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## Call for abstracts

# First Young Scholars Conference on Structural Change and Industrial Policy in Africa

organised by

University of Johannesburg, Young Scholars Initiative

Date: 20-21 July 2021

Virtual Conference

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### Background

Despite growth spurts covering over two decades across Africa, the economic structures of many African countries remain largely commodity based, without successful industrialisation. As a result, African countries continue to record significant balance of payment deficits as they import manufactured consumer and capital goods. The 2008 global financial crisis, and more recently the global economic downturn associated with COVID-19, revealed the consequences for these commodity dependent countries, not least the economic recessions experienced by Africa's largest economies. Rising unemployment, inequality and poverty have also highlighted the deficiencies of the economic structures of these countries, including their susceptibility to macroeconomic fluctuations from the global market. These factors have led to increased calls for structural transformation and a growing focus on industrial policy on the continent.

Moreover, the recent aspiration towards greater regional integration through the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AcFTA) has brought to the fore conversations around the need to expand the productive capabilities amongst African countries to maximise the benefits of trade. Aspiration towards regional integration also opens up conversation around the potential for regional value chains, which further suggest some level of protection for firms on the continent.

However, the resurgence of industrial policy in many African countries has been challenged by the decline in manufacturing share of employment in value added and increase in share of services in total output. What is more, questions remain around Africa's ability to develop its manufacturing base in light of more recent emergence of global production networks and Global Value Chains. Structural fragility often results in balance of payment deficits in most African countries. These developments make it necessary for more scholarship on the strategic role of industrial policy in altering the sectoral allocation of production for the continent, including how such policies may evolve following the pandemic.

### About the conference

The *First Young Scholars Conference on Structural Change and Industrial Policy in Africa* invites papers from young scholars whose work engages with these themes, challenges existing paradigms on structural transformation in Africa and seeks innovative ways for advancing our understanding of

functional industrial policy across the continent. We especially encourage research that takes a pluralist perspective. The purpose of this conference is contribute to scholarship on structural change and industrial development and policy in Africa, specifically among young scholars.

A scientific committee will review the submissions and select those to be presented at the conference. This committee will be led by Prof Fiona Tregenna and Dr Richard Itaman.

Senior international scholars will act as discussants on the papers to provide feedback on presented papers. The conference will be held virtually. Attendance without presentation of papers is welcome. Certificates of attendance/presentation will be provided on request.

### **Submission requirements**

Presentation at the conference is open to current students, postdocs and early career researchers.

Submissions are invited around the broad themes of *structural change, industrial development and industrial policy in Africa*. This could include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Industrialisation and deindustrialisation in Africa
- The political economy of industrial policy in Africa
- Diversification, economic complexity and industrial development in Africa
- The financing of industrialisation in Africa
- Macroeconomics of structural change in Africa
- Gendered aspects of industrial development and policy in Africa
- Innovation and technological upgrading in Africa
- The 4IR and industrialisation in Africa
- Green industrialisation and green industrial policy in Africa
- Learning and capabilities in industrial development in Africa
- Distributional and labour market aspects of industrial development in Africa
- Industrial hubs (parks, zones, districts etc.) in Africa
- Trade and industrial development in Africa
- Regional and global value chains in Africa
- Regional integration in Africa
- Industrial policy post-COVID
- Industrial sector studies in Africa
- Comparative studies of industrial development between Africa and other regions.

Studies with a sub-national, national or supra-national focus are all welcome.

As part of the submission, extended abstracts of 600-800 words are required.

The deadline for submissions is 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021. Submissions can be uploaded at:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1TUNc\\_-zNoCB3rB1SAu0y-3hjUbgQmCBA\\_Qs531iDP2U/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1TUNc_-zNoCB3rB1SAu0y-3hjUbgQmCBA_Qs531iDP2U/edit)

For queries or technical assistance, please contact Mrs. Koketso Manyane-Dlangamandla, email:

[koketsom@uj.ac.za](mailto:koketsom@uj.ac.za)

### **About the organising institutions**

The DST/NRF South African Research Chair in Industrial Development (SARChI-ID) is based at the University of Johannesburg, and undertakes research, capacity building and public and policy engagement focused on industrial development. The Young Scholars Initiative (YSI) supports and inspires the next generation of new economic thinkers and aims to transform the discourse in economics by establishing an open space for economic thought and inquiry. These institutions have collaborated in this joint conference in recognition of the need to strengthen research on structural change and industrial development and policy amongst young scholars in Africa.