

## Invitation to the special plenary discussion

# "Science and Society in South Africa"

Wednesday, 26. June 2024, 14:00 - 16:00

**in presence:** Chair of Economic Policy, KIT, Campus South, Geb. 01.87, 5 OG, Room B 5.25,  
Rüppurrer Str. 1a, Haus B 76137 Karlsruhe

**and online:** [zoom-link](#)

South Africa is more economically advanced and politically stable than most African countries. Compared to other OECD countries, as well as to its own aspirations, South Africa's development is disappointing however. After a decade of diminished economic growth, it has now the highest GINI index in income inequality worldwide, an unemployment rate of over 30 percent, and a life expectancy at birth as little as 60 years. Both unemployment and corruption were hotly debated in the recent national elections in which the ANC lost its majority for the first time since the end of apartheid, and now struggles to form a government in a politically divided country.

None of these issues is simple to address, but education plays a role in all of them. Higher education in particular still shows vestiges of apartheid, though stratification of education along racial or ethnic lines is slowly diminishing. Nonetheless, education provides the human capital on which activity in other sectors, whether industrial, service, or government, is based. Levels of education and disciplines studied affect the nature of graduates who enter industry or government. A question to ask in this context is how the higher education sector serves the broader society, and whether its orientation matches demands for socio-economic development. Disciplinary links between university and industry are the most salient in the literature, and often in policy discussions. Yet, in a country struggling with both government corruption and failures of service delivery, matching academia with the industrial structure of the country is not enough. A successful society, and polity, also calls for active citizens with social and organisational skills.

This small workshop will discuss issues surrounding academia-society connections in the South African context. The aim is to shed light on how this interaction works in South Africa; whether ongoing (racial) transformation is likely to have any impact on that interaction; how various science governance instruments play into that relationship, and whether they have been or can be used to shape it in any way. The event is jointly organized by Fraunhofer ISI, University of Cape Town, University of Strasbourg, and KIT, and received funding from ANR-18-CE41-0011 STIS.

### Discussants:

- Prof. Robin Cowan, UNU-MERIT, Maastricht Univ., Netherlands, and, Univ. Strasbourg, France
- Prof. Michael Kahn, CREST, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
- Assist. Prof. Moritz Müller, BETA, University of Strasbourg, France

### Moderators:

- Prof. Dr. Ingrid Ott, Econ, KIT, Germany
- Prof. Dr. phil. Ulrich Schmoch, Fraunhofer ISI, Germany

**For more information, please contact Ramona Bodemer: [ramona.bodemer@kit.edu](mailto:ramona.bodemer@kit.edu)**

**Please register at the following website: [https://wipo.econ.kit.edu/1024\\_2652.php](https://wipo.econ.kit.edu/1024_2652.php)**

## Short biographies:

**Robin Cowan** is Professor of the Economics of Technical Change at the University of Maastricht, and Professor of Management at the Faculty of Economics and Management at the University of Strasbourg. He studied at Queen's University in Canada and at Stanford University where he received a PhD in economics and an MA in philosophy. His current research includes several topics: the changing economics of knowledge; social networks and innovation; network structure and network performance; universities and science in emerging economies; interacting agents models. In the past he has done consulting research for the OECD on the economics of standards, the European Commission on innovation policy, and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory on technological lock-in and renewable energy technologies. In 2004 he won one of 15 prestigious Chaires d'Excellence of the Ministry of research and Education in France, and in 2013 was made a Senior Member of the Institut Universitaire de France. [Robin Cowan's webpage.](#)

**Michael Kahn** is an independent adviser and evaluator of research and innovation with a lifelong commitment to development. His extensive career includes roles as Ministerial Advisor, government official, NGO director, academic, researcher, and international consultant. He is a Research Fellow at the National Advisory Council on Innovation, an Honorary Research Fellow at Stellenbosch University, and an Extraordinary Professor at the University of the Western Cape, and an elected member of the Academy of Science of South Africa, was Vice Chairperson of the Board of the Agriculture Research Council, serves on the advisory board of the journal Research Policy, and was a trustee of the D G Murray Trust. Kahn has published 73 peer-reviewed research articles, and 40 book chapters or books. Moreover, he has significantly contributed to educational initiatives in Botswana and South Africa. His other activities as social entrepreneur includes creating Spider's Place with the Handspring Puppet Company and conceptualizing the book 'In the Footsteps of Mandela'.. [Michael Kahn's webpage.](#)

**Moritz Müller** is Assistant Professor of management at the University of Strasbourg since 2012, where he coordinated several years the French-German master for management of international innovation. After obtaining his PhD in economics at the University of Strasbourg in 2010, he did a two-year postdoc at the Chair of Systems Design, D-MTEC, ETH Zurich. In 2012, he has been Senior Research Fellow at the Chair in Economic Policy, Institute of Economics (ECON), Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Germany as well as Visiting Scholar at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), University of Pretoria, South Africa. Current research of Moritz Müller centers on the implication of interaction in industrial as well as science systems. Since some years now, he studies the South African science system. [Moritz Müller's webpage.](#)

**Ingrid Ott** is Professor of Economic Policy at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology and research fellow at the Kiel Institute for the World Economy and the CESifo. In her research, she pursues the goal of deriving economic policy recommendations based on formal theoretical models and stylized facts. Her fields of research include dynamic macroeconomics, innovation and growth theory, regional development, political economy and methods of quantitative policy evaluation. She has extensive experience in scientific policy advice. [Ingrid Ott's webpage](#)

**Ulrich Schmoch** obtained his diploma in mechanical engineering at the University of Hannover, 1977. PhD in political sciences at the University of Hannover, 1983. PhD thesis on the economic situation of handicrafts in West Africa. Since 1986, scientist at the Fraunhofer Institute of Systems and Innovation Research, Karlsruhe. Deputy head of department "Technology assessment and innovation strategies", 1991-2003. Head of department "Innovation systems and politics"2004-2006. State doctorate in sociology of sciences and technology at the University of Karlsruhe, habilitation thesis on cooperation of universities and enterprises. Member of the study group on the German Innovation System on behalf of the <German government, 1995-2007. Scientific director of the office of the Commission of Experts for Research and Innovation (EFI), 2008-2010. Member of the South African National Advisory Council on Innovation, 2008-2009. Visiting professor at the University Stellenbosch, 2011. Stand-in professor for science management at the University of Speyer, 2012-2014. At present, large study on knowledge transfer at universities beyond technology. [Ulrich Schmoch's webpage](#)