

Case study three: sustainable socio-technical systems activating young citizens in the 4th Industrial Revolution in Johannesburg

This is the third case study from SUEUAA (Strengthening Urban Engagement in Universities in Asia and Africa), written by Dr Nickey Janse van Rensburg of the University of Johannesburg. The project is interested in how Universities in the Global South can contribute to solving geographical, economic and social issues in their cities. The project is looking at six cities in six different countries: Harare (Zimbabwe), Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania), Johannesburg (South Africa), Manilla (Philippines), Duhok (Iraq), and Sanandaj (Iran). The SUEUAA project involves academics from each of these cities, who will be carrying out fieldwork, and elite interviews with decision makers in the city and senior academics from local Universities, to better understand the ability of Universities to respond to city issues.

This case study highlights the presence of sustainable socio-technical systems activating young citizens in the 4th Industrial Revolution in Johannesburg.

Context:

Research GO are team of University of Johannesburg researchers, academics and commercial partners that include behavioural economists, data scientists, engineers, social scientist and ICT specialists that specialize in developing smart tools to support data collection in difficult to reach areas, at scale. We work with a youth employment accelerator to provide employment opportunities to local young people.

We have developed a methodology which allows us to activate unemployed youth from local communities to participate in the gig-economy using smart tools to allocate work, monitor quality, and execute micro-data collection at scale in urban and rural areas.

Community Engagement:

One example of our work has been the Crowd sourcing food in Ivory Park. In this case, 28 Data collectors registered 697 gardens and conducted 509 baseline studies to connect and expand an urban food ecosystem to unlock opportunities and advance local economies. Over the past 8 months we have run a pilot with 75 active farmers around Gauteng, North West, and Limpopo trading close to R300 000 worth of produce online.



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Another example is the Tshepo1Million initiative; a provincial youth employment strategy contracted the team to identify, map and surveying 80 000 township enterprises across 9 township areas in 10 weeks activating 800 unemployed youth to survey the enterprises. The team returned to map the risk profiles of 15000 of these enterprises in 2018.

A third example is a partnership with the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO) to survey over 31,000 randomly selected Gauteng residents in their homes from August to December 2017. The Quality of Life Survey (QoL) is the largest survey of social attitudes and quality of life in Gauteng. The data collectors are being contracted through Harambee, a youth employment accelerator. Through this initiative, 280 unemployed young Gauteng residents will not just gain work experience and an opportunity to earn an income, but will also receive extensive skills training.

These and other initiatives provide some interesting examples of capacity strengthening of communities at various levels being facilitated by the University of Johannesburg. More detail of the work of ResearchGO is attached.

References:

Gauteng City-Region Observatory website: <http://gcro.ac.za>

Research Go website: <http://www.facebook.com/ujresearchgo/>

Tshepo 1 Million initiative website: <https://www.skillsportal.co.za/content/gauteng-youth-benefiting-tshepo-1-million>



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