

The Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA), which was publicly launched as a think tank in March 2011, was founded by a group of South Africans with experience in research, academia, policymaking and governance who saw the need to create a platform for engagement around strategic issues facing South Africa. MISTRA combines research and academic development, strategic reflections and intellectual discourse, and applies itself to issues such as economics, sociology, governance, history, arts and culture, and the logics of natural sciences.

A MISTRA publication



This collection of essays on the South African National System of Innovation by African scholars represents an important theoretical and analytical contribution to the understanding of the complex interactions between innovation and development and how developing countries are being inserted into the presented financial-dominated globalisation process. — José E Cassiolato, Professor of Economics and Coordinator of the Research Network on Local Production and Innovation Systems, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The book gives observers a good understanding of why the current South African innovation system looks as it does and of the main challenges ahead. — Emeritus Professor Bengt-Åke Lundvall, Department of Business Studies at Aalborg University, Denmark and Professor at Sciences-Po, Paris, France

This year marks two decades since the concept of a National System of Innovation (NSI) was formally introduced into the South African public policy discourse through the *White Paper on Science and Technology* (1996). The vision articulated in that document is that knowledge and the process of its generation could be optimally leveraged to meet the country's developmental goals.

This book traces the history of innovations from precolonial times and examines precolonial settlements in southern Africa such as Mapungubwe (Limpopo), Bukoni (Mpumalanga), and Msuluzi (KwaZulu-Natal) from the perspective of their ingenious technological efforts to harness nature for communal benefit.

The research project was undertaken to identify progress in the past two decades, bring NSI blockages and weaknesses to the surface, and to provide policy recommendations aimed at addressing generic issues and enriching strategies for science, technology and innovation: an element of which is the assessment of innovation in relation to the informal economy.

This book is informed by the understanding that national systems of innovation evolve and take shape against the backdrop of regional, continental and global macrosocial dynamics, including corresponding systems of innovation. South Africa has been one of the champions of the formalisation of systems of innovation across the continent; and within southern Africa, the country's dominant position can play both a facilitative and inhibitive role. Furthermore, the country has developed dynamic relations with peers across the globe, and it fully appreciates the multidirectional spillover impact of humanity's innovative activities. Whether global approaches in assessing NSI systems have been appropriately adapted to domestic and regional conditions is a matter that is critically evaluated.



The Emergence of Systems of Innovation in South(ern) Africa
Long Histories and Contemporary Debates

Ed.: Mario Scerri



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This collection of essays on the South African National System of Innovation by African scholars represents an important theoretical and analytical contribution to the understanding of the complex interactions between innovation and development and how developing countries are being inserted into the presented financial-dominated globalisation process. This is achieved by combining political economy and a broad notion of systems of innovation with a world-systems analysis that rejects the flawed separation of modern disciplines of social sciences.

The book is comprised of a historical section that examines continuities and ruptures of South Africa's systems of innovation from the precolonial period to the post-apartheid era and a thematic section where different aspects of the current state of the South African national system of innovation are analysed with rigour.

The diverse perspectives on how local processes of innovation and social change are connected to the world system, both through collaboration and subordination, will be of immense value to scholars and students interested in innovation and development as well as policymakers in governmental and private bodies.

— José E. Cassiolato, Professor of Economics and Coordinator of the Research Network on Local Production and Innovation Systems, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The authors use a broad definition of the national system of innovation as the framework for a series of studies in the historical emergence of the South African economy and society. The book is highly original in taking a long historical perspective starting with the Stone Age and ending with current challenges from a globalizing economy. This approach gives a good understanding of how the national dimension of innovation systems is first shaped and later on challenged. The integration of the innovation system concept in a specific political economy discourse is original and offers interesting insights. The book gives observers a good understanding of why the current South African innovation system looks as it does and of the main challenges ahead.

— Emeritus Professor Bengt-Åke Lundvall, Department of Business Studies at Aalborg University, Denmark and Professor at Sciences-Po, Paris, France