

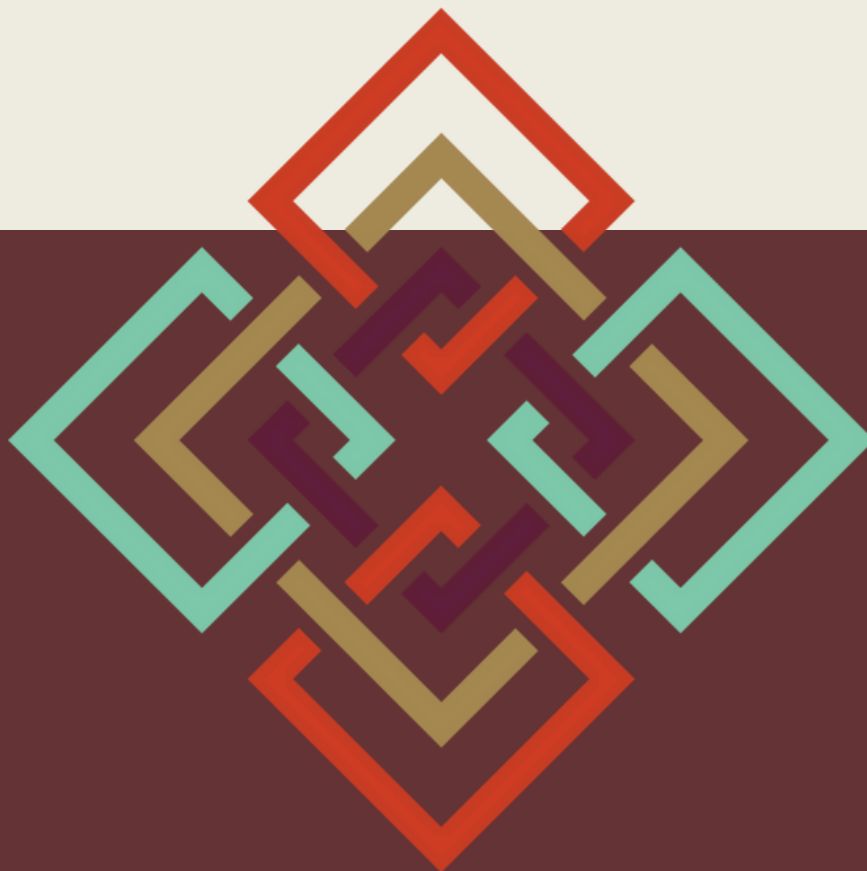


Stellenbosch  
UNIVERSITY  
IYUNIVESITHI  
UNIVERSITEIT

forward together  
sonke siya phambili  
saam vorentoe

# THE PUBLIC SQUARES

Quarterly report (#2)  
Jul. to Sept. 2024



Prepared by:  
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Goatley*



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# Vision And Mission

## Vision

Universities can play a key role in generating knowledge to address complex issues in our society. Yet for academics to become agents of change within and beyond institutions, they need to learn to cross boundaries, work collaboratively, and raise money to sustain their endeavors.

**The vision** of the SU Public Squares initiative is to enhance researcher capacity, support collaborative work, foster impactful ideas, generate competitive grant proposals, and foster new transdisciplinary research areas.

## Mission

**Our mission** is to build skills in collaborative/transdisciplinary research, foster knowledge across disciplinary and societal boundaries, develop competitive grant proposals, and find external funding to cultivate new transdisciplinary focal areas.

Drawing on expertise in research, public engagement, and grant writing, we will engage the eleven Public Square research teams in a series of workshops over 36 months. These workshops will provide research teams with specialized knowledge and targeted training.

In addition to workshops, we will support the Public Square teams through constructive feedback on grant proposals, facilitating brainstorming sessions, identifying funding opportunities, and assisting interested Squares to establish themselves as transdisciplinary entities through university channels.

# Executive summary



Dr Heide Hackmann delivering the Research Impact training lecture at STIAS on 12 September 2024

**Introduction:** The third quarter has been a busy period for the Public Squares. There have been numerous training events, brainstorming sessions, and project meetings, as well as important developments on the administrative front. For example, in August, Mrs. Nicolene Blows joined the team as an administrator. Nicolene (Nicky) has made an important contribution to general project administration and event organization.

**Brainstorming:** In July, we held two brainstorming sessions and in August, Dr. John van Breda conducted a brainstorming session for the One Health Collaborative Hub Public Square (8 August), which focused on team development and the identification of focal areas. The brainstorming catalysed a second session on stakeholder mapping exercise and community engagement, facilitated by van Breda on 11 September.

**Training events:** In July, there were two training lectures featuring interactive workshops on Research Team Development (16 July, Dr. John van Breda) and Stakeholder Mapping (22 July, Dr. Gill Black). Two more training sessions were held in September: Research Impact (Dr. Heide Hackman, September 12) and Engaging Policymakers (Black and Treffry-Goatley, September 10).

**Fundraising:** Since August, we have been shifting our focus toward grant identification and proposal development. This process commenced with a meeting on 23 August between Public Square team members and various representatives from the Division of Research Development's grant administration, including Marlene Fouche. Following this session, we reached out to the Public Squares Consortium, inviting each team to book a funding-focused brainstorming session. We have had a few bookings and there is now one funding proposal under development.

In the report below we highlight these project activities, as well as key achievements, challenges, and mitigation strategies.



# Training Programme

We are working with top internal and external experts to deliver a fresh transdisciplinary training program tailored to meet the needs of our local environment and the research teams. This service consists of a series of hybrid lectures that are open to SU staff and collaborators, and interactive workshops that are for the Public Squares consortium only.

Event (lecture followed by a workshop)	Facilitator	Venue	Date
Building a successful team	Dr. John van Breda	BMRI	16 Jul.
Stakeholder mapping	Dr Gill Black	STIAS	23 Jul.
Policy Engagement	Dr. Gill Black & Dr. Astrid Treffry-Goatley	BMRI	10 Sept.
Research Impact	Dr Heide Hackmann	STIAS	12 Sept.



# Lectures and Workshops

## POLICY ENGAGEMENT

**Lecture:** Transdisciplinary research aims to drive societal change through policy engagement. Gill and Astrid will discuss its importance, sharing international case studies and Gill's experiences with policymakers, highlighting best practices, impactful strategies, and common pitfalls to avoid. (#20)



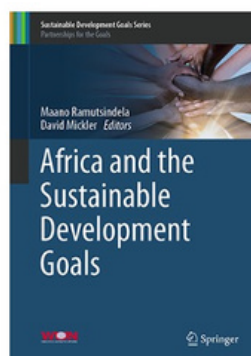
Dr Gill Black delivering the policy engagement lecture



(above) Dr. Gouwa Dawood & Mrs. Helena Kruger at the Policy Engagement Lecture.

(below) Dr. Heide Hackmann shared a riveting account detailing research impact in an international context.

DRD Public Squares Lecture, Heide Hackmann 12 September 2024



"No country offers the SDGs a blank slate on which to write a global vision. The SDGs should be situated within local, national and regional contexts that are in turn useful for understanding how these goals meet the real world."

Ramutsindela and Mickler, 2020



Above and Below: A key slide about the SDG from Hackmann's lecture

## RESEARCH IMPACT

**Lecture:** On Sept. 12 Prof. Heide Hackmann explored maximizing research impact globally, sharing insights on societal relevance and frameworks for evaluating research influence and sustainability (#19 attendees)  
**(Workshop:** This lecture was followed by an interactive workshop facilitated by Treffry-Goatley (#4)



Public Squares Report #2



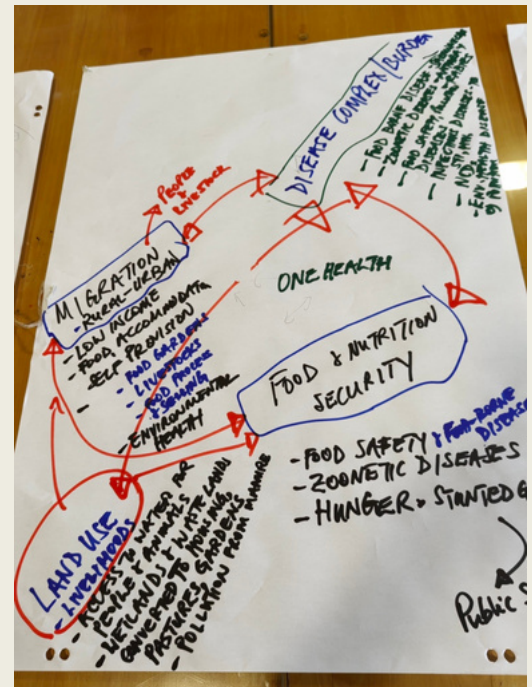
above: Prof. Wolfgang Preiser and Prof. Karen Esler engage in a hybrid workshop discussion

# Brainstorming sessions

We offer consortium members bespoke brainstorming sessions that are facilitated by experts and designed to help the teams develop their ideas. Please see further details of the events that took place in the past quarter.

## List of Brainstorming Sessions: July to September 2024

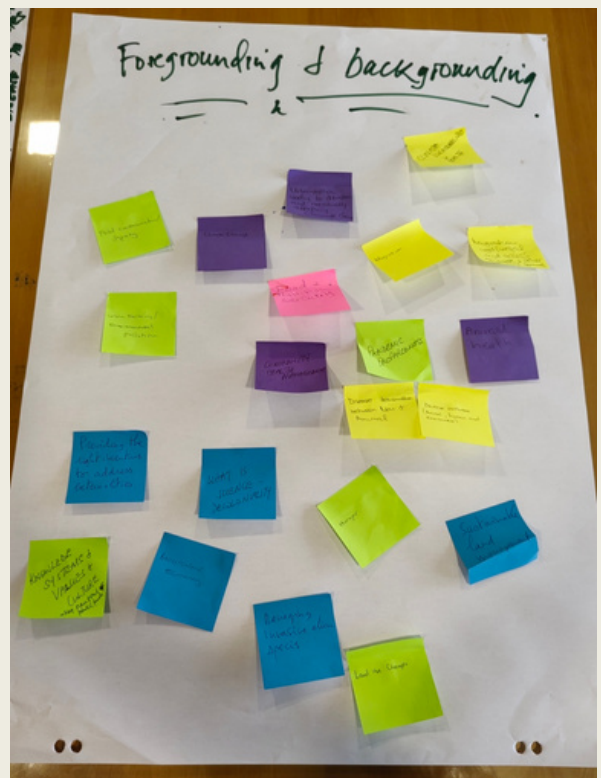
- **15 July:** Public Engagement workshop for SEDOH Square (Astrid and Gill)
- **8 August:** Brainstorming session for the One Health Collaborative Hub Public Square focused on team development and the identification of focal areas (van Breda).
- **11 September:** Stakeholder mapping exercise for One Health Collaborative hub (van Breda).



**Above:** Maps from the One Health Brainstorming session



**Above:** Participants at the One Health Brainstorming session



**Above:** Poster from the One Health Brainstorming session





# Project administration

**Summary:** Nicolene Blows (Nicky) has made an important contribution to general project administration and organization. Nicky has been helping to process project purchase orders, order stationery and other equipment, and has navigated the tricky process of paying external and internal staff for their contributions. She has also set up a project-specific email ([publicsquares@sun.ac.za](mailto:publicsquares@sun.ac.za)) and a Teams SharePoint to facilitate data transfer between the project management team.

**Document Storage and Retrieval:** Nicky is currently crafting a structure of One Drive document storage to create an effective document storage and retrieval system.

**Database for Reporting:** Nicky is also creating a database for our Quarterly reports, to track PS member attendance at lectures, workshops and brainstorming sessions

**The website and social media:** We have identified a web developer who is affiliated with SU and familiar with our corporate identity rules. We are now in the process of fine-tuning the webpage with input from the Public Square teams. The website will include links to our social media platforms. We have created accounts on LinkedIn, X, and YouTube. We will use LinkedIn and X to advertise upcoming events and to visualize our achievements. YouTube, on the other hand, will be used to host a repository of project videos, including recordings of lectures for distribution among the Public Square Consortium and beyond.

**Event preparation:** Under the guidance of Mambele Khosa of CERI, Nicky has been learning to use Canva to create posters for Public Square events. We are distributing these posters to the Public Square consortium through MS Teams and Outlook and the lectures are being advertised more widely through LinkedIn and X.

**The Change requests:** We have had several meetings with Martin Abreu of the Strategic Fund in the past few months. We prepared three requests to accommodate the changes we needed to make to deliver on the project objectives within the reduced budgeted parameters. However, Martin suggested that we apply for a composite 'budget reshuffle' rather than several individual requests. He also advised that we may not spend funds originally allocated to HR costs for project operations expenditure. This has caused some complications because we had planned to use funds that were freed up from the removal of Astrid's salary to cover the costs of our events. This will result in the project being underspent in the personal category in 2024 (because the Project administrator was only appointed in August 2024 and these salary funds will remain unspent). Nonetheless, in terms of project operational costs, we have reviewed the budget and can see that it will still be possible to deliver on the objectives as planned.

# New developments

**Fundraising:** Since August, we have been shifting our focus towards grant identification and proposal development. This process commenced with a meeting between the Public Square team, Marlene Fouche, and representatives from the Division of Research Development's grant administration (23 August). We reached out to the Public Squares Consortium, inviting them to book a funding-focused brainstorming session. We have had some interest, and on 9 August we held the first of these sessions. It was attended by The Early Intervention and Child Mental Health team and they are now preparing a funding proposal to the NIHR, which is due in November. Two other groups have booked 'funding-focused' brainstorming sessions in October and another in Jan.

**Challenges and mitigation strategies:** Despite recent progress, low event attendance remains a concern, likely due to the busy academic calendar. To address this, we opened lectures to all Stellenbosch University staff, collaborators, and post-grad students and advertised them through social media and partner networks, resulting in increased attendance. However, workshops are open to Public Square members only.

**Achievements:** We are excited to report on the plans for the launch of the Centre for Information Integrity in Africa (CIIA). This new entity is linked to the Data and AI Ethics Public Square.

**Two recent publications:** We have two new publications to report on!

1. A Commentary on Infant Mental Health in The Lancet by members of the Early Intervention and Child Mental Health Public Square
2. Perspective Piece on transdisciplinary research in the South African Journal of Science by van Breda and Treffry-Goatley.





# Contact Us



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[Click here to go to the website \(in development\)](#)



*Fund Discussions at the mapping workshop on 23 July 2024*