



The African Centre for Epistemology
and Philosophy of Science



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

ACEPS at a glance

Team: 6 Academics, 6 PGs, 2 PDRFs, 6 RAs

Visiting researchers: 3 Professors

Collaborations: 6

Publications: 8

4IR Initiatives: 2

Talks: 20 – including 10 invited/ keynotes

Grants: 4 @ R4,070,000;

Grant applications: 2 @ R1,000,800

Research Groups: 2

Reading Groups: 1

Conferences organised: 3

Media interviews/pubs: 6

Online Videos: 22

Postgrads supervised: 9 Honours; 13 MA; 9 PhD

2021 Key performance highlights

Background



ACEPS was established in 2018 with the aim of capitalising on UJ Philosophy's unique concentration of expertise in epistemology and philosophy of science, as well as of cultivating young African talent in these areas. The aim in 2021 was to earn our African name by putting to work these traditionally Eurocentric fields in our African context. As a result, we have started acquiring a worldwide reputation for our research on **epistemic decolonisation** and **injustice**, and their links to **4IR**.

Photo: Prof Veli Mitova, Director of ACEPS

A stellar 2021

A changing of the guard with a new ACEPS director appointed in July 2021 led to **better-faster-cheaper results** being achieved with the meagre resources of a non-independent centre with **no URC budget or permanent staff!** This is how it was done in the **five months...**

Levelling the playing field and making our mark

Covid worldwide lockdown turned out to be an opportunity for ACEPS rather than a hindrance. Merely by taking advantage of the internet's resources – **the only tools available to all academics worldwide during Covid** – levelled the playing field for the quick and nimble!

Networking – same old, same old, BUT @ internet warp speed, turbo charged by accessibility via Zoom video conferencing, ACEPS YouTube channel exposure, and the giving and attending of online talks.

The straitjacket of time and cost imposed by distance from the Global North was eliminated. Result? ACEPS marketed itself by making its mark!

Our researchers got noticed

Invited talks and keynotes flooded in - ACEPS previously consigned to afterthought status by the high price of a plane ticket, could compete as equals with the Global North. Which we did - and **punched well above our weight!**

Our postgrads thrived



Overseas postgraduates drown in funding and opportunities to hone their skills across the world, while their poor cousins in the Global South are confined to a tiny pond of local universities – effectively academic segregation. But not so much anymore: **ACEPS postgrads revelled in being on the world stage with their peers.**

Photos: Dimpho Maponya, Abe Tobi and Caitlin Rybko – Three of ACEPS's PhD students who presented at various conferences

We founded the epistemology of the internet

ACEPS **established a new sub-discipline** by leveraging international networks and running a 3-keynote, 150 pax @ no cost conference – from conception to finish in 3 months. (**Pre-Covid:** cost R78 K, 9-12 months lag to apply for funding, coordinate with 3 keynotes, etc.)

And the discipline? **The epistemology of the internet.**

And it just keeps on giving



- Conference deliverables: 150 worldwide attendees, 30 inbound international students, 3 talks given by ACEPS PGs, ACEPS Youtube video channel of presentations racked up 75 views in two weeks.
- Massive ACEPS exposure
- A URC grant application for project ***The Epistemology of 4IR***.

Photo: Students from Zefat Academic College, Israel, thanking ACEPS for the Epistemology of the Internet Conference

2022 Looking ahead

In the bag

As the academic world awakes from its Covid coma, ACEPS's raised profile and status is already paying off with:

- overseas **fully funded** in-person invited talks for its members – so far five;
- a **visiting** research **professorship to Vienna**;
- an **overseas-funded in-coming PDRF** visitor to ACEPS, Feb-Mar 2022;
- the leadership of the South African team for a new **Templeton grant**;
- **three ACEPS conferences** in the process of being organised;
- **three more RAs** starting 1 Jan 2022.

Still up for grabs

Future ACEPS will be an **amalgam of online and live events**. Zoom fatigue means some keynotes, participants and attendees prefer in-person events. So ACEPS is taking the necessary measures – funding has already been applied for – to cater for this.

Two grant applications

URC: If successful, this will fund 2 PhDs, 2 international conferences at ACEPS, 2 talks delivered overseas by members of ACEPS, and a month's long visit by an expert to up the prestige of the centre and assist in grooming our postgrads for the international scene. Value: R 258 000.

NRF (Transatlantic Platform): *Resilience by evidence-based policy: epistemic pluralism and local governance as elements of a sustainable pandemic management*. Ben Smart co-PI with three partners (McGill, Leubeck and For Hare). Value of SA sub-award: R 750 000.

A whole new project: The Epistemology of the 4IR

The success of the Epistemology of the Internet conference inspired this project. ACEPS already had 3 PhDs and 1 MA working on philosophical issues related to 4IR/AI and was running *The Epistemology of 4IR* research group, so this is a natural project to pursue.

Hats off to the VC's 4IR vision and the **Dean's** prescience to position Humanities and ACEPS at the forefront of these possibilities.

Active international PG recruitment

We are **actively recruiting new postgraduates** in this field by advertising on the international philosophy lists and approaching our network contacts.

We are still decolonising knowledge and seeking epistemic justice for Africa

Although we want ACEPS to be at the forefront of 4IR research, we remain committed to the decolonisation of knowledge and the restoration of epistemic justice to Africa, areas of **research for which we have built up a formidable reputation**. We will thus:

- put together an **Indigenous Knowledge Systems portal**,
- continue the sterling work in the **Philosophy of Medicine** that two members of staff and their postgraduates are doing;
- continue to run our **Epistemic Decolonisation and Epistemic Injustice** research group, and the excellent work that both staff and three postgraduates are doing,
- look for grants in this field to fund our cutting-edge research.

In a word, we will continue to trail-blaze in 2022.

Watch this space!

APPENDIX: Detailed Annual Report 2021

PUBLICATIONS

- Harris, C. (2021). 'Science must fall' and the call for decolonization in South Africa. *Global Epistemologies and Philosophies of Science*, 106-114.
- Harris, C., & Bavaresco, A. (2021). On Latin American and African Philosophy: History, Topics and Issues. *Philosophy Magazine*, 38 (99), 429-447.
- Maponya, D.T., 2021. The African woman's plight of reproduction: A philosophical analysis of marriage, procreation and womanhood. *Agenda*, 35(3), pp.82-91.
- Maponya, D.T., 2021. Religion, Patriarchy and the Prospect for Gender Equality in South Africa. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, forthcoming.
- Mitova, V. 2021. A New Argument for the Non-Instrumental Value of Truth. *Erkenntnis*. DOI: 10.1007/s10670-021-00435-4.
- Mitova, V. 2021. How to Decolonise Knowledge without Too Much Relativism. In Khumalo, S. (Ed.) *Decolonisation as Democratisation*. (pp. 24-47, Cape Town: HSRC Press).
- Mncube, Z., Ludwig, D., Koskinen, I., Poliseli, L., Galindo-Reyes, L. (Eds.) *Global Epistemologies and Philosophies of Science*. Routledge.
- Reijer, J. 2021. Employment trajectories of PLHIV on ART in Lusaka, Zambia: a short report, *AIDS Care*, 33:5, 693-696.

GRANTS FOR EXISTING PROJECTS

- Lotter, H., Maponya, D. T., Mitova, V., Reijer, J. *Philosophy Dictionary for Africa (URC) (R 70 000 over two years)*
- Mitova, V., Reijer, J. *The Geography of Philosophy: an interdisciplinary cross-cultural exploration of universality and diversity in fundamental philosophical concepts (John Templeton Foundation, SA subaward: approx., R 3 000 000 over four years)*
- Mitova, V., Tobi, A. *Epistemic Injustice, Reasons, and Agency. (Newton Advanced Fellowship, approx. R 1 000 000 over two years)*
- Mitova, V. *Religiosity project (John Templeton foundation, SA subaward TBA)*

GRANTS UNDER REVIEW

- Mitova, V. *URC once-off 2022 Centres Grant. (R 258 000)*
- Smart, B. *Resilience by evidence-based policy: epistemic pluralism and local governance as elements of a sustainable pandemic management. (NRF Transatlantic Platform, SA: R 750 000).*

CONFERENCES ORGANISED

1. Mitova, V., Tobi, A. *Epistemic Injustice, Reasons and Agency conference, African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science (13-14 October 2021).*
2. Mitova, V., Rybko, C. Tobi, A. *Epistemology of the Internet online Conference, African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science (November 2021).*
3. Mncube, Z. (with Berry, D., Chellappoo, A., Furman, K.) *Epistemic Decolonisation Online Seminar Series. London School of Economics, UK.*

RESEARCH GROUPS

1. Mitova, V. *4IRE: The Epistemology of 4IR research group, Semester 2, UJ, 2021.*
2. Mitova, V. *EDEI: Epistemic decolonisation and epistemic injustice research group, UJ, S2, 2021.*
3. Tobi, A. (with Porter, E.) *Epistemic Injustice, Reasons and Agency reading group, University of Johannesburg and Kent University's Philosophy Departments, Semester 2, 2021.*

TALKS GIVEN BY ACEPS MEMBERS

1. Harris, C. The epistemic decolonisation path latent in Helen Verran's Science and an African Logic, What is epistemic decolonisation? online seminar series, LSE, 11 March 2021.
2. Harris, C. online talk with Konrad Lorenz Institute (KLI) on Science must fall chapter, 1 December 2021.
3. Harris, C. online talk for 6th International Bioethics Colloquium: Bioethics, Neuroethics & AI Ethics in a Post-Pandemic World, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2-3 December 2021.
4. Maponya, D.T. (invited) Male-centeredness of African Philosophy: A Destruction to Decolonisation'. A Call for the Desuperiorization of Philosophy and the Foundation of Superaltern Studies Conference, 11-13 August 2021.
5. Maponya, D.T. (invited) Respondent to the keynote speaker, Mohau Pheko, at the Zondeni Sobukwe Mother of Azania Annual Lecture, the Blackhouse Kollektive, 27-29 August 2021.
6. Maponya, D.T. (invited) Decolonisation and African Feminism: The Nexus of Gender and Race'. African Philosophy and Decolonization, University of Paderbon, 6 December 2021.
7. Mncube, Z. (invited) Race and Personalised Medicine. Durham University Colloquium, UK.
8. Mitova, V. (keynote) Epistemic Decolonisation for Today's Africa. Diversity Reading List and British Philosophical Association Online Series on Epistemic Decolonisation, LSE, UK (online), 6 October.
9. Mitova, V. (keynote) Is Epistemic Injustice White-People Stuff? Thinking at the border: Post- and decolonial theory and epistemic injustice. Oxford, UK (online), 22-23 September 2021.
10. Mitova, V. (invited) Epistemic Injustice. 6th SOAS World Philosophies Lecture, SOAS University of London, UK (online), 3 December 2021.
11. Mitova, V. (invited) Motivated Irrationality, Epistemic Innocence, and White Ignorance. The Value of Irrationality. University of Zürich, Switzerland, 30 August – 1 September 2021.
12. Mitova, V. (invited) Desuperiorising epistemic justice in the service of knowledge-decolonisation. A Call for the Desuperiorization of Philosophy, and the Foundation of Superaltern Studies, Fort Hare, South Africa (online), 11-13 August 2021.
13. Mitova, V. (invited) Decolonising Knowledge: what, why, how. What Is Epistemic Decolonization Online Series, LSE, UK, 15 January 2021.
14. Reijer, J. (with Smuts, L & Maake, T.) Views on Sex, Sexuality, and Gender in Higher Education: Preliminary Findings from the University of Johannesburg. University of Johannesburg, 27 October 2021.
15. Reijer, J. (with Barr, K, Dorfman, A, Smith, K, Yi, L, Stitch, S, Barrett, C, Grossman, I, & Machery, E.) Going it alone: A universal aversion to the wisdom of crowds. 47th Annual Meeting of the Society for Philosophy and Psychology, 28 June – 2 July 2021.
16. Reijer, J, Smuts, L, Maake, T, Coleman, C & Gwedla B. 2021. 'Heteronormativity in South Africa: Changing Perceptions of Sexuality and Gendered Sexual Roles among South African University Students'. 27th Annual South African Sociological Association conference, 27-30 June 2021.
17. Rybko, C. The Knowledge Machine: Googling and Testimony. Epistemology of the Internet online workshop, African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science, University of Johannesburg, 3-5 November 2021.
18. Tobi, A. 'How not to Decolonize' (invited speaker). A Call for the Desuperiorization of Philosophy and the Foundation of Superaltern Studies Webinar.
19. Tobi, A. 'Appreciative Silencing'. Epistemic Injustice, Reasons and Agency Workshop, African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science, University of Johannesburg 14-15 October 2021.
20. Tobi, A. 'Towards an Epistemic Compass for the Internet'. Epistemology of the Internet online workshop, African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science, University of Johannesburg, 3-5 November 2021.

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES IN 2021

1. Agemir Bavaresco, PUCRS, Brazil
2. Corrado Fumagalli, University of Genova, Italy
3. Simon Lohse, University of Lübeck, Germany
4. Tshepo Mvulane Moloi, independent researcher and sangoma, South Africa
5. Sebastian Schmidt, University of Zürich, Switzerland

COLLABORATIONS

1. Harris, C. with PUCRS, Brazil.
2. Mitova, V. with University of Kent
3. Mitova, V. with University of Pittsburgh
4. Mitova, V. with University of Rutgers
5. Mitova, V. with University of Vienna
6. Mitova, V. with University of Zürich

7. Mitova, V. and Mncube, Z. with Transformational HPS, UK.
8. Reijer, J. with UJ project Heteronormativity in Higher Educational Institutions, NIHSS Working groups programme.

AWARDS

1. Tobi, A. University of Johannesburg's Commonwealth Scholarship for Doctoral Studies.
2. Tobi, A. Golden Key International Honour Society.

OPINION PIECES AND INTERVIEWS

1. Mitova, V. Interview: Epistemic Decolonisation and Epistemic Injustice. Socially Engaged Philosophy with Martin Kusch.
2. Mitova, V. Interview: Meet the Geography of Philosophy Team, with Victoria Sterling.
3. Smart, B. and Combrink, H. <https://theconversation.com/we-cant-banish-covid-19-but-we-can-end-the-pandemic-with-vaccinations-168294>
4. Smart, B. Interviewed live on Newzroom Afrika on Covid-19 during elections
5. Smart, B. Interviewed on Covid-19 regulations by 'Cape Talk' radio
6. Smart, B. Interviewed on vaccine hesitancy by Madibaz Radio