



The Age of **Digit**ality and the **Future** of Society

Rethinking Knowledge, Ethics, and the Role
of the Humanities and Social Sciences

PROGRAMME

HSRC ANNUAL CONFERENCE: 15 – 16 SEPTEMBER 2026



science, technology
& innovation

Department:
Science, Technology and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



HSRC
Human Sciences
Research Council

Dates: Tuesday, 15 September - Wednesday, 16 September 2026
Venue: Radisson (Destiny) Conference Centre, Ekurhuleni, Gauteng

DAY 1: 15 SEPTEMBER 2026

08:00 – 09:00 Arrival and Registration

Opening Session: Programme Director: Professor Charles Hongoro

Time		
09:30–09:45	About the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)	
09:45–10:00	Opening Remarks	Prof. Xoliswa Mtose: HSRC Board Chairperson, Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)
10:00–10:30	Objectives and Reflections on the conference	Prof. Sarah Mosoetsa, CEO (HSRC)
10:45- 11:00	TEA BREAK	

Plenary Session 1 Chair: Dr Mzi Nduna

Time		
11:00–12:00	Keynote Address	Prof. Ayobami Ojebode, Director & Principal Consultant, TRAC Africa – Thousand Hills Research and Action Collective, Rwanda Professor of Applied Communication at the University of Ibadan. Digital Humanities and Artificial Intelligence in Africa: Opportunities, Tensions, and the Imperative for Indigenous Knowledge Governance
12:00–13:15	Parallel Sessions	1: Rethinking Knowledge Production in the Age of AI
		2: Digital Humanities and African Knowledge Systems
		3: The Future of Work, Education, and Scholarship
	Round table	4: Digital Publics and Participatory Governance in South Africa

13:15 - 14h00 LUNCH BREAK

Plenary Session 2 Chair: Prof. Khangelani Zuma

Time	Session Title	Presenter(s)
14:00–15:00	Keynote Address	Dr Mamello Thinyane Adelaide University, School of Computer Science and Information Technology College of Engineering and Information Technology, Australia The system is not broken; it was built this way. How then shall we build better?
15:00–16:15	Parallel Sessions	5: Digital Humanities and African Knowledge Systems
		6: Ethics, Power, and Accountability in AI
		7: Data, Infrastructure, and Sovereignty
	Round table	8: Charting the Future of South African Elections: Findings from the IEC Electronic Voting Policy Process
16:15–17:30	Parallel Sessions	9: The Future of Work, Education, and Scholarship
		10: Digital Inequality and Social Justice
		11: Digitalisation and African Youth Futures: Life beyond the tech sphere

18:30 –20:00 CONFERENCE NETWORKING DINNER



DAY 2: 16 SEPTEMBER 2026

Plenary Session 3 Chair: Dr Lucky Ditaunyane

Time		
09:00–10:00	Keynote Session	Dr Tsosheletso Chidi Lecturer: Department of African Languages, University of Pretoria Research Fellow: Department of Computer Science Digital Inequality and Social Justice
10:30–11:45	Plenary	12: BRICS Expert Panel: Digital Futures, Global South Pathways
11:45–13:00	Parallel Sessions	13: Digital Inequality and Social Justice
		14: Communication, Digital Publics, and Society
		15: Global South Pathways and Alternative Digital Futures
13:00–13:30	LUNCH BREAK	
Plenary Session 4 Chair: Prof Sharlene Swartz		
13:30–14:00	Keynote Address	Honourable Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Professor Blade Nzimande Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, Republic of South Africa
Closing Session: Prof Charles Hongoro		
14:00–15:00	CONFERENCE AWARDS	
	CLOSING REMARKS	



Parallel Session Information:

15 September 2026

1: Parallel Session: Ekurhuleni 5	
Time: 12:00–13:15	Chair: Sizulu Moyo
Presenter	Title: Rethinking Knowledge Production in the Age of AI
Yoliswa Ntsepe, HSRC	Artificial Intelligence through a Relational Wellbeing lens: Rethinking research in the Global South
Sibulele Mabe, University of the Western Cape	Classification and Interoperability in South African Digital Infrastructures: Toward Context-Responsive Data Governance
Anelisa Pezisa, Nelson Mandela University	Online Work-Integrated Learning in Social Work Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for Professional Competency Development
Tebogo Gumede, HSRC	Digital Humanities and African Knowledge Systems

2: Parallel Session: Duduza	
Time: 12:00–13:15	Chair: Saahier Parker
Presenter	Title: Digital Humanities and African Knowledge Systems (1)
Kegomoditswe Mamabolo et al, HSRC	Scrolling Through Heritage: Youth, TikTok and the Digital Transformation of South Africa's Living Heritage
Ndifelani Precious Tshiwalule, HSRC	Digital Humanities and African Knowledge Systems: Preserving Indigenous Knowledge for Sustainable Development in South Africa
Tsakane Matsilele, University of Cape Town	The Paradox of Participation: Preserving Indigenous Languages When Indigeneity Is Contested

3: Parallel Session: Kwa-Thema	
Time: 12:00–13:15	Chair: Bongzi Mncwango
Presenter	Title: The Future of Work, Education, and Scholarship
Swazi Hlatshwayo et al, HSRC	Strengthening Local Democracy through Context-Sensitive Digital Participation: Evidence from South African Municipalities
Nondumiso Masuku, HSRC	Can Internships Help Bridge Digital Skills Divides?: Tracking Changes in Self-Perceptions of Digital Skills Across a Three-Wave Panel of South African Graduate Interns
Yoliswa Sikhosana et al, HSRC	Co-producing an evidence map of engaged research: digital knowledge infrastructure for collaborative evidence synthesis
Angelique Wildschut, HSRC	Reimagining Digital Futures: African Youth, Work and Structural Transformation
Inbarani Naidoo et al, HSRC	Cyberbullying among learners: who are the accountability partners?

4: Round Table : Ekurhuleni 4	
Time: 12:00–13:15	Chair: Odilile Ayodele, Co-Chair: Paul Plantinga
Presenter	Title: Digital Publics and Participatory Governance in South Africa
Panellists	Tshepang Mosiea, Chief Director: Innovation for Inclusive Development, Department of Science, Innovation and Technology
	Khululekani Ntakana Senior Lecturer of Sustainable Property Development and Digitisation, University of Johannesburg
	Michael Chauke Specialist: Inclusive Governance and Councillor Welfare, SALGA
	Kureish Isaacs Director: Ward Governance and Community Participation, City of Johannesburg
	Tshepo Legodi Manager: Integrated Development Planning, Mogale City Local Municipality
	Sanah Madikwe IDP Officer: Mogale City Local Municipality
	Theo Nkosi Researcher, Public Affairs Research Institute



5: Parallel Session: Ekurhuleni 5	
Time: 15:00–16:15	Chair: Sizulu Moyo
Presenter	Title: Digital Humanities and African Knowledge Systems (2)
Phindile Tabata, University of the Witwatersrand	The technologizing of the word: Self-publishing as a modern reimagining of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems
Buyisile Chibi, HSRC	Digital Innovation for Public-Private Tuberculosis Care Integration in South Africa: Lessons from the Connect TB Study
Mavimbela Awam, University of Mpumalanga	Digitalising Indigenous Health Knowledge Systems: Inclusion of Izangoma in South African Chronic Healthcare
Glen Maimela, University of the Free State	Sustainable Pathways for Digitally Managing, Accessing, and Promoting Indigenous Knowledge Systems in South African Mainstream Education

6: Parallel Session: Duduza	
Time: 15:00–16:15	Chair: Tholang Mokhele
Presenter	Title: Ethics, Power, and Accountability in AI
Ali Ridha Khan, Independent Writer	Stupidity as Infrastructure: Platform Capitalism, Pseudo-Fascism, and the Political Economy of Digital Non-Thinking
Thomas Molala, University of Johannesburg	Artificial Intelligence Ethical Paradoxes: Should We Trust Human or Machine-Inspired Decisions?
Shingirirai Muzondo, HSRC	Beyond detection: practical insights into plagiarism and AI detection software in an information and knowledge management environment
Nonzwakazi Natasha Gcelu, HSRC	Making AI Mental Health Support Work for Key Populations in South Africa
Lindani Msimango, HSRC	More Than a Chatbot: Trust, Support and Digital Access in Users' Experiences of Coach Mpilo

7: Parallel Session: Kwa-Thema	
Time: 15:00–16:15	Chair: Nomcebo Ubisi
Presenter	Title: Data, Infrastructure, and Sovereignty
Mbali Bongoza et al, HSRC	Beyond the digital divide: How does digital inequality shape economic participation in South Africa?
Nosibusiso Nomchutsha, HSRC	GeoAI Early Warning System for Flood-Prone Informal Settlements in South Africa
Vuyo Mjimba HSRC	Developmental Data Sovereignty: Establishing Data Governance as a Key Pillar of Africa's Digital Transformation
Xaba LS, University of Johannesburg	Demographic and Behavioural Patterns of Dating App Use among Gay, Bisexual, and Other Men Who Have Sex with Men in South Africa

8: Round table: Ekurhuleni 4	
Time: 15:00–16:15	Chair: Odile Ayodele
Presenter	Title: Charting the Future of South African Elections: Findings from the IEC Electronic Voting Policy Process
Yul Derek Davids, et al., HSRC	Findings from the IEC Electronic Voting Policy Discussion Document
Benjamin Roberts, HSRC	Voting behaviour and electoral trust: evidence from the 2024 elections and the road to 2026
Simangele Dlamini et al., HSRC	Identity Politics, Democratic Trust and Electoral Realignment: Lessons from South Africa's 2024 Elections



9: Parallel Session: Ekurhuleni 4	
Time: 16:15–17:30	Chair: Bongiwe Mncwango
Presenter	Title: The Future of Work, Education, and Scholarship (1)
Siphesihle Maseko, University of South Africa	The AI Mirror: What Generative AI Reveals about Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Vusi Maseko, Department of Higher Education and Training	Beyond Detection: Structural Assessment Redesign for the Generative AI Era in South African TVET and University Education
Mphumzi Makaleni, Nelson Mandela University	The AI Divide Before Adoption: Occupational Exposure, Digital Access, and Labour-Market Inequality in South Africa
Dean Mazhawidza, University of Stellenbosch, Rubina Setlhare, University of the Western Cape	From Career Information Systems to Career Imagination: An AI-Assisted Storytelling Framework for Career Identity Development in Low-and Middle-Income Country Contexts
Amukelani Idah Ngobeni, University of Mpumalanga	Building Inclusive Digital Futures: The Role of the Gauteng e-Government ICT Skills Development Programme in Enhancing Youth Digital Skills

10: Parallel Session: Duduza	
Time: 16:15–17:30	Chair: Vuyo Mjimba
Presenter	Title: Digital Inequality and Social Justice
Mampete Jemina Mookeng et al., Emeris	Access to digital healthcare in unequal societies: Reflections from Black men's health-seeking experiences in South Africa
Sibahle Ndlela et al, HSRC	A rapid review of facilitation models for digitally mediated community-based planning in South African municipalities
Thamie Ndlovu et al, North West University	Reconceptualising Learning Experience Design Through Ubuntu: Towards Relational and Epistemically Just AI-Mediated Learning
Mokgadi Mamaleka, HSRC	Challenges in Safeguarding Originality and Academic Authenticity in AI-Generated Content in Higher Education: Policy Implications for South Africa

11: Parallel Session: Kwa-Thema	
Time: 16:15-17:30	Chair: Angelique Wildschut
Presenter	Title: Digitalisation and African Youth Futures: Life beyond the tech sphere
Panelists	Sharlene Swartz, Divisional Executive, HSRC
	Krish Chetty, Head of Research, Allan and Gill Gray Philanthropies
	Sokhna Roslie Ndiaye, Policy scientist, Université Rose Dieng France-Sénégal, Senegal
	Tyebakazi Madiba, Emerging Researcher, HSRC
	Adam Cooper, Chief Research Specialist, HSRC



Parallel Session Information:

16 September 2026

12: Plenary Session : Ekurhuleni 1/2/3	
Time: 10:30–11:45	Chair: Auriel Niemack
Presenter	Title: BRICS Expert Panel: Digital Futures, Global South Pathways
Mohamed Aziz, Fayoum University, Egypt	Global South Pathways and Alternative Digital Futures: Egypt and BRICS Perspectives
Ekaterina Vorontsova, Nauka Publishers (Russian Academy of Sciences), Russia	Academic journals as instruments of science diplomacy and “soft power”: the case of Nauka Publishers’ digital transformation and global outreach
Carla Osthoff, National Laboratory of Scientific Computing, Brazil	Brazil’s Scientific Computing Sector Between Sovereignty and Dependency: Infrastructure, Brain Drain, and the AI Plan (PBIA)
Petrus Letaba, University of Pretoria	The Future Scenarios of Writing

13: Panel Session: Ekurhuleni 1/2	
Time: 11:45–13:00	Chair: Tholang Mokhele
Presenter	Title: Digital Inequality and Social Justice (2)
Ikekhwa Albert Ikhile, University of South Africa	Digital Health Justice in the Age of AI: A Systematic Scoping Review of Algorithmic Exclusion and Healthcare Access among Structurally Marginalised Populations in South Africa and Comparable Global South Contexts
Vandudzai Mbanda, HSRC	Left Off the Platform? Digital Exclusion, Informal Food Traders and Social Justice in South Africa’s Food Value Chains
Shirin Motala et al, HSRC	Beyond Access: Theorising Digital Exclusion and State Illegibility among Women Informal Workers in South Africa

14: Parallel Session: Kwa-Thema	
Time: 11:45–13:00	Chair: Paul Plantinga
Presenter	Title: Communication, Digital Publics, and Society
Zimasa Gavu-Tshawe, HSRC	Exploring the Use of Smart Cell Phones as an Effective Small Business Tool: A Qualitative Case Study of Salons in Durban, South Africa
Mabontle Mzolo, HSRC	From Hashtags to Voting Appeals: A Cross-Platform Analysis of Political Discourse in South Africa’s 2024 National Elections
Ntombizodumo Mkwana, HSRC	Multivocal, Converged Media for Disaster Risk Communication: Lessons from COVID-19 in Four African States
Xolani Ntinga, HSRC	Designing Through Disagreement: First-Time Parents’ Competing Priorities for Digital Parenting Support in KwaZulu-Natal
Lesiba Molopa, HSRC	Digital Access Inequalities in South Africa: Sociodemographic and HIV-Related Factors of Digital Platform Use: Findings from the 2022 national population-based household survey

15: Parallel Session: Ekurhuleni 4	
Time: 11:45–13:00	Chair: Auriel Niemack
Presenter	Title: Global South Pathways and Alternative Digital Futures (2)
Bongumusa Walter Ngema, Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Causal Recipes for Success: Configurational Pathways of Green Innovation and Youth Entrepreneurship in South Africa’s Just Energy Transition
Kgabo H. Ramoroka, Peter T. Jacobs, HSRC	Innovative Learning through Actor Networks: Insights from South Africa’s Citrus Value Chain
Nozipho Ziqubu, Independent Researcher	Structural Transformation in the Age of Digitality: Rethinking Industrial Policy for Inclusive Development in South Africa

16/17 SEPTEMBER 10:00	FINAL DEPARTURES
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Keynote address



Dr Bonginkosi Emmanuel "Blade" Nzimande was appointed as Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation from 3 July 2024. He was previously Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology from 30 May 2019 to 19 June 2024. He was also Minister of Transport from 27 February 2018 to 25 May 2019. From 26 May 2014 until 17 October 2017 he was the Minister of Higher Education and Training in the Republic of South Africa. He is a general secretary of the South African Communist Party; chairperson of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education; deputy chair of the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party; and chairperson of the Financial Sector Campaign Coalition. Dr Nzimande holds a Doctorate in Philosophy specialising in Sociology from the University of Natal. Dr Nzimande has lectured at the University of Zululand in 1985, and was a lecturer in Industrial Psychology at the University of Natal in 1987. He was a Council member at the University of South Africa; a member of the National Deployment Committee of the ANC; chairperson of the board of trustees at the Centre for Educational Policy Development; a council member at the University of Transkei; a council member at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and chairperson of the African National Congress Parliamentary Study Group on Education. Dr Nzimande has published: *Unsocial Science Indicator SA Vol. 11, No. 2*; *Schooling in the context of violence in SA: the challenges of change*, edited by V Maphai, published by Harare SAPES Books; *Schooling in the context of violence*, Durban: Education Policy Unit; *Civil Society and the role of the National Education Coordination Committee (NECC)*, Durban: Education Policy Unit; *Civics are the National Democratic Revolution*, Mayibuye No. 5; *Political violence and the struggle for control in Pietermaritzburg*, *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 15. No. 3; and *Civics and Civil Society: a reply to M Mayekiso*, work in progress co-author with M. Sikhosana. Dr Nzimande has also written a book titled *Children of wars: the impact of violence on schooling in Natal* Durban: Education Policy Unit.

Opening session



Prof. Xoliswa Mtose is a well-known international scholar who is a trained educator, higher education specialist, as well as a psychologist. She is the former Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Zululand. Her academic career began at Rhodes University as a lecturer and Coordinator of Distance and Continuing Education. She then served at the University of Fort Hare as senior lecturer, Deputy Director and Director of a School of Postgraduate Studies, School of Initial Teacher Education and Dean of the Faculty of Education. She was previously the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning at the University of Zululand. As Vice-Chancellor she has taken gargantuan strides in advancing teaching and learning, research and innovation, African scholarship, community engagement and the entire fabric of the university towards academic distinction. Mtose's influence has been far reaching, from local impact to having an effect on the national as well as on the international stage. Her research interest is on race, everyday racism in contemporary South Africa as well as construction of black identities in post-apartheid South Africa.

Mtose is a full professor in Psychology. She also holds a PhD in Psychology from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Master of Philosophy in Higher Education from the University of Stellenbosch, a Bachelor of Arts Honours (African Languages) from Rhodes University, a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Fort Hare, and a Higher Diploma in Education (Postgraduate) Primary from the University of Cape Town. She was honoured to be endowed with a Harvard/South African Scholarship that enabled her to study at Harvard on further studies as part of her doctoral degree work.



Prof. Sarah Mosoetsa is the Chief Executive Officer of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), South Africa's statutory research agency dedicated to the social sciences and humanities. She assumed the position in February 2023, following almost a decade as Chief Executive Officer of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS). She was instrumental in establishing the NIHSS in 2013 and subsequently led the Institute from its inception, shaping its institutional development and contribution to the humanities and social sciences in South Africa.

Prof. Mosoetsa holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of the Witwatersrand (2005). Her scholarship focuses on labour, livelihoods, inequality and social policy, with a particular interest in the changing nature of work and its implications for households and communities. Her publications include *Eating from One Pot: The Dynamics of Survival in Poor South African Households*, as well as co-edited volumes and journal collections on labour, precarious work, poverty and inequality.

Prof. Mosoetsa has extensive experience in research leadership, higher education, public policy and institutional governance. She has served on numerous national boards, councils and advisory structures, including university councils and bodies concerned with human resource development, research, innovation and social and economic development.

Keynote Speakers



Prof. Ayobami Ojebode, retired Professor of Applied Communication at the University of Ibadan, is a research, training, and evaluation expert. With 26 years' experience, he supervised 12 doctoral researchers and trained over 550 scholars in multimethod, policy-engaged research. As Mastercard Foundation's Director of Knowledge Systems, he initiated and managed large investments strengthening Africa's knowledge ecosystem, and led learning strategies, including the seven-country African Youth Aspiration study. His work emphasizes evidence-to-policy translation and digital innovation for sustainable development, empowering African researchers and institutions to shape globally relevant, locally grounded solutions. He now heads TRAC Africa, advancing evidence and capacity-building for organisations tackling Africa's pressing development challenges. He can be reached at: aojebode@tracafrika.com, ayo.ojebode@gmail.com.



Mamello Thinyane is an Associate Professor in the School of Computer Science and Information Technology at Adelaide University (Tirkangkaku). An accomplished computer science academic, interdisciplinary researcher, and information technology professional, Mamello's research interests span human-centric cybersecurity, societal cyber resilience, critical data studies, digital technologies for sustainable development, and collective intelligence. For more than two decades, he has collaborated with inter-governmental organizations, governments, industry leaders, universities, and civil society organizations across Africa, Asia, and Australia to drive sustainable, impactful, and responsible digital transformation initiatives. He previously served as the Senior Research Advisor and Principal Research Fellow within the United Nations and as an Associate Professor and the Director of the Telkom Centre of Excellence in ICT and Development at the University of Fort Hare. Mamello is passionate about the role of scientific research and technology innovation to advance sustainable good life for all.



Dr Tsosheletso Chidi is a researcher, multilingual writer, and poet whose work explores the intersection of African languages, artificial intelligence, and digital technologies, with a focus on linguistic inclusion and digital innovation. She holds a PhD in African Languages from the University of Pretoria and a Master of Arts in Creative Writing from Rhodes University. She is an Andrew Mellon Scholar (2019–2024), an Elinor Ostrom Fellow (2023–2024), and a Chevening Clore Cultural Leadership alumna (2024–2026). In 2024, she curated the Time of the Writer Festival at the Centre for Creative Arts, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Plenary Panellists

Digital Publics and Participatory Governance in South Africa



Dr. Khululekani Ntakana is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Johannesburg, specialising in inclusive and sustainable built environments, human settlements, property development and construction economics. His research explores equitable urban development and digital innovations, including BIM, digital twins and three-dimensional concrete printing, to enhance project delivery and productivity. He holds a PhD in Construction Management and an MSc in Property Economics and Valuation, complemented by professional experience as a Quantity Surveyor. Through UJ's SMaCT Research Centre, his interdisciplinary work advances sustainability, technological innovation and digitally enabled human settlements, aligned particularly with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 11.



Kureish Isaacs is Director: Public Participation and Outreach at the City of Johannesburg, where he oversees councillor support, civic education, community-based planning and public engagement within the City's Integrated Development Planning (IDP) processes. Working at the intersection of public participation, digital innovation and artificial intelligence (AI), he has spent the past six years driving the digitisation of community engagement through online platforms that broaden participation and improve the use of citizen input. More recently, he has pioneered the application of AI to analyse public submissions, support councillors and strengthen municipal decision-making. His work combines technology, education and community development to advance citizen-centred local governance.



Mr Theo Nkosi holds a BA in Public Management and Governance, awarded with distinction by the University of Johannesburg, and a Bachelor of Administration Honours in Public Administration from the University of Pretoria. His experience includes community-based work promoting digital internet access and contributions to the Digital Market Access Programme in partnership with 22 on Sloane, the UK-South Africa Tech Hub and the Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct. He is currently a Future Leaders Fellow at the Auwal Socio-Economic Research Institute (ASRI) and a researcher in the Academic Engagement Unit at the Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI). His research interests include data-driven decision-making, public service delivery and public policy.



Mr Michael Chauke is a governance specialist at SALGA, leading initiatives in democratic accountability, ethical leadership, anti-corruption, collaborative governance and councillor capacity-building. Drawing on extensive experience in public administration and development policy, he supports municipalities across South Africa to strengthen governance systems and improve service delivery. He holds master's degrees from the Universities of Pretoria and Cape Town and is pursuing doctoral research on financial governance, misconduct and consequence management in local government, alongside postgraduate studies in public law. His career spans senior roles in Ekurhuleni, SALGA and Gauteng CoGTA, with a consistent focus on professionalised, ethical, inclusive and participatory governance practices.



Mr Tshepo Legodi, MSc (Urban & Regional Planning), is the Manager: Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and Performance Management at Mogale City Local Municipality. With over 15 years of experience in local government, he has extensive expertise in integrated development planning, performance management, public participation, and sustainable local governance. Mr Legodi has been actively involved in advancing innovative citizen engagement approaches, including e-participation initiatives that strengthen inclusive and responsive governance. He is also a member of the SALGA Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Local Government Programme, contributing to the localisation of global development priorities within South African municipalities.



Ms Sanah Madikwe-Twala is an Integrated Development Planning Officer at Mogale City Local Municipality and an e-participation champion committed to connecting community voices with digital opportunity. With more than 17 years of municipal experience, she has worked across integrated development planning, monitoring and evaluation, performance management, and stakeholder engagement. She holds a Diploma in Public Administration and Management from UNISA and is pursuing studies in Community Development and Leadership at the University of Johannesburg. Using Asset-Based Community Development approaches, she champions inclusive, community-centred participation and co-creates digital futures in which every voice can be heard and no community is left offline.

Plenary Panellists

BRICS Expert Panel: Digital Futures, Global South Pathways



Prof. Dr. Mohamed Aziz is a Full Professor of Geo-Informatics (GIS) & GeoAI at Fayoum University, Egypt. He also served as the former Dean of the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at Galala University, Egypt. Prof. Aziz earned his Ph.D. in Cartography from Vienna University, Austria, in 1987. With more than four decades of academic experience across Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Austria, Prof. Aziz has held Visiting Professor positions at nine universities in the UK, USA, Canada, and Germany. He has been instrumental in establishing pioneering GIS programs and numerous GIS laboratories, and he has worked as a GIS consultant for governments and UN agencies. Prof. Aziz has received multiple awards for research excellence and holds an Egyptian patent for a smart census solution. He is the author of over 60 scientific papers and 23 books, including recent publications in GeoAI, remote sensing, and geomatics. He is fluent in Arabic, German, and English, and he contributes his expertise to several scientific promotion committees and journal peer-review panels. His research interests include urban and environmental planning, digital cartography, demographic modeling, and the integration of AI with geospatial technologies.



Dr Ekaterina Vorontsova is Head of the International Cooperation Department at Nauka Publishers. Her career spans education, academic research, and international relations within Russia's academic and educational institutions. She holds a PhD (2024) with a thesis on the transformation of the educational process within internationalisation at Australian and Japanese universities. Her academic training began at Moscow Pedagogical State University's Department of Geography (2004–2009), where she specialised in geography alongside English and French, and continued in 2019–2022 with postgraduate studies at the Institute for Strategy of Education Development, Russian Academy of Education. In 2013, she completed an internship in pedagogical comparative studies at the Vesuvian International Institute of Archaeology and Humanities in Castellammare di Stabia, Italy, and in 2022, completed professional retraining in education management at Moscow Pedagogical State University.

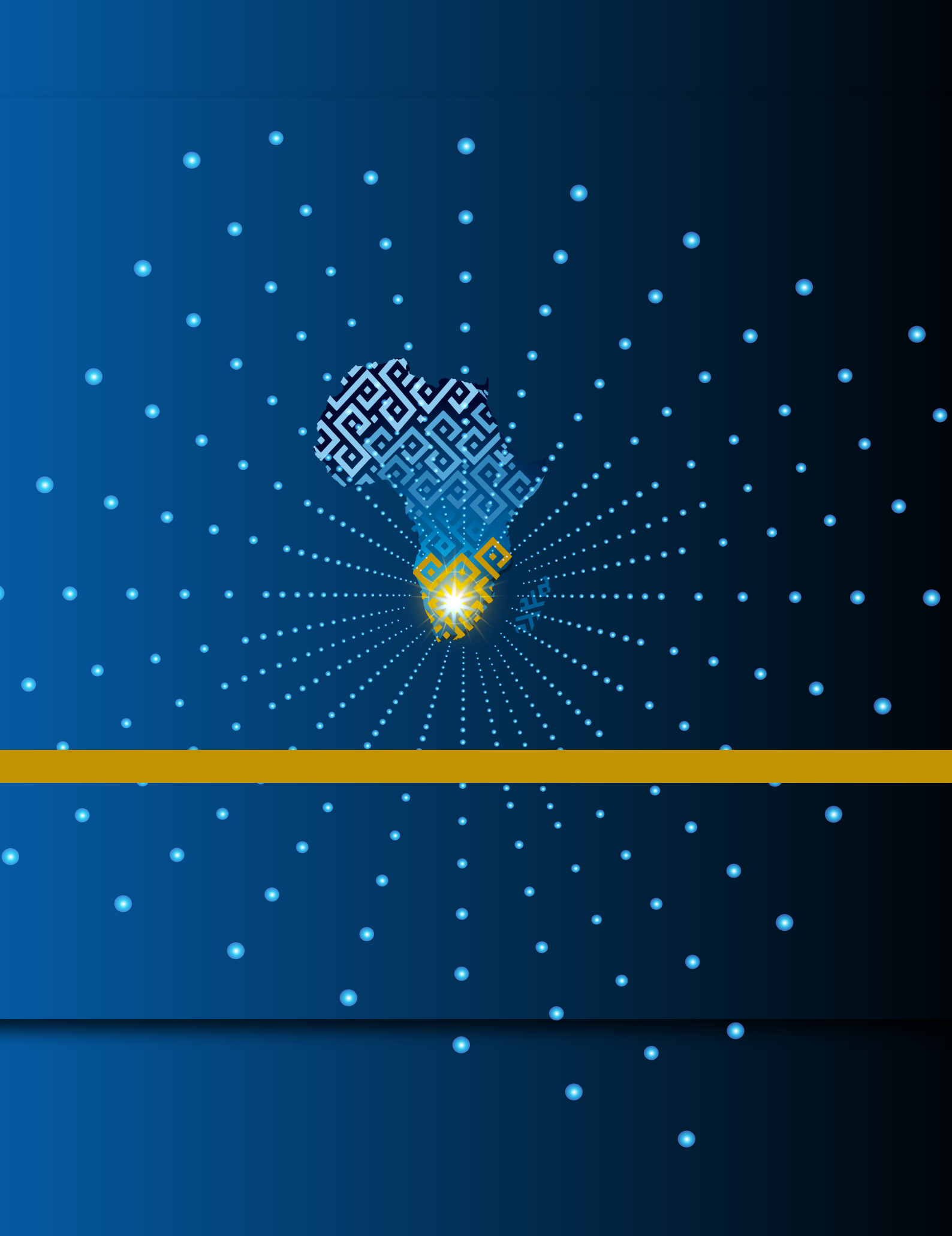
Vorontsova's career began in 2004 as a Research Assistant in the Laboratory of Foreign Languages at the Institute of Content and Teaching Methods, Russian Academy of Education, running concurrently with her undergraduate studies. From 2009 to 2021 she taught English and French at School No. 183 in Moscow, moving into administration as Deputy Director for Curriculum at the same school in 2021–2022. She then became an Associate Professor at the State University of Justice and Moscow City University (2022–2023), before joining the Institute for Strategy of Education Development as Senior Researcher in the Laboratory of Pedagogical Comparative Studies (2023–2024). From 2024 to 2026 she headed the International Cooperation Department at the Russian Research Institute of Economics, Politics and Law in Science and Technology (RIEPP), immediately preceding her current role at Nauka Publishers. Her work bridges pedagogical research, comparative education, and international academic cooperation, reflecting a career trajectory from language teaching and school administration through educational policy research to institutional leadership in international relations.



Holding an M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Systems Engineering and Computer Science from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), **Dr. Osthoff** has extensive experience in High-Performance Computing (HPC). She is currently a Senior Technologist at the National Laboratory of Scientific Computing (LNCC) and a professor in the LNCC's Multidisciplinary Graduate Program. She coordinates the LNCC's National Center for High-Performance Processing (CENAPAD) and serves on the Technical-Scientific Committee for the Santos Dumont Supercomputer, the most powerful supercomputer in Latin America and the Caribbean, dedicated to the scientific community. She heads LNCC's High-Performance Processing Sector and has coordinated the Santos Dumont HPC Summer School since 2015. She is a member of the Regional High-Performance Computing Commission for the Southeast Region (CRAD-SE) and the Executive Council of the Advanced Computing System of Latin America and the Caribbean (SCALAC). Currently, she serves as a member of the Brazilian delegation to the BRICS Working Group on High Performance Computing and Information and Communication Technologies (BRICS WG on HPC-ICT).



Prof. Petrus Letaba is an Associate Professor in the Department of Engineering and Technology Management at the University of Pretoria, where he specialises in technology roadmapping, strategic foresight, and technology management. With a PhD in Technology Management and an MBA, his research focuses on navigating the complex dynamics of innovation and technology planning in developing countries. He brings over 23 years of experience across academia, government, and industry, and serves as the lead writer for the annual South African Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators Report. As an expert in futures studies, Prof. Letaba's work bridges rigorous academic research with practical policy and industry application.



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