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Update on the future of global poverty

Last month’s edition of the Southern Africa Scan newsletter featured two a new studies on the future of global poverty, in particular how it relates to, and unfolds in Africa. As pointed out in the commentary, these types of studies often have significant policy implications, despite the fact that they are characterised by high levels of uncertainty and bias. It is, therefore, very useful that the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth has published a ‘One Pager’ (opens in pdf format from here http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCOnePager204.pdf ) on the Future of Global Poverty, which is very handy to refer to, and includes an excellent explanatory graphic.

Why isn’t road safety much higher up the development agenda?

Road traffic kills as many people as malaria, and tobacco and alcohol kill even more – but the collective development gaze skips over deaths that are not from ‘exotic’ diseases.

According to the World Health Organisation, more than 1 million people die each year on the world’s roads – that’s about one every 25 seconds. Between 20 million and 50 million sustain non-fatal injuries. Young adults aged between 15 and 44 years account for more than half (59%) of deaths. And 90% occur in low- and middle-income countries, even though they have only half the world’s vehicles.

The unwanted prize for the greatest carnage goes to the Dominican Republic, with 42 deaths per 100,000 people (pdf) (compared with four in the UK and 11 in the US). Small wonder that the UN has declared 2011-20 the decade of action for road safety.

As we know from the UK, getting the death toll down is relatively straightforward – speed limits, safety belts, proper pavements for pedestrians, enforcing drink-driving laws. Or even encouraging citizens to take action: when researchers put signs in Kenyan minibuses (matatus) urging passengers to criticise reckless driving, injuries and deaths halved (pdf).

Road traffic kills as many people as malaria, but getting Nairobi’s bus drivers to slow down is much easier than tackling malaria. So if we know what to do, and the remedies are cheap, why isn’t road safety much higher up the development agenda?

This is not an isolated case. The same question can be asked of numerous other sources of death and destruction, where we know what to do but nothing much is happening. In terms of death toll, tobacco is equivalent to five malarias; alcohol is two malarias. And both tobacco and alcohol leave a much wider toll in terms of damaged health, incapacity and burdens on health systems.

My theory is that the collective development gaze skips over road deaths and others like tobacco or alcohol because they are too familiar. The world of aid and development prefers the exotic, the “other”. But if you think roads, booze and fags are tricky issues for the aid industry to tackle, try obesity – increasingly present among poor communities in poor countries, as a recent visit to South Africa brought home to me, often side by side with malnutrition. Can you imagine an aid organisation launching a fundraising appeal to tackle obesity?

There may be other reasons – there’s not much money in sorting out road safety, hence no corporate lobby on a par with the pharmaceutical industry’s interest in finding new drugs to tackle malaria.

When Big Pharma tried to restrict access to HIV and Aids medicines, campaigners jumped all over them, with considerable success – as a recent landmark ruling against Novartis in India showed.

Yet on issues such as road deaths, tobacco and alcohol there is silence. With tobacco and alcohol, the situation is even worse because as restrictions grow in their home markets, large multinationals have a clear commercial interest in keeping people smoking and boozing.

Look at Uruguay, against which Philip Morris International, an American tobacco company, has filed a claim at the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, an arm of the World Bank, alleging that the country’s anti-smoking measures violate a bilateral investment treaty.

As deaths from communicable diseases decline, “they” in developing countries will get ever more like “us” in the rich ones. Road safety, along with cancer, obesity, diabetes, mental health and disability, will become ever more prominent issues in the pursuit of human wellbeing around the world.

The good news is that, in many cases, experience gained in the rich countries will be useful in tackling issues elsewhere. But first, the aid industry has to learn to see them as development issues.

A superb opinion piece, supported by good data, raising issues that any forward-thinking aid / development / philanthropic agency or organisation should be contemplating. The issue of road traffic injuries and its externalities in Africa was first covered by the Southern African Scan newsletter in September 2012.

Can complexity theory help understand the Brazil protests?

Brazilians are calling the protests sweeping through their country the Salad Uprising after police began arresting people carrying vinegar as a remedy for tear gas. The name could be more apt than protesters realise: uprisings of this sort could also have food links. But they spread like a disease.

Brazil’s uprising came “totally out of the blue”, says Marcus de Aguiar at the University of Campinas in São Paulo, Brazil. “We never had anything like this before”. It began when police responded violently to protests over a 6% hike in bus fares in São Paulo. But the uprising continued even after the fare increase was rescinded.

That may not be surprising. Dan Braha at the New England Complex Systems Institute (NECSI) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, says civil unrest spreads like other spatial phenomena such as epidemics and forest fires: different factors control susceptibility, resistance, and rates of outbreak and transmission.

Braha’s modelling studies of unrest over the past century in 170 countries show how long-standing social stresses leave a society susceptible to the spread of unrest once it is sparked off. The initial focus may be an otherwise unrelated event: bus fare increases in Brazil; redevelopment of a park in Turkey; heavy-handed policing in Sweden; the suicide of a Tunisian street vendor in the 2011 Arab Spring.

Brazil’s social stresses are clear, say the protesters. Schools, hospitals – and bus services – are suffering as public funds are lavished on the preparations for next year’s soccer World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. Resentments deepen as economic inequality persists, despite an economic boom that has lifted 20% of the population out of poverty in the past decade, says Edmar Bacha, an economist who helped end Brazil’s chronic inflation in the 1990s.

In fact, most protestors worldwide are not the grindingly poor, but the newly prosperous, says Martin Scheffer of Wageningen University in the Netherlands. As inflation begins to surge again, these people fear falling back into poverty. This suggests societies emerging from poverty could be unstable: China take note.

The price of food is another stressor. Brazilians protested last month as the price of tomatoes more than doubled. The country’s food production suffers marked price volatility.

Yaneer Bar-Yam, head of NECSI, has found that when a global food price index tops a threshold value, clusters of riots occur. It has been hovering around this value for some time, he warns – more price spikes may mean more riots.

Meanwhile, social media boost a protest’s transmission rate through susceptible societies. A Facebook page connected to Brazil’s protests, says Braha, went from thousands of members to hundreds of thousands overnight. Also a factor here, says Scheffer, are unemployed young people – the equivalent of an epidemic’s carriers. In December last year a combination of restless youths and high food prices led to rioting in Argentina.

But these factors alone do not cause the outbreak, says Bar-Yam. He thinks recent cases of unrest relate to a general evolution within our societies away from hierarchies and towards leaderless networks. Self-organisation within these networks becomes contagious “as we develop a better understanding of collective action”, he says. In time this could spread beyond uprisings.


A fascinating article covering some fascinating issues, and what a bonus if there were to be better knowledge and understanding of these factors. For example, understanding, self-organisation within networks and collective action (beyond uprisings), would be very valuable indeed. Hence, NECSI, and the knowledge they produce, continues to be on Southern Africa Scan newsletter’s watch list.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

A culture of angel investment for fledging African entrepreneurs

Investors and ‘Africanists’ Wesley Lynch and Keet van Zyl, co-founders of AngelHub in South Africa had fascinating things to say about early-stage innovation financing during infoDev’s Global Forum on Innovation and Technology Entrepreneurship in South Africa. Not only did they help in selecting the most inspiring entrepreneurs for the Forum’s
Dragons’ Den pitching contest, they were putting forward a lot of passion in explaining how a culture of angel investment for start-ups and fledging entrepreneurs could be established on the African continent. As access to finance is noted often as the main problem for innovative start-ups, we should look seriously at models that show potential.

AngelHub’s mission is to bring the experience, mentorship, networks and, of course, financing from already successful businessmen (bona fide angels) together in order to assist South Africa’s new wave of start-ups. They launched in September 2011. AngelHub’s management draws on the venture capital and start-up experience of its founders to attract both investors and entrepreneurs. A key part of their selection process is finding entrepreneurs that meet their criteria to present to their group of early-stage Angel investors. Their way of working was recently described in this article on ‘Bridging the Funding Divide,’ published by the Daily Maverick.

Three fascinating insights stand out:

1. On helping entrepreneurs
[Looking] at some of the AngelHub’s deal flow, thanks to the Gust online platform they use to manage their investment process; on average, they get 50 deals a month, and from a precursory glance half of them appear quite meagre. They are able to spend a bit more on about 20 deals and select around 10 for further due diligence. Utilizing the full-time effort of four senior professionals, they are able to help these companies with building business models, pitching, etc. and they try to put at least five of them in front of about thirty Angels each quarter. They have also partnered with the University Of Cape Town Graduate School Of Business to present an early-stage investment course that each of the start-up companies attend before their pitching sessions. The key to continued success is to broaden the angel community for successful matchups, and to lobby for co-investment initiatives or incentives.

2. On sustainability of helping entrepreneurs
Pitching events in Johannesburg and Cape Town, regular founders’ dinners, the UCT GSB investment course, full-time intense work with entrepreneurs at no charge and a variety of other operational costs, the sponsorship they receive from corporate strategic partners, and the founding grant from the South African government’s Industrial Development Corporation only pays for 25-30% of AngelHub’s operations. The benefits of AngelHub’s existence in supporting one or two entrepreneurs a month is clear: they receive funding and further engagement of established angels. But the limited engagement that 20 entrepreneurs receive from Wesley and Keet’s team, and the full grooming of 5-10 entrepreneurs as they prepare themselves for the pitching event also accelerates their development at no cost. AngelHub’s path to success lies in the 5% equity option that they take in from their portfolio companies. If a start-up receives funding through all this engagement and mentorship, it allows AngelHub to invest in the start-up up to 5% of equity ownership. AngelHub remains actively involved post-investment to assist their start-ups with executing growth strategies.

3. On working with other players in the enabling ecosystem
[Reflecting] on infoDev’s current and future work in sustainably developing the private sector, specifically innovative start-ups in the developing world, I am more convinced that angel networks need to be thought of as effective ecosystem enablers. This in spite of the unfortunate connotation in our (development professionals) minds that supporting them makes rich people richer. Philosophically, there is absolutely no difference between a perfectly capitalist AngelHub and a fully non-profit government-run incubator in terms of their “desire” to help entrepreneurs. I sure have my own opinions with respect to effectiveness. Needless to say, I look forward to working with Wesley, Keet and team in South Africa and beyond.

Source: https://blogs.worldbank.org/psd/angel-entrepreneur-s-table

A very interesting, and it seems effective, model for addressing the single biggest problem African entrepreneurs face – access to start-up finance. At first glance it seems scalable, and feasible, for other African economies too. On this topic; see here http://mashable.com/2013/06/06/african-startups/ for 20 important African start-ups to watch.

World Bank formally urged to overhaul ‘Doing Business’ Report
An external review panel is calling on the World Bank to institute sweeping reforms to its widely cited annual “Doing Business” report, including doing away with a controversial ranking of countries on a variety of business-friendliness metrics.

Doing Business is put out jointly by the World Bank and its private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), both based in Washington, and has become
one of the bank’s most high-profile publications.

"Over the decade that it has been published, Doing Business has achieved a great deal of influence,” Trevor Manuel, South Africa’s planning minister and chair of the review panel, said [on 26 June] at the audit’s London unveiling.

“It is the leading tool to judge the business environments of developing countries, generating huge global media coverage every year. Several countries – such as Rwanda – have used it as a guide to design reform programmes.”

Indeed, reportedly used by some 85% of global policymakers, the report has built up particularly outsized influence in the developing world, as government officials have competed to raise their index ranking.

Yet for this reason, critics have for years warned that the report was pushing countries to lower taxes and wages and weaken overall industry regulation, thus potentially endangering the poor.

On Monday, the 11-member panel, appointed in October by World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, offered strong backing for several of these criticisms, even while it stated that the report should continue to be published. Most prominent among these is the recommendation to do away with the aggregated Ease of Doing Business Index, introduced in 2006.

“The decision to retain or drop the aggregate rankings table is the most important decision the Bank faces with regard to the Doing Business report,” the review states.

“Removing it would defuse many of the criticisms levelled against the report, but would diminish the report’s influence on policy and public discussion in the short term. In the long term, however, doing so may improve focus on underlying substantive issues and enhance the report’s value.”

The report also calls for greater transparency within the reporting and evaluation processes, and urges the bank to move the report’s "home" from the IFC to the research department within the bank proper.

Yet the panel’s recommendations, some groups contend, now offer a potent opportunity. “The panel’s report is a defining moment for World Bank policy to reflect the needs of working people, and a balanced approach to labour market regulation,” Sharan Burrow, general-secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, said Monday in a statement. “If adopted, the World Bank has the opportunity to reshape the relationship between working people, business and governments.”


The review panel’s report can be downloaded from here http://www.dbrpanel.org/sites/dbrpanel/files/doing-business-review-panel-report.pdf (opens pdf) and for more information about the project and the panel, see Independent Panel: Reviewing the World Bank Group’s Doing Business Report

POLITICAL ISSUES

Why clarity about SADC law has become an urgent matter

An article by tralac Associate, Gerhard Erasmus. Tralac (trade law centre for Southern Africa) is a non-profit organisation focussing on effective participation by individual Southern African countries and SADC in the global economy.

The 2012 audit of the SADC Free Trade Area (FTA), conducted by the Southern Africa TradeHub, notes that certain member states are not complying with basic obligations in the SADC Trade Protocol. Some are charging “surtaxes” and levies on goods imported from other state parties, which are in violation of the applicable tariff schedules. In other instances goods from selected member states are targeted; amounting to discriminatory treatment. There are also complaints about other trade-related measures such as import bans because health standards have allegedly not been complied with.

These are unilateral measures which are either clear violations or they are based on arguments lacking clarity and legal certainty. The fact of the matter is that the SADC FTA legal regime does not function as it should; the rights of private parties are violated while suspect national measures go unchallenged. No court of law has been petitioned to rule on the lawfulness or otherwise of these measures. Proper monitoring on behalf of the collective is absent and the system for notifying national trade restrictions is deficient.

These are not new developments or new allegations. The SADC Committee of Ministers of Trade (CMT) could, however, not yet agree on how to tackle them or how to implement effective answers. The result is that the rules-based character of SADC is undermined and that trade governance lacks transparency.
The problem has deeper roots; African governments do not litigate against each other about violations or non-compliance when it comes to regional trade arrangements. Apparently that is seen as disrespect for sovereignty; or perhaps because there is a belief that differences can be ironed out through “discussions”. Why litigation is viewed as offensive is not clear. It will in fact be better to refer disputes over the application and interpretation of REC law to an independent forum; as is the practice elsewhere. There are regional courts and tribunals with the necessary jurisdiction within the African RECs.

The settlement of differences via adjudication will contribute to clarity and better relations between the governments concerned, so that normal business transactions between their nations can go ahead. The European Commission and the United States government are frequently locked in dispute settlement procedures in Geneva, without derailing their cooperation when mutual interests are at stake. Right now they are negotiating the Trans-Atlantic FTA, while the Boeing- Airbus and Beef Hormone cases are still before the Appellate Body of the WTO. There are no logical reasons why the same cannot happen with regard to the basic rules of the SADC game and why local traders and firms should not enjoy the protection and certainty of the law.

In SADC, traders and firms are often treated unlawfully and unfairly. These private entities face major difficulties when it comes to the enforcement of their rights. There are jurisdictional challenges regarding access to regional tribunals, national courts will refuse to apply unincorporated trade agreements, and in the case of SADC the regional Tribunal was suspended in 2010.

The governments of affected private parties as a rule refuse to act on their behalf; they will not litigate directly against those other member states engaging in unlawful practices. This weakens the belief in SADC as a rules-based arrangement. Political statements regarding increased regional integration and about negotiations to conclude the new Tripartite FTA are met with growing cynicism. This does not bode well for regional integration and trade. Why would the same governments implement new agreements on FTAs, finance and investment, services, transport, customs etc. any differently when existing regional legal instruments are violated with impunity?

Respect for the applicable rules is crucial if we want our regional arrangements to be based on certainty, predictability and clean administration. This requires clarity about the applicable law, the real prospect of judicial review, and that effective remedies are available.

Source: http://www.tralac.org/2013/06/19/why-clarity-about-sadc-law-has-become-an-urgent-matter/

See also here http://www.tralac.org/2013/06/12/does-it-matter-whether-sadc-has-a-tribunal/ for an article by the same author on why it matters that SADC has a Tribunal (SADC used to have a tribunal, but it was suspended last year). In essence formal dispute settlement mechanisms promote transparency and certainty so that the private sector, firms, service providers, investors and consumers then know where they stand.

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

**Rethinking incremental urbanism**

A paper entitled *Rethinking Incremental Urbanism* will be presented at the upcoming International Conference on Sustainable Development Research that will take place in Stellenbosch in July 2013, co-hosted by the Sustainability Institute. This is the first attempt at integrating highly innovative research by a group of postgraduate [Stellenbosch Sustainability Institute] students who have been conducting trans-disciplinary research in an informal settlement called Enkanini.

Source: http://www.sustainabilityinstitute.net/newsdocs/sinews/item/rethinking-incremental-urbanism

Enkanini (‘take by force’) is an illegal informal settlement of 2400 households, located within walking distance of the centre of Stellenbosch. Enkanini is an unelectrified community that shares 70 toilets and 12 taps; has infrequent waste collection of the 7 open waste skips; no formal drainage, on a steep topography; and no effective leadership structure in order to engage with the municipality to address these infrastructure challenges.

What is remarkable about this project (much of it has been covered in previous editions of the Southern Africa Scan newsletter, mostly under the topic of the i-Shack) is that a trans-disciplinary action research methodology was adopted, which has led to the co-production of new and transformational knowledge with the intended beneficiaries of the knowledge outcomes. This approach goes beyond multidisciplinary methods, which view participation merely as a cooperative tool. The research question that the students...
addressed was: What does in situ upgrading, of informal settlements mean in practice from the perspective of the average shackdweller in South Africa?

The paper concludes: "Despite the large number of South Africans living in informal settlements, relative to research on other problems very little research has been conducted that addresses [the above-mentioned] challenge. A review of published journal articles on this issue yields only a few dozen references compared to, for example, the several hundred references to alien plant invasions. The R2.6 million (US$266,000) allocated by the NRF [National Research Foundation] to Stellenbosch University to mount the Enkanini project is a massive financial contribution to the reversal of this trend.

However, as this paper has shown, research that addresses the challenge of incremental urbanism is not simply about technical solutions or appropriate policies that the state must adopt. Instead, what we mean by research needs to change. Following transdisciplinary research methodology, the research question is no longer about a particular physical construction (services, houses), but rather the research question becomes ‘how can active networks within a given community develop the knowledge capacity they need to generate solutions on their own terms?’ The point of departure, therefore, is not poverty (as ‘absence of something’), but rather meaningful engagements that lead to co-produced problem statements that then inspire on-going processes of ever-expanding explorations of workable innovations. It is these innovations that can reinforce the assemblages that sustain the household and collective energies that relentlessly drive the dynamics of incrementalism. In this way, research gets connected to the social will of the powerless rather than the political will of the powerful.

In practice, the waste, energy and sanitation innovations that have been co-generated in Enkanini are significant not simply because they represent technical innovations but also because they have become the basis for social organization and network formation. Prior to securing land rights and formal permission to remain where they are, co-produced social innovations have undermined the notion that this is a ‘temporary community’, created a media profile that suggests active investments in community-constructed infrastructures, and reinforced the notion that researchers have a role to play in redefined processes of coproduced problem solving."

Request a copy of the DRAFT paper from Tanja@hichert.co.za. Otherwise wait until later in July when it is published as part of the conference.

Tackling urban sprawl in Africa’s least dense city

Urban sprawl and the inability to plan effectively for expansion is an overriding characteristic of rapidly growing African cities. Below is reportage from a session held in Cape Town, labelled Africa’s least dense city, of how this can be addressed.

[In May] Future Cape Town hosted its first FCT (Future Cape Town) Summit and the topic covered was Urban Sprawl in Cape Town. This mid-morning session hosted a small gathering of local government officials, urban developers, planners, and academics. The aim of the Summit was to create a forum to discuss the contentious issue of urban sprawl, and formulate a way to facilitate sustainable spatial urban growth in the City.

Below are 7 major highlights and ideas on the contextual constraints in Cape Town and future steps toward denser, inclusive communities that come out of the session:

1. The major problems and challenges in Cape Town

The Summit panel raised the following key problems currently affecting Cape Town urban development and perpetuating urban sprawl: a lack of accountability in the process of responding to urban development applications, inadequate civic engagement and lack of political willingness to address the planning legacy in the City. Developments are often pursued as a matter of political expediency rather than as a result of sensible planning, and there was also a sense that tough decisions were put off because of political considerations.

The point was strongly made that public housing projects often have several serious shortcomings, which are likely to cause major problems going forward. An example shared was the inability of the city to align housing provision with economic development, leading to poor people being given houses they cannot afford to maintain, located on the margins and with densities inappropriate for them to obtain economic betterment. The result is asset depreciation and the growth of city sprawl, without concomitant economic growth.
2. Towards a sustainable, inclusive urban form
The Summit panel generally agreed that Cape Town cannot continue to be developed as it has been up until now. Infill of under-used spaces and densification were agreed on as necessary steps to begin changing the spatial character of the city, as detailed in the Densification Strategy of the City of Cape Town. Currently the city is amongst the least dense in Africa.

It was also acknowledged that there is currently little motivation or incentive for developers to create dense or low-cost housing projects. This was due to lower land costs for developments on the urban edge, as well as the existence of almost insurmountable civil, bureaucratic and legal hurdles to creating dense infill developments or low-cost housing within the city. The Summit panel believed that steps should be taken to make it attractive for developers to create these developments within the city limits, such as improving zoning laws, freeing up unused land owned by the various government structures, and providing clear incentives.

3. Civil Buy-in: Building a non-partisan voice for sustainable, inclusive change
The Summit panel believed that there is a need to get civil buy-in for development policies that favour density and infill. Their suggestions about the way forward include:
- The creation and communication of a compelling vision for the city and region, with need for clear buy-in
- The need to come up with numbers and hard facts to show politicians, decision makers and citizens the economic and other implications of various decisions
- Changing of the expectations and desires around housing, public land and the future city
- In terms of low-income and affordable housing: the need to rephrase political debates from simply discussing the provision of housing, to addressing issues around increasing access to economic opportunity

4. Debunking myths on the urban land situation
The Summit panel challenged two common misconceptions regarding Cape Town:
1. That Cape Town lacks the space for new development (i.e. that the city is full); and
2. That the problems caused by the apartheid design of the city are insurmountable.

The Summit panel highlighted large portions of state land within the city centre and established suburbs that are ideally situated for dense housing. However, it was explained that there has been an inability on the part of local, provincial and national government to open it up for development, and where land has been made available, private developers do not consider dense low-cost projects profitable. This is a problem that is exacerbated by the high cost of land and the large number of regulatory hurdles.

5. Positive stories in Cape Town need to be highlighted
There was consensus that focussing solely on the problems facing Cape Town is a narrow approach, and there are benefits in discussing, engaging with and studying stories of more positive developments in the city. Positive stories of housing and development activities in Cape Town are rarely shared or highlighted.

The following positive case studies were mentioned:
1. Mitchell’s Plain: The community is showing signs of becoming a workable middle-class neighbourhood. It currently has the lowest amount of backywarder dwellings of any township community in the Western Cape. A number of Mitchell’s Plain residents are now working in the area, and major investments in the rail facilities have improved the commuting experience significantly.

2. Pook Road: A small informal settlement, which has relatively low crime and is well serviced by the community. [See here (opens pdf) http://www.accesssanitation.org/fileadmin/accesssanitation/Case_studies/Sub_Saharan_Africa/ACCESS_Case_study_pooksebos.pdf for a sanitation case study example.]

3. The Swartland: It was claimed that high levels of economic growth have led to the disappearance of informal settlements in this region.

The Summit panel noted that these achievements do not appear to be linked to any formal planning policies but are rather a product of each community’s efforts and localized economic growth.

6. Super urban development agency: A new kind of human settlements institution
A surprising outcome of the Summit was the overwhelming agreement on the need to explore a kind of Super-Urban Development Agency to oversee and co-ordinate development in the City, across departments, political parties and tiers of government. This body would ideally be non-partisan, exist outside of political structures, and have a
great deal of independence, allowing it to pursue the difficult decisions that need to be made and to effectively bridge the silos between current departments.

Part of Agency’s mandate would be educating civil bodies and politicians about the need for certain development decisions, hopefully creating a forum for constructive debate. Mention was made several times of the now-defunct Housing Board and its effectiveness in serving in this arena, and how its’ dismantling had negatively affected housing delivery in the City.

7. The role of Future Cape Town

As highlighted above, the discussion concluded on the need for stronger civic engagement devoid of purely political motivations. As stated by Rashiq Fataar, Future Cape Town’s Managing Director: “Future Cape Town strives to be a strong independent advocate for constructive urban debate and development”.

Source: http://futurecapetown.com/2013/06/7-ideas-to-tackle-urban-sprawl/#.Uc64gJxafz4

For further reading on the summit’s discussion and proceedings, see Future Cape Town’s final report (opens pdf) as well as their media release on the summit’s findings.

Chinese ‘container hospitals’ ready to deploy in Namibia

Africa’s first ‘container hospital’, developed by Chinese scientists, could be ready for use by the end of the month [June], following two years of development. It will be located in Namibia and/or Cameroon, depending on government approval.

Its developers say that the hospital’s ten component containers can be slotted together in different configurations, like toy blocks, depending on individual countries’ needs.

Each hospital consists of ten containers with rooms for general clinics, waiting patients, treatments, a pharmacy and back-up power supply. The hospitals developers say they can be used for decades if properly maintained, and are intended for long-term service. It is hoped that several African countries will eventually benefit.

In 2010, Liu Yandong, the new Chinese vice premier, signed a memorandum to develop a portable hospital suitable for Africa. The concept was subsequently developed at the Low Cost Health Programme Centre (LCHPC) at the Shenzhen Institutes of Advanced Technology (SIAT), part of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

China’s Ministry of Science and Technology has led and funded the project, so far to the tune of 14 million renminbi (US$2.2 million). However, according to Zhou Shumin, director of LCHPC, the funding is not enough, and so the ministry has pledged to invest further. Zhou says that container hospitals function in the same way as general hospitals — the only key difference is the size.

They are intended for use near sizeable settlements — at least a suburban village — and need a flat, open site more than 2,000 square metres in size as well as necessary infrastructure, including a power supply and tap water. China has also developed ‘container clinics’, smaller versions with one to three containers.

According to Zhou, the container hospital needs at least four doctors to run, while the clinic needs one. Ten African doctors were trained to use the hospitals and clinics last year as part of a trial. They will also be trained in the actual hospitals before use. Medical student Wu Haoli, from Gabon, says: “The fact that the hospital is easy to assemble, its low cost and its mobility all make it very suitable for under-developed areas in Africa”.

“In Africa, some areas are short of basic health equipment, particularly in areas far away from big cities. The container hospital will provide them with the opportunity to see a doctor more quickly.”

China plans to give hospitals and clinics to six African countries this year. At the end of July, it plans to send two container hospitals to Cameroon and Namibia, followed by clinics to Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Egypt by the end of this year.


ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Madagascar: Capturing nature’s wealth to reduce poverty

Researchers from Bangor University will lead a new Ecosystem Services for Poverty...
The three year project ‘Can Paying for Global Ecosystem Services reduce poverty?’ involves a consortium of institutions in the UK, Madagascar, the Netherlands, and the USA.

Professor Bruno Ramamonjisoa from the University of Antananarivo in Madagascar, one of the project’s leaders, said: “Madagascar is a very poor country with millions of rural people heavily dependent on natural resources. This research will help ensure funds from international ecosystem payment schemes make a real difference to people’s lives”.

Source: http://www.espa.ac.uk/news-events/espa-news/2013-06/38432

As the project website states: "There has been a recent explosion of interest in market mechanisms to capture global ecosystem service values. An argument in their favour is that they can, in principle, benefit the poor by increasing the value of their resources.

However, the effect on poverty is not easily predicted and depends on a) the structure and distribution of payments (how and when payments are made, and to whom) and b) how land-use changes driven by the payments influence the supply of locally important ecosystem services and livelihood options to poor people.

Our central research question is: How can international ecosystem service payment schemes (specifically for carbon sequestration/storage and biodiversity conservation) most effectively reduce poverty in low income countries, given biophysical, economic and political realities?

This question is of vital importance as there have been few, if any, detailed multidimensional assessments of either existing programmes or the conditions needed for optimal programme design.

We focus on a single ecosystem (tropical forest) in a single low income country (Madagascar) to achieve a uniquely complete analysis. Links to global structures involved in developing international payment for ecosystem services schemes (PES) ensure the results will be influential more widely.

Major land-use changes which international payments are incentivizing include: reduced deforestation, targeted restoration or reforestation (through fire and grazing management or replanting) and changes in rules, or enforcement of rules, governing access to harvesting wild products. Welfare impacts on the poor will be different under these different approaches, and they vary in their potential for producing global benefits.

Objectives:
1) To understand effects on ecosystem service flows, to local and global beneficiaries, of the land-use changes incentivized under alternative PES approaches, and the spatial and temporal trade-offs in these flows;
2) To estimate the magnitude and distribution of net local welfare impacts from the range of PES approaches (incorporating both the effects of payments and land-use change) and the likely influence of different local and regional institutional structures;
3) To fully quantify the land-use changes and the payments distributed in an existing payment scheme; and
4) To develop effective recommendations for improved international PES schemes that maximise their potential for delivering poverty alleviation, given biophysical, economic and political realities.

Our project will answer important specific research questions including:
A) What are the impacts of increased forest cover on dry-season streamflows (important for local agriculture)?
B) What is the effect of changes in land-use (and rules of access) on benefit flows from wild-harvested products?
C) What are the magnitude and distribution of net local welfare impacts of alternative PES approaches (e.g. incentivising avoided deforestation, targeted restoration, restricting access)?
D) How do institutional structures impact the magnitude and distribution of costs and benefits associated with payment schemes and how do schemes influence institutions?
E) What carbon storage/sequestration is achieved across a landscape under alternative PES approaches?
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F) What is the suitability for globally valued biodiversity of landscapes under alternative PES approaches?

G) What effect does incorporating local welfare impacts (A,B,C), as well as the delivery of globally-valued services (E,F), into the design of PES schemes have on which approach is favoured?

H) What general lessons can be drawn about designing PES for poverty alleviation (e.g. concerning asset-building versus use-restricting approaches to PES)?

New publication explores African social innovation

Inside|Out (download pdf here http://www.gsb.uct.ac.za/files/InsideOut.pdf) is a [new] quarterly newspaper, both online and in print. It explores social innovation in a new and different way - from Africa to the world, from people to institutions, from communities to stakeholders and most of all from the inside out. It’s a resource, a news source, a primer, a connector. It reflects the interests of the [University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business] GSB’s Bertha Centre by looking beyond an academic focus on social innovation and entrepreneurship to the many different people, organisations and ideas at work creating and achieving positive social change.

The launch of the Bertha Centre was covered by the November 2011 edition of the Southern Africa Scan newsletter Its new publication is a must-read and covers not only the Centre’s activities and approach, but also contains wonderful case studies of African social entrepreneurship and the positive impact it can have on society, see for example the Reel Gardening seed venture http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/5d9944ec-c777-11e2-be27-00144feab7de.html#ixzz2XUwybLHj.

African design consultancy nominated for “Games for Change” award

[Earlier in June] Games for Change, a non-profit that catalyses social impact through digital games, announced the 2013 finalists for the Games for Change Awards in the following categories: Most Significant Impact; Most Innovative; Best Gameplay; and Game of the Year.

An African design firm was nominated in the Most Significant Impact category and came second at the 10th anniversary celebration of the Games for Change Festival in NYC on 18 June 2013. Cape Town based design consultancy Formula D interactive designed the Eskom Energy Planner, a game that allows the player to take custody of a virtual city’s power plan and to seek a balance between the most efficient technologies currently available and the most environmentally friendly ones.

Source: http://www.formula-d.co.za/blog/2013/05/16/south-african-design-consultancy-nominated-for-games-for-change-award/

Laptops that run on the sun

A small software developer from London, Ontario, is taking on a risky and audacious new project: laptops that run on sunlight. WeWi Telecommunications Inc., a 15-person company, unveiled [during June] a solar-powered laptop designed to bypass the electricity grid. The project is aimed primarily at markets in Africa, where access to electricity can often be unreliable.

WeWi’s founders came up with the idea in early 2012, after visiting Ghana on business. “We saw a need there,” said David Snir, chief executive officer of WeWi. “The electricity infrastructure was very bad. We thought something needs to be done.”

Over the next 14 months, Snir and WeWi’s engineers designed the laptop, called Sol, which runs on a four-panel solar-charging device built into the computer’s case. It takes approximately two hours to charge the laptop’s battery, which then lasts for about eight to 10 hours. The laptop can run off the solar panels directly when exposed to sunlight, bypassing the battery.