

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## Development policy and universities in Africa:

### Towards a coordinated policy architecture and engagement practice in South Africa

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#### Introduction

What is the policy architecture for the community engagement function in African higher education? How has policy acted as lever of change to establish more socially responsible, transformative and developmental relationships between universities and external constituencies? The preceding chapters have presented rich perspectives and debate on conceptions of community engagement as well as concrete cases of engagement with external communities and stakeholders with the aim of enhancing understanding of the developmental contributions made by universities in secondary cities in Africa. Against this background, this chapter seeks to analyse the policy and regulatory frameworks for higher education's contribution to development in general, and community engagement in particular, at the continental, national and institutional levels. At the African level, it discusses the pronouncements of the African Union's (AU's) *Agenda 2063* and the AU's *Continental Education Strategy for Africa* (CESA) on higher education-related development goals and community engagement (AUC, 2015; 2016). The chapter then considers how a particular AU member state, South Africa, has sought to steer university community engagement by means of national policy. The chapter then discusses current conceptions of the community

engagement function at South African universities drawing on a recent study of the annual reports produced by the country's 26 public universities. The institutional-level analysis concludes by reviewing the conceptual and empirical cases presented in this book to produce an understanding of the relationship between concept, policy, and practice. The chapter highlights many disconnects in the policy architecture regarding the community engagement function in higher education and concludes with four sets of elements that need to be considered as part of an effective, multi-level policy architecture for community engagement.

## **African aspirations for development and higher education**

On June 8, 2017, the AU established a higher education cluster as an implementing structure to achieve the goals outlined by the *Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025*. CESA represents a continent-wide intervention towards the realisation of the vision outlined in the AU's *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*. This agenda, which was adopted by the continental body in 2015, features seven aspirations each with its own set of goals and strategies. The seven aspirations are described by the AU as reflective of "our desire for shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth are realised, and with freedom from fear, disease and want" (AU, 2021:1). The aspirations should be viewed in the context of a drive to complete the unfinished work undertaken by the AU's predecessor, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), in pursuit of the developmental goals of shared prosperity, integration and wellbeing (Legum, 1975; Twala, 2014; Vhumbunu, 2019). The seven aspirations are:

Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;

Aspiration 2: An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance;

Aspiration 3: An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law;

Aspiration 4: A peaceful and secure Africa;

Aspiration 5: An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics;

Aspiration 6: An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children; and

Aspiration 7: Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner. (AU, 2021:1)

Each of the aspirations has a descriptor and is elaborated and concretised with several goals (see Appendix 1 below). **Agenda 2063** makes it clear that higher education plays a crucial role in achieving the AU's cultural, social, economic and political goals. In this regard, the second goal of the first aspiration explicitly aims to produce “well educated citizens and skills revolutions underpinned by science, technology and innovation: developing Africa’s human and social capital (through an education and skills revolution emphasizing science and technology)” (AU, 2021:1).

As a blueprint for inclusive and sustainable political, socio-cultural and economic development in Africa, **Agenda 2063** is likely to continue to inform the direction and emphasis of the economic and social interventions undertaken by national governments across the continent. Higher education clearly has a significant role to play in national and place-based development through its core functions of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. In this regard, **Agenda 2063** emphasises the importance of efforts to “build and expand an African knowledge society through transformation and investments in universities, science, technology, research and innovation” (AUC, 2015:15). It further promotes initiatives to standardise and harmonise the African higher education space with the goal of removing obstacles to student and academic mobility, as well as other efforts to enhance the role that universities may play in Africa’s development agenda.

The **Continental Education Strategy for Africa, 2016-2025**, which was established to help realise Agenda 2063, features 12 strategic objectives. These focus on, among other things, revitalising the professionalism, quality and relevance of teaching; infrastructure development and access to quality education; the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in education; knowledge and skills development; gender parity and equity in education systems; revitalising and expanding higher education, research and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness; and the promotion of peace education and conflict prevention and resolution. Teferra (2018) argues that CESA provides an appropriate guide for Africa’s aspirations in the higher education sector and outlines the crucial role that universities must play so that meaningful and sustainable economic growth and socio-economic development are achieved on the continent.

In relation to CESA's ninth strategic objective, which calls for the revitalisation and expansion of higher education, research and innovation, Teferra (2018:1) notes:

It identifies eight elements deemed necessary to achieve this [that is, the revitalisation and expansion of higher education, research and innovation], including allocating 1% of GDP to research and innovation; creating conducive environments for research and innovation through the provision of adequate infrastructure and resources; linking research to the development of priority areas and enhancement of global competitiveness; consolidating and expanding centres of excellence; promoting international research and development cooperation; and strengthening quality (post)graduate and post-doctoral education, among others.

In Teferra's (2018) reading of the CESA, research rather than teaching or community engagement plays the most important role in the development of priority areas. Indeed, the community engagement function of universities is not explicitly mentioned here as a factor in the proposed efforts to revitalise the higher education sector.

At the same time Teferra emphasises that the responsibility for implementing **Agenda 2063** and CESA is supposed to fall to the AU's member states rather than the continental body itself. It is the duty of the national governments to try and enact the continental plans through their development plans, strategies and related regulatory frameworks, including those specific to higher education. It is also at the national level (state level in federal systems) that the link between higher education and development, and the role of community engagement in this, must be elaborated. In this regard, Teferra (2018:1) notes:

According to CESA, virtually all development players now concur that for meaningful and sustainable economic growth to be achieved, tertiary education must be central to any national development agenda. Countries around the world are striving to build this sector either under pressure, as is the case in Africa, or as a priority in their strategic development plans, as in developed and emerging countries. It is clear that building a tertiary education system is no longer a luxury that African countries were once chastised for indulging in, but a critical imperative for national development and global competitiveness.

Against the background of the continental pronouncements on the role of higher education in development, and the role of member states therein, the following section discusses South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) and its higher education regulatory frame-work as an illustrative case.

## South Africa's National Development Plan and higher education

South Africa published its *National Development Plan 2030: Our future – make it work* (NDP) in August 2012, three years before the AU's *Agenda 2063* was adopted. Chapter 9 of the plan is dedicated to education, including a section on higher education. According to Nel (2014), the NDP outlines three main developmental roles for higher education:

1. Produce new knowledge and discover pioneering innovations to respond to pressing societal challenges;
2. Educate and train high-level human resources for a wide range of employment needs in the public and private sectors, while simultaneously equipping pupils to be job creators and entrepreneurs; and
3. Contribute to democratic consolidation by strengthening equity, promoting social justice and advancing an active citizenry.

The NDP conceives higher education's developmental mission primarily in terms of research, innovation, and knowledge production, as well as the production of highly skilled, employable graduates, especially in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The plan also emphasises how the sector can contribute to socio-political development by deepening democracy and promoting social justice and redress. According to Nel (2014), "these ideals can be achieved through socially responsive university curricula, teaching practices, and knowledge generation agendas".

In spite of the plan's emphasis on the developmental contribution that should be made by education in general, and higher education in particular, there is no mention of community engagement *per se* in the NDP's Chapter 9: Improving Education, Training and Innovation – although the chapter does note in its further education section the importance of engaging in strategic community development programmes and responding to community needs. Overall, the NDP's view of how higher education can contribute to development in South Africa is focussed on expanding capacity within the system, including by building two new universities in provinces which previously had none, as well as a new medical school; increasing student enrolment in general and in STEM subjects and at PhD level in particular; and enhancing the quality of higher education on offer and its capacity to produce innovation (NPC, 2012).

In summary, South Africa's NDP, like the continental *Agenda 2063*, makes no direct mention of community engagement. Rather, the community engagement function of the country's universities is viewed as part of higher education's broad mandate to contribute to development and support the social, political and economic transformation of post-apartheid society (DOE, 1997, section 1.13; NPC, 2012).

## National steering towards transformative community engagement in South Africa

The notion that higher education should serve the public good and contribute to development is widely recognised in South African higher education policymaking and regulations, as well as in the statutes, policies and practices of public universities (Luescher-Mamashela, Favish & Ngcelwane, 2015). In the wake of the country's transition to democracy, 'development' became a guiding principle for the post-apartheid transformation of higher education "to contribute to the common good of society" (DOE, 1997, section 1.20). The principle was elaborated in a national goal for the sector "to promote and develop social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of HE [higher education] in social and economic development through community service programmes"; as well as in a goal established for the institutions that they should "demonstrate [their] social responsibility ... and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes" (DOE, 1997, sections 1.27 and 1.28).

One of the enduring legacies of 350 years of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa is that the country has one of the most unequal societies in the world. South African society is characterised by very high levels of unemployment, particularly among black youth and black women, and high levels of poverty and deprivation among the majority black population which coexist with pockets of great wealth and privilege concentrated in the previously white but now increasingly "de-racialised" elite strata. Amidst this unequal and unjust system stands the university sector, which is highly, if unevenly, developed and massifying. The sector includes 26 public universities, of which several rank among the best on the continent, as well as about 100 smaller, mostly vocationally focused private colleges. In government policy, the university sector is understood as part of a larger post-school education and training system which also includes 50 public technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges, many private colleges and a few community colleges. Public and private higher education are governed by a common national regulatory framework, which centres on the Higher Education Act (Republic of South Africa, 1997, as amended), the White Paper for Higher Education Transformation of 1997 (DOE, 1997) and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training of 2013 (DHET, 2013), among other acts, regulations and policy pronouncements.

After the introduction of democracy in 1994, the focus for higher education policy was the need to transform the unjust inherited apartheid system as most South African universities were established as part of the institutional architecture of a colonial and apartheid state. In other words, they were officially and/or in practice segregated by race and ethnicity and directed to serve a specific population group and support particular functions only. In the main, the historically white institutions were

racially exclusive and elitist, while the historically black institutions were designed to narrowly serve the needs of segregated homeland administrations and economies. However, after 1994, all universities were opened to all population groups.

Against this historical background, the earliest policy pronouncements by the democratic government on universities' community engagement function should be seen in the context of the drive to transform the system as a whole to support the aspirations of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic, and prosperous society. This can be seen in the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) Report (NCHE, 1996) and the White Paper for Higher Education (DOE, 1997). During the first decade of democracy, this transformation project was enacted by means of multiple initiatives, most evident in a process of mergers, incorporations and closures, which were undertaken to do away with the "geo-political imagination of apartheid planners" (Asmal, 1999:11). The reconfigured institutional landscape now included large multi-campus institutions such as Walter Sisulu University in the Eastern Cape and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The merger process created opportunities for historically disadvantaged institutions, such as the rural University of Fort Hare, which gained an urban footprint in the secondary city of East London. At the same time, the process affirmed the status of certain historically white metropolitan institutions, allowing them to remain largely untouched. In the second decade of democracy, two new universities were added to the consolidated higher education landscape: Sol Plaatje University in Kimberley and the University of Mpumalanga in Mbombela adding new educational and economic opportunity in these two secondary cities.

In addition to an inequitable structural legacy, the higher education sector's colonial and apartheid history had also produced a skewed approach to development among its institutions. The elite system of higher education inherited in 1994 had focused exclusively on the needs and aspirations of the colonial and apartheid political projects, which prioritised the educational, social, political and economic interests of the small white population over those of the majority black population. Thus, for example, the historically white and well-resourced University of Stellenbosch successfully engaged for many decades with local white wine farmers, becoming a world leader in viticulture and oenology as a result. Conversely, many historically black universities lacked the mandate, capacity and resources to develop in such economically relevant directions – although some, such as the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town, became deeply involved in the liberation struggle as a way of addressing the dire state of their surrounding black communities and the social, political and economic needs and aspirations of this population.

It is therefore not surprising that it has been difficult to produce and implement a common agenda among the universities in pursuit of their mandates to support national development and promote societal and economic transformation to meet

the needs and aspirations of the black majority. Aside from the legacy of a skewed higher education system, this may be attributed to the high degree of autonomy and freedom from government interference that is enjoyed by the universities in their operations. It can also be attributed to competing institutional priorities and conditions of austerity at many higher education institutions, which may lack the resources to adopt and pursue a comprehensive developmental mandate. In addition, individual faculties, departments and academics tend to set their own agendas within broad frameworks which are shaped by quality assurance directives; funding incentives and constraints; and their own capabilities. Meanwhile, the national government only has a limited set of policy instruments with which to steer the universities; it has also shown to have limited will, capacity and imagination to drive substantive change within this context. The result is that there is a fair degree of variation in the way universities conceptualise and implement their responses to national policy, including in relation to community engagement, development, and their social responsibilities.

The notion of social responsibility as 'community service programmes' which was espoused in the 1997 White Paper (DOE, 1997), was actually masking a wide range of understanding and practices, including community service and outreach; civic engagement; volunteering; service-learning; and community engagement (see Chapter 2 by Fongwa and Mtawa in this book). Only in 2001 a more comprehensive policy-based conception of community engagement was produced by the statutory quality assurance body of South Africa, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), which included in its founding document knowledge-based community service as one of the pillars of its quality assurance framework. Singh (2006:17-18) explains why the HEQC included this function of higher education in its framework:

The reasons for the HEQC focus on community engagement in higher education had to do with issues of academic reconstruction, and wanting to bring the three core functions [of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement] much more explicitly into the restructuring framework. In addition ... there was already in the HEQC a clear awareness that the issue of community engagement was a potentially powerful way of giving content to the transformation agenda in higher education, through new partnerships and relationships between higher education and its multiple communities.

The affirmation of community engagement as a core function of higher education by the HEQC led to the development of quality assurance criteria for the function. Other government entities soon followed suit. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) and its research funding agency, the National Research Foundation (NRF), established mechanisms to support university-led community engagement, which included funded research chairs specialising in community engagement and funding calls for community engagement-focused research



(e.g. University of the Free State, 2021). In 2013, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) published a new *White Paper on Post-School Education and Training*, which noted:

Community engagement, in its various forms – socially responsive research, partnerships with civil society organisations, formal learning programmes that engage students in community work as a formal part of their academic programmes, and many other formal and informal aspects of academic work – has become a part of the work of universities in South Africa. (DHET, 2013, section 4.8)

While the DHET did not introduce funding specific to community engagement, it affirmed that community engagement would be financially supported insofar as it was “linked directly to the academic programme of universities and formed part of the teaching and research function of these institutions” (DHET, 2013, section 4.8). In addition, in 2014, the DHET introduced new regulations for public universities which required them to report on:

... how a public higher education institution has both positively and negatively impacted on the economic life of the community in which it operated [including] inclusivity of stakeholders; innovation, fairness, and collaboration; [and] social transformation [and] relationships with the community, both academic and service. (DHET, 2014:26-28)

With the introduction of these reporting requirements, it became possible to analyse how South Africa’s public universities conceive of and practice community engagement, insofar as this function is covered in their annual reports to the DHET.

## **Current conceptions of community engagement at South Africa’s public universities**

In 2020 and 2021, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) undertook research to assess the state of transformation among South Africa’s public universities on behalf of the Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in the South African Public Universities (TOC) (Luescher et al., 2021).

The assessment was based on a critical review and analysis of the contents of the 2018 and 2019 annual reports produced by the country’s 26 public universities. Overall, the TOC report found that in the two years preceding the Covid-19 outbreak, the universities had responded to the challenge of transformation in a range of ways. Some had adopted piecemeal and compliance-based approaches, while others had attempted to forge a holistic response to the challenge of producing teaching, and research that addressed the country’s major developmental challenges while building strong, collaborative relationships with government, private-sector and civil-society stakeholders.

The HSRC report focussed on several key higher education functions and how these may be leveraged to promote transformation. It practically identified the university's role in promoting societal relevance and community engagement as a key dimension of their drive to transform themselves and the broader society (see Luescher et al., 2021 for a complete overview of the framework and methodology). In this regard, it found that the universities had increasingly sought to integrate their identity and core functions within their immediate and extended community-regions and had engaged with an increasing number of stakeholders in pursuit of developmental and social transformational objectives. At the same time, it noted that the kinds of engagement had varied widely among the institutions; and that little consideration had been given in the annual reports to producing a comprehensive account of the transformative impacts of such efforts.

In their annual reports, many of the universities emphasised the importance of engaged scholarship, which many progressive analysts have argued should be integrated within the core functions of teaching, learning and research (e.g. Bender, 2008; Cooper, 2011). For example, in its 2018 annual report, the University of Cape Town conceptualised its commitment to engaged scholarship as a response to calls for deeper transformation and decolonisation within the institution. It noted that the university aimed:

... to enhance the scope, quality and impact of engaged scholarship [ES] with an emphasis on addressing development and social justice ... the value of ES in the current context of decoloniality and transformation is that it challenges the attitudes of researchers, which determine how, by and for whom research is conceptualised and conducted and the corresponding location of power in the research process. It is this orientation to research that speaks to the theme of transformation and decolonisation. (University of Cape Town, Annual Report 2018:24)

A similar position was adopted by several other institutions, suggesting a reactive approach to how community engagement may serve a social justice function within society.

Although the HSRC report for the TOC found that there were diverse understandings of how best to address and implement community engagement across the country's universities, it also identified a number of common approaches among the institutions. In general, the universities framed their commitment to society at large in one or more of following ways:

1. As a response to calls for deeper transformation and decolonisation;
2. As the fulfilment of a responsibility to deploy institutional resources to ensure social justice;
3. As a response to local needs in the context of a global knowledge agenda, and;
4. As a form of collaboration which may produce interventions in support of the university's teaching and learning functions while also benefiting the population.

The notion of a commitment to society beyond the campus gates was also expressed in the idea of universities as place-based 'anchor institutions'. Under this concept, universities position themselves as institutions that "consciously apply their long-term, place-based economic power, in combination with their human and intellectual resources, to better the long-term welfare of the communities in which they reside" (Axelroth & Dubb, 2010:3; also see Bank, Cloete & van Schalkwyk, 2018). In line with this concept, there were a growing number of mentions of 'precinct development' in the reports, particularly in those produced by universities in metropolitan areas, such as the Durban University of Technology, the University of Pretoria, the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. The University of Pretoria reported that, as an anchor institution, it had actively engaged municipal officials and the local metro police to improve neighbourhood security and support environmental protection and renewal. These passages from the university's 2018 and 2019 reports provide an example of the new outlook from the perspective of a metropolitan university:

As an anchor institution, UP is rooted in its communities and plays a central role in their social, cultural and economic wellbeing. (University of Pretoria, 2020:36)

**Impact as an Anchor Institution:** We work closely with the Hatfield City Improvement District (HCID) to create a clean, safe, secure, and attractive environment beyond the University boundaries. Our efforts were recognised when we received the 2018 Gauteng Premier's Service Excellence Award in the category: Creating Safer Communities. (University of Pretoria, 2019:38-39)

The concept was also referenced by a few institutions outside metropolitan areas, even if it was not described as 'anchoring'. For example, Rhodes University in its rural-town setting of Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown) in the rural Eastern Cape envisioned itself as a strong economic player in its locality. Its 2019 report stated:

Our university is the largest source of employment and contributes the highest percentage in the GDP of Makhanda/Grahamstown. Our future, as Rhodes University, is inextricably bound up with that of the greater Makhanda/Grahamstown community. It is in recognition of this inescapable reality that on 30 July and, again, on 16 September 2019 we convened a civil society forum to harness the collective energy, creativity and resourcefulness of our community to contribute towards creating a sustainable future for our city. (Rhodes University, 2020:34)

The notion of place-based socio-economic development including the more specific concept of anchoring thus seemed to be gaining increasing traction across the country's universities, according to their annual reports (see also Fongwa, 2018).

At the same time that the country's universities seemed to be displaying responsiveness to the challenges facing their local communities, there appeared to be little consensus on the nature of the developmental paradigms and engagement approaches to be adopted. Only 14 of the 26 universities articulated a concise conceptual understanding of community engagement and linked this to their mission and vision statements in their annual reports. In addition, the ways in which community engagement were conceptualised varied widely, with the engaged scholarship ethos standing at one end of the spectrum, and a preference for community involvement with philanthropic overtones standing at the other.

The universities across the country not only produced different understandings of their community engagement role, but they also adopted different approaches to how they should try and integrate their identity and core knowledge-production and other functions into the surrounding socio-political and economic landscape. For example, some focussed on local community contexts, while others envisaged their community engagement role in a national, continental or even global context. In this regard, many historically white, metropolitan universities espoused the notion of globally competitive and locally engaged research touted by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2007). For these institutions, the kudos that such work could bring at the international level was clearly an important driver.

By contrast, several historically black and rural universities sought to establish their local relevance by placing the emphasis on a closer alignment with the priorities of communities in their immediate and extended regions. In this regard, community engagement in many historically black and/or rural universities appeared to be embedded in a variety of memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and projects being implemented in surrounding communities, which are generally poor and quite marginalised from mainstream socio-political and economic life. Among these institutions there was a strong sense of the mutual benefits that could be accrued through a reciprocal engagement with local communities. They thus

adopted collaborative approaches, working with nearby communities to identify and implement initiatives and interventions that could support teaching and learning, and benefit local development. For example, the University of Venda (Univen) in Thohoyandou stated in its 2018 annual report:

Univen sees community engagement as goal-orientated, reciprocal interactions between the university and the community, with the aim of establishing a win-win partnership, through collaborative projects. These interactions are expected to also serve as vehicles for increasing community awareness, social consciousness and active citizenship among our students. (University of Venda, 2019:53)

A number of universities reported implementing curriculum-driven external engagements through their teaching and learning, and research activities. The initiatives included service-learning; co-operative education programmes; and community-based research – all of which may be seen as benefiting both the university, with students gaining credits, and the community. This pedagogic method also promotes a reflexive educational approach that may support the broader transformation of students, staff and universities.

Although the engagement efforts reportedly undertaken by the universities tended to be small-scale, fragmented and focused primarily on immediate, local communities, especially at the historically black and rural universities, it was notable that all the universities reported engaging with a plethora of stakeholders in pursuit of various developmental and social transformational objectives. Partnerships were reported to have been forged with firms, government officials, local communities, schools and sectoral education and training bodies.

The engagements with businesses and industry were reported to have been largely geared towards enhancing graduate employability through initiatives such as work-integrated learning and career shows with employers. Many universities also reported engaging with Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) as part of efforts to develop skills within the business sector while acquiring much-needed third-stream income. A large number of universities further reported assisting schools across the country in various ways, including through tutoring and mentoring programmes and internship placements.

In reflecting on the scope and potential developmental impacts of its community engagement efforts, the University of Pretoria noted:

The University's community engagement continues apace, with 1,500 community sites of learning and 33,000 students involved in community outreach programmes, or volunteering. As a result of its contribution, UP is a member of the University Social Responsibility Network, a network of 16 top universities in the world selected for their responsiveness to their local context. It is critically important that the University uses knowledge to make a decisive difference to the lives of the people in South African communities. (University of Pretoria, 2020:7)

Most of the universities, particularly those in small rural towns and secondary cities, reported engaging with various government departments at the local, provincial and national levels. Universities in the secondary cities reported engaging with the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), as well as other government departments and public entities.

While almost all the universities reported on various aspects of engagement, the institutionalisation of such engagement within the system appeared, from the universities' own accounts, to remain quite weak. In this regard, the analysis of the annual reports indicated a lack of proper coordination of engagement efforts by a central, institutional structure at most South Africa's universities. Moreover, while the adoption of an *ad hoc*, flexible and decentralised approach at the national/system level may allow the various institutions to produce their own, appropriate forms of engagement; weak coordination and a lack of recognition and support for engagement within the system cannot be regarded as the best way of ensuring optimal or comprehensive impacts.

In addressing the finding that there was a lack of effective mainstreaming of community engagement as an institutional goal, the Human Sciences Research Council's report recommended establishing staff reward and recognition schemes in support of engagement activities and producing appropriate strategic plans and budgets. It further recommended that efforts should be made to implement reporting structures that could consolidate accounts of the relatively significant amounts of engagement already taking place within institutions and across the sector.

## Community engagement in South Africa in the context of its policy architecture

The analysis of the 2018 and 2019 annual reports of South Africa's public universities indicated their awareness of the challenges facing communities, youth, the business sector, and society in general within their local contexts (Luescher et al., 2021). However, there are a number of caveats to this. First, the annual reports showed that there was little consensus on the nature of the developmental paradigms and engagement approaches that should be adopted. While most universities were reportedly pursuing an engaged scholarship ethos, others continued to focus on a community engagement approach with philanthropic or voluntaristic overtones. Some analysts have also given warning of a 'projectisation' trend, under which engagement has been limited to projects and thus has tended to have little impact on the underlying teaching and learning or research approaches adopted by the universities, or on community development more broadly (Cloete et al., 2011).

Second, the annual reports generally failed to consider how community engagement had transformed or was transforming academia, for example, by encouraging the production of a scholarship of engagement informed by actual initiatives undertaken with the community. Furthermore, while some universities stressed that they were becoming more responsive by developing more employable and well-rounded graduates, as well as socially relevant knowledge, many were silent on this topic. In this regard, one way forward could be to consider service-learning not only in the context of its credit-bearing function but as a reflexive approach that could support the broader transformation of internal stakeholders (students, staff, and senior management) and contribute to transformation in the external community – that is, through firms and businesses, local communities, schools and government bodies. More broadly, the annual reports indicated that the universities' community engagement efforts seemed to be suffering from a lack of policy guidance and steering at the national level.

Meanwhile, analysis of the major policy pronouncements made by the AU and the South African government on the developmental role of universities indicates that their community engagement function has been generally overlooked. Neither *Agenda 2063*, CESA or the NDP make direct reference to community engagement. Mention of the conceptions and practices that link higher education to development through community engagement is confined to sector-specific policy and regulations in the South African case; and the focus of these is on infusing teaching and learning, research and other university activities with a social responsibility component, with the emphasis being placed on practices such as university-community research partnerships, service learning, and the like.

Analysis of the policy architecture directing the kinds of engagements that universities should undertake in pursuit of socio-economic development also indicates a disconnect between continental and national plans. In the specific case discussed in this chapter, this disconnect may partly be attributed to their timing: the production of South Africa's NDP precedes that of the AU's *Agenda 2063*. By contrast, a clearer policymaking continuity is evident between the NDP and the subsequent South African White Paper on Post-School Education and Training, which includes prominent references to community engagement and thus goes well beyond the NDP's considerations and proposals in relation to this higher education function.

At the same time, the alignment of national with continental policymaking may be considered less important than the need to elaborate detailed conceptions and approaches to higher education's contribution to development, which must necessarily take place at the sectoral level. The South African case illustrates the extent to which universities' community engagement function may be articulated at the sectoral level – although it should also be noted that the framing of the concept especially at the institutional level, has tended to emphasise its developmental rather than transformative aspects.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the policy architecture for community engagement in Africa and South Africa, and the overview of current conceptions and practices in South Africa's public universities is meant to complement the conceptual and empirical contributions made in the previous chapters. Overall, this volume contains a rich repository of accounts of various community engagement efforts in secondary cities in Africa, which may produce a greater understanding of the concept of community engagement and its practice in a range of settings, and from which lessons may be learned that can be transferred to a wider range of contexts or form the basis for further research. Policymakers may wish to consider the multi-dimensional conception of community engagement produced by this volume as they seek to promote a more comprehensive definition of the community engagement function of universities and the developmental and transformative benefits that it may foster. In this regard, a useful summary of the various conceptualisations and related practices that fall under the 'community engagement' heading is provided by Fongwa and Mtawa in Chapter 2. These include:

1. Anchoring, place-based development, precinct development, smart precincts and the need to partner local, provincial and national government and stakeholders in such initiatives, acknowledging the transformative and developmental impacts that universities can help to produce as anchors in African secondary cities;



2. Inclusive innovation-focused engagement practices as against community-focused engagement approaches;
3. The need for a collective approach among agencies to foster community engagement and the need for social compacts in university-community engagements which include a broad range of stakeholders;
4. Service-learning and work-integrated learning as forms of community engagement which can foster sustained and mutually beneficial relationships between universities and the business sector to enhance students' work preparedness, gradueness and employability; and
5. Engagement with indigenous knowledge, art, and practices through university-community research partnerships. The aim should be to document indigenous knowledge on a wide range of matters including local governance and ethics, sustainable agriculture and biodiversity, pharmacopeia and traditional medicine, and language and language practices – and to create joint curricula and social events to popularise and celebrate indigenous knowledge.

The call in this chapter is for policymakers at all levels to coordinate a policy architecture that can promote effective forms of university community engagement. Such an architecture should provide suitable, multi-faceted conceptions, approaches and steering mechanisms which can facilitate the transformative, developmental contribution of African universities in their localities and beyond. It is further suggested that the following elements of a multi-dimensional policy-based intervention may form the basis of an effective policy architecture for community engagement:

1. Concentric spheres of locality for place-based developmental engagements of universities and other social institutions (such as hospitals and schools) as anchors within business and residential areas to foster integrated development precincts;
2. Explicit development pacts between universities and university-linked entities and external stakeholders, especially government at all levels; local small, micro and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) and large businesses; and residential communities;

3. Directing the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement to help develop highly skilled graduates and knowledge to address local solutions with regard to: population growth and rapid urbanisation; improvement of habitats and access to the necessities of life such as clean water and sanitation, electricity and transport, as well as data traffic infrastructure; social security and protection; and health, food security, biodiversity and conservation; various sectors of economic and cultural activity and their relation to the core functions of universities, with respect to research and innovation; humanities, arts and civic development; business development (in all local sectors at the level of SMMEs and beyond); work-integrated learning, and service-learning; and graduate employment and entrepreneurship;
4. Different social groups including youth, women, the elderly and impoverished communities with a view towards fostering open-learning offerings, extra-mural teaching and learning courses, and university-access courses; open access to university knowledge resources such as the university library, and university infrastructure such as the university's Wi-Fi; and pro bono access to student and staff services as available (for example, employment advice, health counselling and disability services).

In this manner, national development planning should be able to “localise” and integrate the aspirations of *Agenda 2063* in relation to higher education’s contribution to development into sectoral policymaking and the regulatory framework for universities. SDG.

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# APPENDIX 1

## Agenda 2063: The Seven Aspirations

### Aspiration 1

A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development

We are determined to eradicate poverty in one generation and build shared prosperity through social and economic transformation of the continent.

#### Goals

1. A high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all: ending poverty, inequalities of income and opportunity; job creation, especially addressing youth unemployment; facing up to the challenges of rapid population growth and urbanization, improvement of habitats and access to basic necessities of life – water, sanitation, electricity; providing social security and protection;
2. Well educated citizens and skills revolutions underpinned by science, technology and innovation: developing Africa's human and social capital (through an education and skills revolution emphasizing science and technology);
3. Healthy and well-nourished citizens: expanding access to quality health care services, particularly for women and girls;
4. Transformed economies and jobs: transforming Africa's economies through beneficiation from Africa's natural resources, manufacturing, industrialization and value addition, as well as raising productivity and competitiveness;

5. Modern agriculture for increased proactivity and production: radically transforming African agriculture to enable the continent to feed itself and be a major player as a net food exporter;
6. Blue/Ocean Economy for accelerated economic growth: exploiting the vast potential of Africa's blue/ocean economy;
7. Environmentally sustainable climate and resilient economies and communities: putting in place measures to sustainably manage the continent's rich biodiversity, forests, land and waters and using mainly adaptive measures to address climate change risks.

## Aspiration 2

An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance

Since 1963, the quest for African Unity has been inspired by the spirit of Pan-Africanism, focusing on liberation, and political and economic independence. It is motivated by development based on self-reliance and self-determination of African people, with democratic and people-centred governance.

### Goals

1. United Africa (Federal/Confederate): accelerating progress towards continental unity and integration for sustained growth, trade, exchanges of goods, services, free movement of people and capital through establishing a United Africa and fast-tracking economic integration through the CFTA.
2. World-class infrastructure criss-crosses Africa: improving connectivity through newer and bolder initiatives to link the continent by rail, road, sea and air; and developing regional and continental power pools, as well as ICT.
3. Decolonisation: All remnants of colonialism will have ended and all African territories under occupation fully liberated. We shall take measures to expeditiously end the unlawful occupation of the Chagos Archipelago, the Comorian Island of Mayotte and affirming the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

## Aspiration 3

An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

Africa shall have a universal culture of good governance, democratic values, gender equality, and respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

### Goals

1. Democratic values, practices, universal principles for human rights, justice and rule of law entrenched: consolidating democratic gains and improving the quality of governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law;
2. Capable institutions and transformed leadership in place at all levels: building strong institutions for a development state; and facilitating the emergence of development-oriented and visionary leadership in all spheres and at all levels.

## Aspiration 4

A peaceful and secure Africa.

Mechanisms for peaceful prevention and resolution of conflicts will be functional at all levels. As a first step, dialogue-centred conflict prevention and resolution will be actively promoted in such a way that by 2020 all guns will be silent. A culture of peace and tolerance shall be nurtured in Africa's children and youth through peace education.

### Goals

1. Peace security and stability is preserved: strengthening governance, accountability and transparency as a foundation for a peaceful Africa;
2. A stable and peaceful Africa: strengthening mechanisms for securing peace and reconciliation at all levels, as well as addressing emerging threats to Africa's peace and security;
3. A fully functional and operational APSA: putting in place strategies for the continent to finance her security needs.

## Aspiration 5

An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics.

Pan-Africanism and the common history, destiny, identity, heritage, respect for religious diversity and consciousness of African peoples and her diaspora's will be entrenched.

### Goal

1. Africa cultural renaissance is pre-eminent: inculcating the spirit of Pan Africanism; tapping Africa's rich heritage and culture to ensure that the creative arts are major contributors to Africa's growth and transformation; and restoring and preserving Africa's cultural heritage, including its languages.

## Aspiration 6

An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.

All the citizens of Africa will be actively involved in decision making in all aspects. Africa shall be an inclusive continent where no child, woman or man will be left behind or excluded, on the basis of gender, political affiliation, religion, ethnic affiliation, locality, age or other factors.

### Goals

1. Full gender equality in all spheres of life: strengthening the role of Africa's women through ensuring gender equality and parity in all spheres of life (political, economic and social); eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls;
2. Engaged and empowered youth and children: creating opportunities for Africa's youth for self-realization, access to health, education and jobs; ensuring safety and security for Africa's children, and providing for early childhood development.



## Aspiration 7

Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner

Africa shall be a strong, united, resilient, peaceful and influential global player and partner with a significant role in world affairs. We affirm the importance of African unity and solidarity in the face of continued external interference including, attempts to divide the continent and undue pressures and sanctions on some countries.

### Goals

1. Africa as a major partner in global affairs and peaceful co-existence: improving Africa's place in the global governance system (UN Security Council, financial institutions, global commons such as outer space);
2. Africa takes full responsibility for financing her development;
3. Improving Africa's partnerships and refocusing them more strategically to respond to African priorities for growth and transformation; and ensuring that the continent has the right strategies to finance its own development and reducing aid dependency. (African Union, 2021).

Details see: AUC (2015).