cambridge hosts LEAP

In June this year, Masters student Laura Richardson visited Cambridge University for a week under the expert guidance of prof Tony Hopkins. The visit was simultaneously an opportunity to meet and discuss her work with key scholars in the fields of family history, and to explore possibilities for postgraduate study at Cambridge.

She attended several seminars, including a seminar on South African neoliberalism presented by Quinn Slobodian, the author of *Globalists*. She also visited the History Department, toured various colleges and was

introduced to a number of other postgraduate students. On the Friday prof Johan Fourie and PhD student Amy Rommelspacher joined her in Cambridge, where Fourie presented his work on Cape slavery at a seminar organised by the African history group.

The three of them also managed to go on a punting tour and to visit Kettle's Yard, once the home of famous art curator Jim Ede. On the Saturday they drove to rainy Lincoln, where they hosted a panel discussion on Anglican marriage records in 20th century Cape Town at the Social History Society's Annual Conference.

# LEAP in the lecture halls

This semester postdoc Kate Ekma and PhD candidate Amy Rommelspacher have been teaching the second-year history students, in the History department. The core course covers important processes in African and South African history, from the seventeenth

to nineteenth centuries. One aspect of the course is dealing with the hard history of slavery – encompassing the VOC’s involvement in Indian Ocean slave trade that shaped the Cape Colony and the dynamics of the transatlantic slave trade.

## Two centuries of divergence in South African incomes

One of the most important contributions of the last two decades to the literature on economic growth is that institutions matter. Most famously, Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson posit that the institutions established by Europeans were either extractive or inclusive. This institutional persistence explains contemporary outcomes.

In a new paper in the *Journal of Comparative Economics*, Dieter von Fintel and Johan Fourie apply this theory to the eastern half of South Africa over the

last two centuries. Our result? Things are far more complicated than the binary world of extractive versus inclusive institutions. The paper uses data from over two hundred years to show the persistence of population over time but a reversal of wealth for black South Africans. The lesson from history is that people with access to inclusive institutions – property rights, the rule of law, democracy and free participation in a market economy – are the ones most likely to prosper.

A summary of the paper can be downloaded from [johanfourie.com](http://johanfourie.com).



## Fieldwork in the Gamtoos

PhD student Nobungwele Mbem and Masters student Beareul Visser visited the Gamtoos Valley in July to assist Prof Robert Ross with a research project entitled ‘A Water History of the Gamtoos Valley’.

The purpose of the research was to gain insight into the lived experiences of the people in the community on how they have interacted with the water from the Karoo mountains and the role it has played in the agricultural-

activity over time. The trip was exciting because they were able to engage with people from different walks of life ranging from a Khoi chief, a community councillor, farm owners, farm workers and many more.

The opportunity to conduct oral history practically exposed them to the realities of oral history, with both heightened advantages and disadvantages. Prof Ross is a research associate at Stellenbosch.



INSIGHTS: Visser, Ross and Mbem



REPRESENTING: Kara Dimitruk and Young-ook Jang

## Postdocs present at EHES

Two LEAP postdocs, Kara Dimitruk and Young-ook Jang, attended the European Historical Economics Society Conference in Paris from 29 to 31 August. This conference is one of the largest gatherings of economic historians in Europe, which hosted 69 sessions with over 200 presentations. Kara presented her work, “Economic Interests and the Evolution of Coercive Labor Laws in the British Cape Colony”, on the first day. Young, on the second day, gave a presentation of his paper entitled “Diversity Backlash? Migration, Ethnic Fractionalization and Violence in the Soviet Union”. Both presentations received helpful advice.

In addition to presenting their works, Kara and Young-ook met many scholars who are affiliated to European institutions, not only discussing their own research but also promoting LEAP and its projects. Young-ook’s former colleagues at the LSE expressed their interest in the Biography of an Uncharted People group. In particular, they were impressed by the richness of individual-level records about the economic, social, demographic, health, labor, genealogical and migration histories of South Africa.

# *'I stumbled on it while doing something else'*

*Postdoc Fran Marco Gracia has been in Stellenbosch nearly two years now. As he starts to think about heading home to Spain, Fran reflected on his time here and chatted about it to fellow post-doc Kate Ekama.*

## **What made you decide to move to South Africa at the beginning of 2018?**

I specialise in historical demography and in particular in the analysis of micro-data. I've built a huge database – one of, if not actually the largest database of micro-level archival population data for southern Europe. My entire universe revolved around my home town of Zaragoza. I saw the opportunity to move to South Africa as a new challenge, personally and academically.

## **Had you been interested in African demographic history before you moved here?**

When I first arrived, I had no experience working on African population data, but I was well aware of the potential for new, exciting research that lay ahead. While on a course in Nijmegen, I was convinced by Prof Angélique Janssens of the immense potential in the fields of African and Latin American demographic research. Coming to Stellenbosch has been a great way to get involved in research on African population data.

## **You uncovered some amazing treasures in the archive early last year. What was it that you found?**

I stumbled onto it when doing something else. When I started my post-doc, I was supposed to work on Anglican marriage records for Cape Town. I have a lot of experience working on Catholic sources with a great level of detail in them, but the Anglican records were new to me. In order to understand the wider South African population better, I went to the censuses. As I transcribed the 1911 census records, I noticed a really strange thing. I was struck by the difference in number of women relative to men, which was the complete opposite of

what I know of population statistics for the rest of the world. The number of females relative to number of males was unusually high, especially among children. I have called this the phenomenon of the “missing boys”. It was such a surprise to me and I recognised the significance of explaining the difference.

## **How has your research on the South African censuses contributed to the field?**

Historical demographers around the world treasure census data, but so far, very few use African census data. Any who do in future, will be confronted with this issue of the missing boys. The historical census data is problem-

is that I am reaping the rewards of all the time invested in building this database. I think that publishing papers based on African population data is a particular challenge because of the need to convince peer reviewers of the strength of conclusions. The root of this issue is that the data available is more problematic than the European data. If European data is taken as the norm, African data pales because of the quality of the data and just how little of it there is, relatively speaking. In spite of this unique challenge, I am really optimistic about the opportunities to publish in the field of African demographic history. There is an opportunity to ask new questions, to use sources that have been little used

or not used at all. And with the work that I am involved in at the moment, I am confident that the issues of quality and quantity can be overcome. The challenge in the future of African demographic history is to explore so many questions that other people have not tried yet, with the micro-data that we have.

## **What are you most looking forward to about moving back**

### **to Spain?**

Other than seeing my friends and family, enjoying Spanish food, and the joys of public transport, I look forward to be close to the archives on which my database is built. But when I leave Stellenbosch in a month or two I will miss the freedom I have had to pursue new, innovative questions, explore ideas and things that interest me. And I will really miss the people. When I first moved to Stellenbosch I did not know what to expect, but I have been so surprised by the warmth and openness of the people I have met, which is similar to the Spanish. Colleagues have become friends here and we have a very good environment among us. Yes, I'm going to miss the people.



**INTERVIEW:** Fran in conversation with Kate on the Red Square

atic and historical demographers are aware of the issues of quality of the data. But the censuses are one of the very best sources that we have. Even if other scholars do not accept my explanation, they will have to deal with the issue if they make use of the rich sources.

## **Fran is affectionately known in LEAP as a publishing machine. I asked him if he has any tips for other senior students and early career researchers on how to win at publishing.**

Over the last few years, I have been building my own database. I continually add to it, including new variables that I transcribe from archival sources. So part of the answer, I would say,