

SOCIAL COHESION AND INTEGRATION



Social Cohesion and Integration (SCI) is a Research Programme dealing with religion, arts and culture, the social aspect of science, the media and public discourse. In essence, it analyses the social fabric of a developing country. The unit was established in November 2002. It is also, in part, a response to the call by NEPAD for a greater engagement with the social sciences and humanities in the development of science and technology in Africa.

The current staff complement consists of five researchers, a visiting research fellow, an editorial specialist and three administrative staff.

Current and recently completed projects

SCI hosted the **Human Genome and Africa** conference in March 2003. The conference brought together experts, both local and international, to discuss the implications for Africa of sequencing the human genome. The conference consisted of five concurrent workshops. A major theme running across the five workshops was the influence of recent advances in genomic science on African society. More than 350 delegates participated in the conference. This included 23 young and promising scholars from under-resourced institutions in Africa, who were awarded fellowships to attend the conference. A major art competition, *What is Life?*, which invited top national artists, new artists and school-level artists to take part by providing their interpretation of the meaning of the human genome, was part of the conference. Two occasional papers and a book called *The Architect and the Scaffold: Evolution and Education in South Africa*, edited by Wilmot James and Lynne Wilson, have been published out of this project. A book reflecting on the March 2003 Africa Genome conference will be published in 2004.

After a successful conference on the theme **Spirit of the Nation: Reflections on South Africa's Educational Ethos**, an edited collection of proceedings was published in August 2002. Professor James and the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, were the editors.

A report entitled **Petrol Station 5 Safety Project**, which investigated safety and security at South African petrol stations, was conducted by an SCI-led team. It was launched at the Civic Centre, Grassy Park, Cape Town, in December 2002. The project received major media coverage and has already led to some important interventions in the industry.





Graeme Pollock and Franklin Larey, two of the individuals profiled in the Living Treasures project

SCI commissioned a paper on the connections between **South Africa, Israel and Palestine** from renowned historian Dr Heribert Adam. It was launched at the London School of Economics in September 2002. This was followed up in March 2003 with an historic meeting of Israelis, Palestinians and South Africans near Hermanus in the Western Cape.

The Department of Arts and Culture commissioned SCI to investigate the capacity within Government, the HSRC and the private sector to gather reliable indicators, data and research in the cultural industries. The ultimate goal of the **Valuing Cultural Industries: Phase 1 project** is to assist with the establishment of a Cultural Observatory for South African Arts and Culture.

A series of books, chapters and papers has been produced within SCI on **religion**, including:

- Religion Education in South Africa: Teaching and learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity, by Professor David Chidester in Lena Larsen and Ingvild T. Plesner (eds), *Teaching for Tolerance and Freedom of Belief* (Norway: Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, 2003);

- Global citizenship, cultural citizenship and world religions in religion education, by Professor David Chidester in Robert Jackson (ed.), *International Perspectives on Citizenship, Education, and Religious Diversity* (London: Routledge, 2002): pages 31 to 50.

SCI has conducted a number of **studies in the transformation of South Africa's media**. An investigation of the core courses, financial viability and direction of the country's principal in-service journalism training institution, the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, was conducted and completed in 2003. Various other media projects are underway, including a major collaboration with the newly established Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) and Mediaworks. The MDDA is charged by Government to foster and encourage community media organisations in South Africa in the interests of diversity and democratic consolidation.

The **Living Treasures: Arts, Sports and Science project** commissions and publishes biographical research on South Africans who excel in the arts, sports and sciences. The project has thus far published eleven articles and has profiled, among others, artist Helen Sibidi, singer Sibongile Khumalo and writer Nadine Gordimer.

The **Africa genome scientific literacy and school programme** aims to spread up-to-date knowledge regarding the outcomes of the Human Genome Project among school and tertiary students and adult learners, and thus improve scientific literacy regarding the Human Genome Project and its implications for society. It hopes to incorporate new scientific knowledge into school curricula, and will undertake a pilot teacher-training workshop to deal with the teaching of molecular biology. The project will investigate the iconography of certain scientific theories and produce a set of visual teaching materials to improve old representations of concepts such as evolution, geological time and early *Homo sapiens*.

The **evolution of human skin colour**, something which was first thought to be immaterial, is of immense intellectual interest. From an evolutionary perspective, skin colour types evolved fundamentally as a reproductive strategy to ensure survival. It also has social interest, since skin pigmentation is one of the

most visible human characteristics, and one from which numerous other characteristics are commonly and unfairly inferred. We hope to facilitate informed public discourse on skin colour and "race" in South Africa in the interest of promoting a new national identity.

In 2002, **An I for cultural diversity and heritage** (with DACST) produced a position paper on cultural diversity and developing countries and the challenges of globalisation. *Protecting Our Cultural Capital* is the second paper of this project and is to be published as an occasional paper in 2003. The political transition of 1994 fore-grounded the debate about who we are and what sites, memories or artefacts actually constitute our common heritage as South Africans. This paper discusses the key outcomes from this debate as well as limitations in the current heritage structures that prevent other benefits from being realised.

DAC has requested a position paper from SCI on **intangible heritage** for the purposes of the International Network on Cultural Policy. "Intangible heritage" is a term coined to honour the powerful symbolic meanings that communities may associate with a site, as well as rituals, music, language, know-how, oral traditions and the cultural spaces in which these "living heritage" traditions are played out. The project will look at definitions of intangible heritage. It will also ask whether this is a special form of heritage requiring special attention and, if so, what legal and financial instruments could help protect this intangible heritage.

Early in 2002, DACST requested SCI to conduct **an audit of the community arts centres** that had been established with RDP funding between 1997 and 2001. The audit report was finalised with representatives from the community arts sector at a workshop in April 2002. The report contained an analysis of problems and solutions with regard to policies, management capacity, finding resources, service delivery and partnership development between national, provincial and local levels. The audit was extended into a strategic document with implementation plans through a second workshop in October. The research was accepted as the basis for a Flemish-South African bi-national programme on policy development and capacity-building in arts centre clusters in KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Limpopo, with an extension of the findings to the other six provinces. SCI's Gerard Hagg has a three-year appointment as Programme Manager. The programme has led to the establishment of national and provincial steering committees for community arts centres and has increased investments by Government, NGOs and the arts sector.

Following a successful and interesting conference in 2002





between the SCI team and representatives from the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac), a book of the proceedings on **social cohesion and globalisation** is due to be published in 2003, edited by Professor David Chidester.

SCI has provided an enabling environment for producing a book, under the editorship of the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, MP, Professor David Chidester and Professor Wilmot James, which **profiles the lasting legacy of Mr Nelson Mandela**, who remains the central icon of social cohesion in South Africa. As a thematic collection of Mr Mandela's speeches, with introductory essays by national and international leaders, *Nelson Mandela: From Freedom to the Future* is scheduled to be published in July 2003.

Future developments

SCI is currently planning a major investigation into **road safety** in South Africa.

Invested with biographical and political history, ***Ali Fataar and the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM)*** is an account of Dr Ali Fataar, long-time leader of the NEUM of South Africa. It is being finalised by author Trevor Oosterwyk for publication in late 2003 or early 2004.

An edited collection of the published and unpublished essays of the late **Professor Jack Simons** is planned for publication

later in 2003 or early 2004.

Against the background of the HSRC-Nedlac conference of August 2002, SCI is undertaking a three-year project to **identify and measure social capital** in the spheres of Government, business, labour and community. Former Nedlac Director Phillip Dexter has joined the SCI with the principal task of overseeing this project.

Plans to turn the **international conference on the Human Genome and Africa** into an annual event begin with the follow-up event already scheduled for Cairo in 2004. The conference will again focus on genomics, vaccines and drug development. Other follow-up possibilities being investigated include establishing a journal, publishing a science magazine and the production of a documentary series on the impact of genomics on research and development in Africa.

Outcomes of the **Israel-Palestine-South African** peace-building conference include the publication of a book of conference proceedings and an expanded follow-up meeting planned for later in 2003 or early 2004.

Executive Director Professor Wilmot James

Tel: +27 21 467 4422

E-mail: wjames@hsrc.ac.za