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Special Issue
CODESRIA's 40th Anniversary

Guest Editor: Lansana Keïta

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Africa Development is a quarterly bilingual journal of CODESRIA. It is a social science journal whose major focus is on issues which are central to the development of society. Its principal objective is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among African scholars from a variety of intellectual persuasions and various disciplines. The journal also encourages other contributors working on Africa or those undertaking comparative analysis of the developing world issues.

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Introduction

Lansana Keïta*

The present issue of *Africa Development* is dedicated to CODESRIA's fortieth anniversary and carries articles on the very idea that generated creative debates that led to the realisation of CODESRIA itself. CODESRIA was founded in 1973 by the intellectual visionary, Samir Amin. The acronym CODESRIA, standing for the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, is self-explanatory. CODESRIA is concerned about pursuing the very necessary goal of social science research in Africa. Such was necessary in the early days of post-colonial Africa when the ex-colonial powers enjoyed the monopoly in disseminating information on Africa's societies. The importance of empirical social knowledge is easily understood when one recognises that the colonialists established research organisations such as the Royal Africa Society in the case of Britain and the Institut francais de l'Afrique noire – later changed to Institut fondamental de l'Afrique noire – in the case of France. The goal was to gather and interpret information on African societies in all areas so as to better coordinate the colonial enterprise.

Under these circumstances there was a two-stage approach to the gathering of information. First, there was the formulation of theoretically founded interpretive frameworks into which empirically observed data was inputted. These theoretical formulations covered all the then existing social sciences; but in a number of instances, they were modified for the tasks at hand. Thus, sociology was morphed into anthropology to distinguish the study of African societies from that of European societies. There were also African history and African linguistics; though it must be pointed out that the economics and politics of African societies were covered under the broad rubric of anthropology.

Under such circumstances, the improvised theoretical framework used to describe and explain African realities was founded on theoretical constructs that were designed to express meanings and significations for societies that were qualitatively different from those of a colonising Europe. These theoretical constructs required their own specific lexicons.

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The basis for the differential analysis derived from the fact that the African societies that were being colonised were not as technologically advanced as those of Europe. On account of this, the colonisers maintained a status quo of technological imbalance that allowed the material exploitation of Africa's resources. This was the basis for the development of the key social science of biological anthropology of which physical anthropology was a macroscopic expression. Theories of biological race were henceforth developed which were used to explain the technological gaps between Europe and its colonies in Africa.

The colonial anthropological argument was that individuals of African ancestry were not on evolutionary par with the rest of humanity on the basis, especially, of cranial analysis. An appropriate lexicon was developed to explain the sociology of this portion of humanity. Terms such as 'tribe', 'negro', 'negroid', 'caucasoid', 'Hamite', 'hamitic', 'chief', 'bride-price', ' negro Africa' (now euphemistically referred to as sub-Saharan Africa), etc. were duly introduced into the descriptive analysis.

An interesting aspect of all this is that whereas in the West the different aspects of human behaviour were studied under the distinct social sciences such as economics, history, political science, etc., this was not the case with colonial research on Africa. All research efforts of whatever nature were bundled together under the heading of 'anthropology'. This, of course, is not in any way to support the way intertwined aspects of human social behaviour are treated by separate sciences in contemporary Western social science. Thus suffice it to say that in the study of African society during the colonial period, two foundational concepts – race and ethnic group (normally referred to as 'tribe') – were crucial in this regard. A number of European scholars became prominent in this engagement as they studied and interpreted the social, cultural and spiritual life of African society in all its dimensions and usually under the rubric of 'anthropology'. The stage was set for the racial paradigm with the work by Arthur de Gobineau (1853-1855) in his *'An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races'*. The colonial era began in earnest not long after following the Berlin Conference (1885). In the case of Africa specifically, the signature work in terms of the racial paradigm was that of Charles Seligman, with his *The Races of Africa* (1930), according to which the so-called 'caucasoid Hamites' were accorded distinction of being the bearers of civilization in Africa. The so-called Hamitic hypothesis was based on pure imagination but it fitted well with the colonial enterprise and the cultural narcissism of a then dominant Eurocentric scholarship about Africa.

This fallacious theory was so well believed that it led to an actual race-based sociology in the case of Rwanda and Burundi. Similar race-based

considerations were applied in the analysis of the languages of Africa. Westermann and Meinhoff classified the languages of Africa according to the principles of the Hamitic hypothesis. Thus, the languages of the Hamites were not subject to strict linguistic analysis to establish real family affiliations but were *a priori* shunted off to the language grouping of 'Hamitico-Semitic'. The other languages of Africa were simply labelled 'Negro languages'.

Given that there were no established modern research centres in Africa – except in the case of South Africa – Eurocentric research gained almost universal acceptance by default. Similar considerations applied to the analysis of what could be paraphrased as 'African modes of thought' as was explored by colonial theorists such as Levy-Bruhl (1922) with his *La mentalite primitive,* later seconded by E.E. Evans Pritchard (1937) and his *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande.* Over time, the social scientific analysis of Africa became more nuanced as the idea of decolonisation advanced. In the areas of Anglophone expression the ideas of Robin Horton became well known and debated. His *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West* (1997) [a collection of Horton's papers] makes for interesting reading as he debated the ideas of stalwarts who wrote substantially on the sociologies of Africa, from social structures to thought patterns.

But, all in all, the social scientific research literature on Africa was dominated by researchers of colonial provenance. It was at the dawn of formal independence that journals such as *Presence Africaine* began to publish the ideas of those who were at the receiving end of colonial ideologies. This new beginning also witnessed the publication of antithetical, path-breaking works, such as those produced by Frantz Fanon (*The Wretched of the Earth* 1958; *Black Skin, White Masks* 1956). Add to this the works of Cheikh Anta Diop, noted for his critiques of orthodox Eurocentric research on Africa in all of the social sciences from anthropology to linguistics. His iconoclastic work *Nations nègres et culture* **(**1958) was duly rejected by the doctoral examiners at the Sorbonne. The work was, however, published later by Présence Africaine. Then there were the works on political economy all with a Pan-African orientation published by Diop (1987) and Nkrumah (1963) when he was President of Ghana. The orthodox Eurocentric thesis was being challenged on all social scientific fronts by an African anti-thesis**.**

This is not to say that research in the social sciences is alien to Africa. Historians' ideas would all point to Ibn Khaldun's *Al Muqaddimah* (1377) and its pioneering work in history, sociology, and economics. Then there the various Tariqs produced in medieval Ghana-Mali-Songhay, of which the

works of Kati and Sadi are well known. The University of Tomboctou had a significant roster of scholar-researchers including the acclaimed Ahmed Baba and his set of publications in the social sciences and jurisprudence.

Given that a tradition of research is not alien to Africa, it is already recognised that research in the social sciences is of utmost importance if Africa is to compete effectively with other areas of the globe. CODESRIA is, of course, doing its part. It is now incumbent on other institutions to take the cue from CODESRIA and to make their needed contributions. As of now, African research in the social sciences is less than three per cent of total world output. Maximum output hails from the Euro-American world despite the ongoing efforts from African institutions. Thus, there is need for more concerted commitment from those institutions and governments that are capable of participating in this ongoing enterprise. The goal is to create societies that are sufficiently independent to be self-regarding and self-sufficient in most areas as are the nations of Euro-America. To attain this goal requires information about societies in Africa that is internally generated and disseminated. This would require three conditions: (i) increased funding for more universities and research institutions, (ii) more university and private publishing houses, and (iii) more Pan-African journals that would attain international repute. Though there has been improvement in the three areas mentioned above, there is still large gap to be filled.

The key social sciences that offer insights and information on contemporary Africa are political economy, political science, anthropology and history. The colonial statements on Africa placed more emphasis on anthropology – as the key explanatory social science – and history than on political economy and political science since these latter two were incorporated into the economics and politics of the colonising nation.

It is a fact that though social science research on Africa presented itself as objective in content, it was heavily value laden. The theoretical structures on which it was founded and the theoretical terms used to evaluate had the ingrained intent of reifying and justifying certain material conditions and circumstances in favour of colonial dominance. The function, therefore, of post-colonial social science would be to engage in research that would be more objectivist in nature, thereby correcting the ideological excesses of metropolitan social science and with the goal of producing a social science that would have as its objective the offering of recommendations for optimal social systems for African societies that now exist in a world of novel technological ideas and structures. The solutions offered would no doubt deal with each received social science singly. In this context, discussion of anthropology, history, political science, and political economy follows.

We begin by noting that colonial anthropology was essentially founded on principles of 'race'. The question for increased African research into the anthropology of Africa is whether there is any genuine objective validity for it. The fundamental question is: 'does race exist'? In fact, despite attempts at debating the issue, the idea of race as an objective social marker is still much in practice. The dominance of the post-colonial literature on Africa is much in evidence when Western funding agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank are considering the prospects of African countries. Only pseudo-racial considerations explain the bifurcation of the political economies of the African continent into 'Sub-Saharan' Africa (SSA) and 'Middle East and North Africa'(MENA). Surely, the economic interactions between, say, Senegal and Morocco are much greater than that between Iran and Morocco. It should be noted too, in this regard, that African researchers for the most part casually accept this Western geopolitical structuring of the African continent. One expects that more critical research from African researchers would argue for more rational and objectivist statements on the peoples of Africa.

The casual appellation for Africa's linguistic and other groupings is commonly that of the sociology of the 'tribe' still described according to the intricacies of 'kinship' linkages. Are such qualifications justified or not? A more scientifically disposed social science research would operate on the principle that more epistemologically robust results would be obtained if more universalist and comprehensive the theoretical terms were used. In other words terms such as 'tribe' and 'kinship' become more scientifically acceptable the more they are applied universally in whatever society. Thus, one would expect under these circumstances to see such relational terms applied not only with regard to African society but similarly with Western societies. It would also would, for instance, be a meaningful question to ask about any intra-national tribal groupings in France or Spain. In the same context, one would want to know about the structures of kinship relations in Germany. If such terms were not explanatorily adequate then alternatives would be investigated.

Similar issues arise concerning the structuring of the linguistics of Africa. Classifying languages according to the Hamitic hypothesis has been shown to be theoretically faulty. Joseph Greenberg has introduced a different model according to which a novel nomenclature has been formulated to describe Africa's languages. One instance of that is the old 'Hamito-Semitic' language grouping being transformed into 'Afro-Asiatic' by Greenberg who is viewed by language theorists of Africa as having developed the extant paradigm for the classification of Africa's languages.

The African contribution to language classification in Africa has been mainly that of Cheikh Anta Diop and Theophile Obenga, but there has been little continuity along these lines. Greenberg's thesis remains essentially unchallenged, with some modifying input by Christopher Ehret. The 'Afro-Asiatic' model remains in vogue despite the fact that all members of that linguistic grouping are indigenously African with the exception of Arabic, which being of Semitic classification has its proto-Semitic roots in East Africa (Ehret 1995). There is much basis for critical analysis in this instance on the part of African researchers.

In the case of history the situation is more balanced. During the colonial times the issue of whether there was an African history was one of much contention. It could be assumed that what was meant was whether there were events in the macro-political sense of the term 'history'. There were numerous such events from North Africa to Southern Africa. One set of such events were the state formation events that led to the founding of states such as medieval Ghana, Mali, and Songhay. And before that there was the chronicled history of the Egypto-Nubia complex that had its recorded inception some three thousand years earlier. In the southern part of the continent, there were historical movements that were recorded as oral history too. But the recorded histories of other parts of the continent were archived in written texts. The various *Tariqs* by authors such Kati and Sadi inform on the events that took place in the areas just north of the Equator over a substantial time period. Before that, of course, the Ibn Khaldun text, *Al Maqadima,* published in 1373 offered a detailed history-cum-sociology of Africa north of the Equator.

These facts did not, however, impede European writers such as Hegel from formulating their own versions of African history which he expressed in his *Philosophy of World History* (1837, 1975). The Hegelian thesis was that regardless of events that took place there, African history was just not an integral part of world history. The same trope was assumed by British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper when he argued that no African history of note existed other than that made when Europe entered Africa on its colonising mission. In a set of lectures delivered at the University of Sussex in 1963 (later reprinted in the *Listener* magazine, November and December 1963), Trevor-Roper argued that history as 'purposive action' could not be discerned from events in so-called 'black Africa'. This Hegelian approach to African history has indeed been rectified; but a set of problems still remains. No specific schools of African historical writing according to research paradigms have been developed. There is little recognition of the fact that African history could be approached from a Pan-Africanist angle

as was the case of Cheikh Anta Diop or from the local particularist angle as is the case with most African historians in contemporary times. Diop's *L'Afrique precoloniale* and *L'unite culturelle de l'Afrique noire,* together with Joseph Ki-Zerbo's *Histoire de l'Afique noire,* constitute good examples of the Pan-Afrcianist approach to African history. But such approaches are rare given the petty nationalisms that are the post-colonial vogue in Africa in contemporary times. Another problem is that the writing of African history has been structured along the lines of the colonial model. So-called Francophone historians hardly ever research topics out of the ex-French colonial areas and vice-versa. And even so, the research topics are locally derived. West African historians are not particularly known to write the histories of East Africa, North Africa, or Southern Africa and vice versa. Nor have West African historians extended the colonial model of African history to cover the continuation of African history across the Atlantic and into the Americas. Thirdly, compared to the number of history texts written by European historians on their specific nations as part of the European tapestry, relatively few texts have been attempted by African historians. As a result of the dearth of historical research, continental historical consciousness among Africa's populations is much reduced. This just sets up the conditions for unrewarding conflicts founded on ethnic and sectarian particularities. The solution is that the Pan-African models established by theorists such as Cheikh Anta Diop and Joseph Ki-Zerbo must be readopted and African history taken seriously.

In the area of political science, models of analysis are orthodox, reflecting the influence of existing Western models. Current models of analysis are founded on the realist or liberal schools of thought. There is also an increasing tendency to develop quantitative models that are hardly descriptive of reality. Imitations of these models are increasingly the norm in research on African topics. There have been a number of articles though on the issue of democracy and 'good governance' but such models hardly take into consideration the problematic nature of the organic composition of Africa's sates, created as they were by colonial fiat. State formation in Europe was determined d by internal political forces for the main part but there have been noted instances of exogenous forces in play. Such instances occurred when the larger powers of Europe imposed their will on smaller territories. The result has been bouts of instability. Similar considerations apply to modern state formation in Africa where extra-continental forces have created the contours of its existing states. There have been some readjustments here and there but still extra-continental forces were at work. Cases in point are Ethiopia and Eritrea, and Sudan and South Sudan.

On account of the fact that African states have been exogenously created, contemporary ideas about how the modern state should be configured optimally have been borrowed essentially from the West. Ideas such as 'African socialism' and the 'one-party state' which had some intellectual adherence in the immediate post-colonial era have now been abandoned in favour of ideas that promote 'democracy'. 'Democracy' in this sense would mean a set of political practices determined by optimal agency on the part of the people as 'voters' who select by choice those who would represent them at the governmental level. Assumedly, the choice of particular candidates would be determined by promises regarding issues affecting the commonweal and known competencies to effect such. But such is not the case as a rule concerning the selection of candidates for governmental positions. Choices are usually effected principally on the basis of ethnic or regional affiliations. This would not augur well for good governance.

In the more industrialised areas of the world, political parties are usually structured on economic considerations mainly. The public in general choose their governmental representatives on the basis of what portions of GDP should individual voters be entitled to receive. Thus some voters may favour socialist-type parties while others may show preference for parties that support neo-liberal or conservative type policies. This is generally not the case regarding Africa's voting exercises. Candidates are voted for principally on the basis of their ethnic, religious, and regional affiliations. Clearly, this approach would not bode well for good governance principally because the key issues that should determine whether a particular candidate is fit for some governmental role concern matters of economic management and the distribution of resources and revenues.

The question then is what are the remedies for such discrepancies within the practice of democratic exercises in Africa. Given that the problem derives principally from the fact that the modern African state did not derive from internal developments but from external impositions, any optimal solution would necessarily require that the political consciousness of populations be transformed through civic education and the nurturing of civil society. It would follow that the more the populace is subjected to new knowledge through education the more effective would be novel inputs in civic education. The fundamental question would always be: what are the most effective modalities for effecting optimal human welfare both the political and economic spheres within a given circumscribed political and economic space? In this regard, much more research is needed on the part of Africa's political orientation emanating from increased number of political science

research centres. Following the various works by Claude Ake, researchers such as Mkandawire (2001) and Edigheji (2005) have followed up with interesting analyses, but their efforts need to be replicated manyfold. The result of this paucity of research efforts, especially in the analytical sphere, is a palpable loss of historico-political consciousness. For example, the classic works of Fanon, Memmi, Ake, Nkrumah, Hountondji, Mamdani are not yet universal standard fare in African university offerings.

Similar considerations apply to the practice of economics as a social science in Africa. The neoclassical modelling of economic behaviour and phenomena has been the orthodox norm from the early post-independence days to the present. This could be easily confirmed by simply perusing the course offerings of any department of economics on the African continent. For the most part, they mirror the course offerings of most departments of the neo-liberal West. Alternative modes of economic analysis such as institutionalism, Marxian analysis, and socioeconomics are rarely countenanced. Such pedagogical lacunae could be remedied by creative instruction in areas such as the history of economic theory. It is only in this regard that the ideas that led to the development of modern microeconomic analysis and modern macroeconomics could be adumbrated and discussed. At the moment, economics as a social science is treated in Africa's universities like a species of engineering as it is treated in the West. Economic phenomena are reduced to thickets of mathematical equations that bear little relationship to empirical reality. This is in total disregard for the methods of scientific research. The symbolic languages used by empirical science become significant only when they are employed, mirror and grasp the relevant portions of the empirical world. Without the empirical world as content the various research sciences would not be empirically meaningful at all. The theories of neoclassical economics – with the possible exception of monetary and finance economics – are not at all anchored on portions of the empirical world of actual human behaviour. This is a situation in need of rectification; hence, there is this task ahead for economic research in Africa's universities and research centres.

At present the original programme formulated by the Economic Commission of Africa in 1980, called 'The Lagos Plan of Action' has been replaced by the neoliberal 'New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development' (NEPAD) which stresses open cooperation with Western corporations, privatizations, reduced role for the state in development goals, and open markets. But this approach – originally touted by the World Bank in 1980 by way of the Berg Report – has not been successful. A ready proof of this claim is available in a study of the economic performance of

nations according to the UNDP's Human Development Index. The Human Development Index measures the economic performance of nations according to a set of criteria that focus on human welfare metrics instead of just economic growth. These human welfare metrics include indices such as years of education, life expectancy, living conditions, health, disposable income, and so on. The truth is that the majority of the occupants of the fourth tier are the nations of Africa. Clearly, it is incumbent on Africa's researchers in economics and political economy to derive new models that would help reduce the dire economic conditions of the nations of Africa. The immediate goal is the kind of economic modalities that should be put in place in order to get the nations of Africa making the transition from primary product-producing nations, to nations at the industrial and technological level of a Korea or a Taiwan.

Any new model of analysis must recognise the fact that economics in its most meaningful guise is political economy and not symbolic representations of fictitious agents in an imaginary world. There must also be innovative research into the dynamics of currency exchanges and the ways in which the values of currencies are determined. The fact that we live in a world where some currencies are convertible and others not is a matter of research concern. The longstanding issue of structural unemployment in Africa's economies should also be examined in depth and remedies developed. Neoclassical economics has failed to provide the answers for real economic problems. The failure of neoclassical economics has been most recently underscored in the exhaustive text by French economist Thomas Piketty (2014) in his *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* in which he excoriates neoclassical economists for their near-obsession with irrelevant and petty self-regarding mathematical problems and their flight from the real world derived from ideological considerations. Picketty's thesis is that market neoclassical political economy has led to increasing wealth inequalities over the decades. The reason, simply put, is that over the decades the returns to capital are outstripping the rate of economic growth. And with regard to Africa the stark reality is that most of the investment capital in Africa is not indigenously owned. It is obvious that the answer to a 'what is to be done' question must include accelerated research in economic issues.

In this regard, the collection of essays in this special issue of *Africa Development* proposes the way forward. Amin begins with the observation that given Africa's present economic and social problems the existing social science education for future African cadres is inadequate. University education is not geared to produce individuals with the proper skills to

engage in critical analysis of Africa's economic and political structures. His analysis is structured from a flexible Marxian position which states categorically that there is no pure economics relevant to social conditions but only a specific political economy which seeks to unpack the relations between humans as social beings via the intermediary of capital in the specific form of dynamic capitalism whose historical goal has always been profit, not production for the sake of the masses. Amin traces the present economic impasse in which Africa finds itself, to its integration in the world system beginning with its mercantilist phase dating from the sixteenth century onwards. This integration was based on an unequal exchange which manifested and still manifests itself according to the well-established model of the 'centre-periphery' economic relationship. Amin informs us that the second phase of this dependency relationship began in 1880 and ended in 1960, but still continues in its neocolonial guise. According to Amin, Africa is fully integrated in the world economic system contrary to what is being argued but on very unequal terms. The most viable path forward he argues would be intellectual, political, and economic cooperation.

Bond's paper argues against the notion that South Africa's social and economic structures touted against bare growth rates affords evidence of the 'Africa rising' mantra promoted by neoliberal economic orthodoxy. According to Bond, the post-independence economic facts point to an increasing gap between the economically better-off classes and the poorer classes. What the economics of post-Apartheid economics has wrought is the development of small comprador classes as facilitators of the ongoing economic exploitation of Africa. The revolutionary thought of pre-independence Africa has been jettisoned in favour of new class interests. But the workers of Africa have not been passive in light of the worsening situation. There have been ongoing revolts and protests as in the case of South African workers.

Jane Gordon offers a novel way to hasten the process of decolonisation by way of 'creolisation'. According to its definition, creolisation in this would refer to a kind of transdisciplinary and synthetic mixtures of the social scientific disciplines through which African intellectual structures are constructed – all with an intensity of interaction. This creolized social scientific method would be much more than the casual cohabitation of social and political worlds for those disciplines that treat of African social science issues.

Lewis Gordon broaches the issue of knowledge from the context of what he calls 'colonial impositions' of the already received disciplines which breed 'disciplinary decadence'. For Gordon, this ultimately leads to

the 'fetishisation of method'. He argues that the incipient moribund nature of such disciplines could be overcome by a 'shifting of the geography of reason' by way, not of interdisciplinarity, but by *transdisciplinarity.* This approach to knowledge by way of transdisciplinarity rather than by interdisciplinarity leads to the teleological suspension of disciplines and can be rightly called 'epistemic decolonial acts'. Gordon applies this new approach to the field of Africana philosophy yielding interesting results.

Keita's input is that of an unpacking of contemporary economic theory and its role in social science development. The dominant neoclassical theory presents itself fundamentally as a species of robotic engineering with a programmed 'rational economic man' as main actor. This is highly unrealistic and hardly descriptive of the actual often fallible choices of actual economic agents. He points out that economics as political economy offers a more realistic and comprehensive study of human economic behaviour. Given the problematic nature of the economies of the South, especially those of Africa, more comprehensive paradigms of economic phenomena are indeed preferable especially in the area or pedagogy. Keita offers a close analysis of the structure of neoclassical analysis in order to point out its explanatory weaknesses as a viable 'science'.

Michael Neocosmos takes up the issue of the aftermath of African independence after almost 100 years of colonial domination. At the eve of independence there was a palpable Pan-African spirit as the colonised peoples of Africa militated for independence. The awaited promises were political freedoms as the prelude to economic development. But the masses were disappointed in how the new states operated both politically and economically. Neocosmos places much of the blame on African social science theorists who demonstrate what he calls 'demophobia' towards the masses. Post-independence African social science has linked up ideologically with the new states and their statist approaches to politics and economics. The masses feel betrayed because promises made by their political leaders and governments were not met. As a solution, unacceptable to Neocosmos, is the embracing of xenophobia as in the case of South Africa. A revised social science for post-colonial Africa should be one based on the premise that 'people think!' and that reason should not be the monopoly of university academics and politicians. Neocosmos's recommendation for a genuinely liberated Africa is that a Pan-Africanism of people rather than states represents the way forward.

Sanya Osha presents a study of the technological development of the South African economy from the perspective of evolutionary economics from 1916 onwards. The backdrop for this appraisal is Mario Scerri's work,

The Evolution of the South African System of Innovation Since 1916, on the technological and industrial development history of South Africa from the early part of the 20th century up to recent times. Crucial in Osha's work is his analysis of the neoclassical factoring in of the problematic concept of innovation in its explanation of economic growth and development. In his analysis of South African technological and industrial development Osha points out the directive and planning roles played by government leaders such as Jan Smuts and H.J. van der Bijl. This was first attempt according to Scerri to develop a certain sector an economy using a planned system of innovation but fitted into the paradigm of neoclassical growth theory.

The varied nature of the above essays would no doubt set the template for Africa's continuing efforts to narrow the research gap between itself and the rest of the world.

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Understanding the Political Economy of Contemporary Africa

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Abstract

Current academic programmes in social sciences for African Universities have been prescribed by the World Bank and allied authorities in order to destroy any capacity to develop critical thought. Unable to understand really existing systems which govern the contemporary world, the brain washed cadres are reduced to the status of 'executives' implementing programmes decided elsewhere, unable to contribute to changing that world rejected by their own people. A critique of this totalitarian shallow 'unique thought' which has invested the teaching of economics is the subject of this paper. Further readings, offering a critique of 'post modernist' sociology and cultural studies (see, for instance, Samir Amin, The Liberal Virus, Pluto 2004, pages 19 et seq.) complete the picture of the ongoing intellectual disaster. CODESRIA constitutes an important intellectual locus conducting real open debates with a strong sense of responsibility.

Resumé

Les Programmes en sciences sociales dans les universités africaines ont été prescrits par la Banque mondiale et les autorités alliées afin de détruire toute capacité de développer une pensée critique. Incapable de comprendre réellement les systèmes qui existent et qui régissent le monde contemporain, les cadres qui ont reçu un lavage de cerveau sont réduits à mettre en œuvre des programmes décidés ailleurs, incapables de contribuer au changement de ce monde étant rejeté par leur propre peuple. Une critique de cette totalitaire faible « pensée unique » qui a investi dans l'enseignement de l'économie est le sujet de cet article. D'autres lectures poussées, offrant une critique de la sociologie « post moderniste » et les études culturelles (voir, par exemple, Samir Amin, *The Liberal Virus*, Pluton 2004, pages 19 et suiv.) complètent le tableau de la catastrophe intellectuelle en cours. Le CODESRIA constitue un important locus intellectuel qui mène de réels débats ouverts avec un fort sens de responsabilité.

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Imaginary Capitalism and the Para-theory of 'Pure' Economics

The concept of capitalism cannot be reduced to the 'generalized market', but instead situates the essence of capitalism precisely in power beyond the market. This reduction, as found in the dominant vulgate substitutes the theory of an imaginary system governed by 'economic laws' (the 'market') which would tend, if left to themselves, to produce an 'optimal equilibrium' for the analysis of capitalism based on social relations and a politics through which these powers beyond the market are expressed. In really-existing capitalism, class struggle, politics, the state, and the logics of capital accumulation are inseparable. Consequently, capitalism is by nature a regime in which the successive states of disequilibrium are products of social and political confrontations situated beyond the market. The concepts proposed by the vulgar economics of liberalism – such as 'deregulation' of the markets – have no reality. The so-called deregulated markets are markets regulated by the forces of monopolies which are situated outside the market.

Economic 'alienation' is the specific form of capitalism which governs the reproduction of society in its totality and not only the reproduction of its economic system. The law of value governs not only capitalist economic life, but all social life in this society. This specificity explains why, in capitalism, the economic is erected into a 'science' – that is, the laws which govern the movement of capitalism are imposed on modern societies (and on the human beings which form those societies) 'like laws of nature'. In other words, the fact that these laws are the product not of a trans-historical nature (which would define the 'human being' vis-a-vis the challenge of 'scarcity') but of a particular historical nature (social relations specifically characteristic of capitalism) is erased from social consciousness. This is, in my opinion, how Marx understood 'economism', the unique characteristic of capitalism.

In addition, Marx brings to light the immanent instability of this society, in the sense that the reproduction of its economic system never tends towards the realization of any sort of general equilibrium, but is displaced from disequilibrium to disequilibrium in an unforeseeable manner. One can account for this after the fact but never define it in advance. The 'competition' between capitals – which defines capitalism – suppresses the possibility of realizing any sort of general equilibrium and thus renders illusory any analysis founded on such a supposed tendency. Capitalism is synonymous with permanent instability. The articulation between the logics produced by this competition of capitals and those which are deployed through the evolution of the social relations

of production (among capitalists, between them and the exploited and dominated classes, among the states which form capitalism as a world system) accounts, after the fact, for the movement of the system as it displaces itself from one disequilibrium to another. In this sense, capitalism does not exist outside of the class struggle, the conflict between states, and politics. The idea that there exists an economic logic (which economic science enables us to discover) that governs the development of capitalism is an illusion. There is no theory of capitalism distinct from its history. Theory and history are indissociable, just as are economics and politics.

I have pointed out these two dimensions of Marx's radical critique precisely because these are the two dimensions of reality of which bourgeois social thought is ignorant. This thought is, in fact, economistic from its origins in the era of the Enlightenment. The 'Reason' that it invokes attributes to the capitalist system, which replaces the Ancien Regime, a trans-historical legitimacy, making it the 'end of history'. This economic alienation was to be accentuated thereafter, precisely in the attempt to respond to Marx. Pure economics, starting with Walras, expresses this exacerbation of the economism of bourgeois social thought. It substitutes the myth of a self-regulating market, which would tend through its own internal logic towards the realization of a general equilibrium, for the analysis of the real functioning of capitalism. Instability is no longer conceived as immanent to this logic, but as the product of the imperfections of real markets. Economics thus becomes a discourse which is no longer engaged in knowing reality; its function is no more than to legitimize capitalism by attributing to it intrinsic qualities which it cannot have. Pure economics becomes the theory of an imaginary world.

The dominant forces are such because they succeed in imposing their language on their victims. The 'experts' of conventional economics have managed to make believe that their analyses and the conclusions drawn from them are imperative because they are 'scientific', hence objective, neutral and unavoidable. This is not true. The so-called pure economics on which they base their analyses does not deal with reality, but with an imaginary system which not only does not approach reality but is located squarely in the opposite direction. Really-existing capitalism is another thing entirely.

This imaginary economics mixes up concepts and confuses progress with capitalist expansion, market with capitalism. In order to develop effective strategies, social movements must liberate themselves from this confusion.

The confusion of two concepts – the reality (capitalist expansion) and the desirable (progress in a determined sense) – is at the origin of many disappointments expressed in the criticisms of implemented policies. The dominant discourses systematically mix up concepts. They propose means that enable the expansion of capital and then quality as 'development' that results, or would result, according to them. The logic of the expansion of capital does not imply any result qualifiable in terms of 'development'. It does not suppose, for example, full employment or an amount designated in advance for the unequal (or equal) distribution of income. The logic of this expansion is guided by the search for profits by individual enterprises. This logic can entail, in certain conditions, growth or stagnation, expansion of employment or its reduction, can reduce inequality in incomes or accentuate it, according to circumstances.

Here again the sustained confusion between the concept of 'market economy' and that of 'capitalist economy' is at the source of a dangerous weakness found in critiques of the policies that are carried out. The 'market', which refers by nature to competition, is not 'capitalism', which is defined precisely by the limits to competition that the monopoly or oligopoly (for some people, to the exclusion of others) of private property implies. The 'market' and capitalism form two distinct concepts. Really-existing capitalism is, as Braudel's analysis has shown so well, the opposite even of the imaginary market.

In addition, really-existing capitalism does not function as a system of competition among the beneficiaries of the monopoly of property – competition among them and against others. Its operation requires the intervention of a collective authority representing capital as a whole. Thus the state is not separable from capitalism. The policies of capital, thus of the state insofar as it represents capital, have their own concrete logical stages. It is these logical stages that account for the fact that, at certain times, the expansion of capital entails an increase in employment, at other times a decrease in employment. These logical stages are not the expression of 'laws of the market', formulated in the abstract as such, but requirements of the profitability of capital in certain historical conditions.

There is no 'law of capitalist expansion' which is imposed as a quasi-supernatural force. There is no historical determinism anterior to history. The inherent tendencies of the logic of capital always clash with forces which resist its effects. Real history is thus the product of this conflict between the logic of capitalist expansion and those logics that spring from social forces resisting its expansion. In this sense, the state is rarely simply the state of capital, it is also at the heart of the conflict between capital and society.

For example, the industrialization of the post-war period, from 1945 to 1990, was not the natural product of capitalist expansion but rather resulted from conditions imposed on capital by the victories of national liberation movements, which forced globalizing capital to adjust to this industrialization. For example, the erosion of the effectiveness of the national state, produced by capitalist globalization, is not an irreversible determinant of the future. On the contrary, national reactions to this globalization could impose unforeseen trajectories onto global expansion, for better or worse according to circumstances. For example, the concerns stemming from the environment, which are in conflict with the logic of capital (which is by nature a short-term logic) could impose important transformations onto capitalist adjustment. One could multiply the examples.

The effective response to the challenges can only be found if one understands that history is not governed by the infallible unfolding of economic laws. It is produced by social reactions to the tendencies expressed by these laws which, in turn, are defined by the social relations within the framework in which these laws operate. The 'anti-systemic' forces – if one wants to refer to this organized, coherent and effective refusal to unilateral and total submission to the requirements of these alleged laws (in fact, quite simply, the law of profit characteristic of capitalism as a system) – make real history as much as the 'pure' logic of capitalist accumulation. These forces govern the possibilities and the forms of the expansion which then develop within the framework that they have organized.

The method proposed here prohibits formulating 'recipes' in advance that would allow the future to be made. The future is produced by the transformations in the social and political relations of force, themselves produced by struggles whose outcomes are not known in advance. One can nevertheless reflect on this process, in the context of contributing to the crystallization of coherent and possible projects and, consequently, help any social movement avoid false solutions. In the absence of such reflection, a movement could easily become bogged down in the pursuit of these 'solutions'.

The project of a humanist response to the challenge of capitalism's globalized expansion is by no means utopian. On the contrary, it is the only possible realistic project, in the sense that the beginning of an evolution towards such a response could rapidly win over powerful social forces capable of imposing a logic on it. If there is a utopia, in the banal and negative sense of the term, it is truly the project of managing the system, understood as regulation by the market.

The Theoretical Model of Capital Accumulation in the Contemporary World

The aim of this study is to show that there is a basic difference between the model of the accumulation of capital and economic and social development that is characteristic of an autocentric system and that of a system in the periphery. This difference – that we consider to be absolutely fundamental – having been highlighted, it is in the general theoretical framework that we shall try to relocate questions of social structure as well as the diverse aspects that are essential to the problems of the contemporary world, both social (particularly that of unemployment, under-employment and marginalisation) as well as ideological and political (especially problems of social consciousness, class consciousness, problems of planning, the mobilisation of resources and people, problems of education and its social role, etc.).

This table below 'sums up' abstractly the difference – from this viewpoint – between an autocentric system and a peripheral one.

(main articulation of an autocentred system)			
1	2	3	4
Exports	Mass consumption	Luxury consumption	Production goods

Note too that the articulated sectors above also apply to the dependent periphery. The activities in the different sectors would, of course be different.

The economic system is divided into four sectors that can be considered either from the production angle or from that of the distribution of the active population involved in the production activities as described.

The Determining Articulation in an Autocentric System

The determining articulation in an autocentric system is the one linking sector 2 (the production of mass consumption goods) to sector 4 (the production of industrial plant that enables the production of sector 2). This determining articulation has indeed been characteristic of the historical development of capitalism at the centre of the system (in Europe, North America and Japan). It therefore illustrates abstractly the 'pure' mode of capitalist production and has been analysed as such, in Marx's *Capital.* It can also be shown that the development processes of the USSR and China have also been based on this

articulation, although the forms, as far as China is concerned, are original.

Marx does, indeed, show that in the world of capitalist production there is an objective relationship (that is to say, necessary) between the rate of surplus value and the level of development of the productive forces. The rate of surplus value essentially determines the structure and social distribution of the revenue (its division between the wage earners and the surplus value that takes the form of profit and, hence, that of demand (as it is the wage earners who constitute most of the demand for mass consumption goods, the profits are totally or partially 'saved' with a view to being 'invested'). The level of development of the productive forces is expressed in the social division of labour: the allocation of the work force, in appropriate proportions, to sections 2 and 4 (sections 2 and 1 in Marx's reproduction model). This objective relation, although fundamental in Capital, has often been 'forgotten', particularly in the debate on the tendency of the rate of profit to diminish. The argument, often put forward, that the increase in the organic composition of capital can be compensated by that of the rate of surplus value loses it coherence as soon as one realizes that the contradiction between the capacity of the system to produce and its capacity to consume – inherent in the capitalist mode of production – is constantly being overcome and this explains the objective character of the relationship between the rate of surplus value and the level of development of the productive forces. As we have so often emphasized, this theoretical model of accumulation is infinitely richer than all the subsequent empiricist models:

i) because it reveals the origin of profit (which requires a prior theory of value) and gets rid of economic rationality as an absolute quality, restoring it to its real status of rationality *in a system* and not rationality independent of the system, as Piero Sraffa has rediscovered so brilliantly (in *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities*, Cambridge University Press, 1960);
ii) because it shows that the economic choices made in this system are necessarily sub-optimal, showing the ideological – i.e. non-scientific – character of the marginalist constructions of 'general equilibrium'; and
iii) because it demonstrates that the 'real wage' cannot be 'any old wage' and that it therefore gives an objective status to social power relationships.

The objective relation in question is expressed in the conjunctural fluctuations of activities and unemployment. An increase in the rate of surplus value above its objectively necessary level leads to a crisis, when

there is insufficient effective demand. A reduction of this rate slows down economic growth and therefore creates labour conditions that are favourable for capital. As we have shown, this adjustment – which indeed corresponds to the history of the accumulation of the industrial revolution at the time of the 1930 crisis (a history marked by the economic cycle) is now more complex because the influence of this secondary effect in wage variations on the choice of techniques is responsible for the suboptimal character of the economic system. The tendency towards full employment (which does not exclude but, on the contrary, involves a small margin of permanent unemployment) as well as substantial conjunctural fluctuations of unemployment show how this system functions. The internal transformations of contemporary capitalism have removed the functionality of this adjustment mechanism. The monopolisation of capital on the one hand and the organization of workers at the national level on the other, made possible 'planning' that was aimed at reducing conjunctural fluctuations. If the working class accept to operate in this framework, which is the system by which, under the leadership of the State, capital and labour accept a 'social contract' linking growth of the real wage to that of productivity (in given data which is calculated by the 'technocrats') almost stable full employment can be guaranteed.

Except that obviously some sectors of the society can, by refusing the 'contract', cause trouble. This is especially the case of the small and medium enterprises who will be the ones to suffer from the concentration and who can – especially in relatively backward structures – carry out more or less effective political blackmail. Also, except that foreign relations are not subject to this kind of planning. The contradiction is growing between the global character of production – illustrated by the increasing weight of the multinational corporations – and the continuing national character of institutions, both capital and labour. The social-democrat ideology expressed in this type of social contract, is limited by the borders of the national state.

Schematic as this model may seem – it is evidently an abstraction of reality – it nevertheless captures the essence of the system. In this model, foreign relations are made abstract, which means, not that the development of capitalism operates in an autarchic national framework, but that the essential relations in the system can be grasped by making an abstraction of them. Besides, the foreign relations of the developed regions as a whole with the periphery of the world system remain quantitatively marginal in comparison with the internal flows within the centre. These relations, furthermore, help primitive accumulation, and not expanded reproduction and it is for this reason that such abstraction is valid.

The historically relative character of the distinction between mass consumption goods and luxury goods is also apparent here. The demand from wage earners expands with economic growth – the progress of the productive forces. While, at the outset of capitalist history this demand was almost exclusively made up of essential consumption – food, textiles, housing – it has now reached a more advanced stage of development with production of consumer durables (cars, electric domestic appliances, etc.). This development of the type of 'mass' products is of decisive importance for understanding the problem that concerns us. The structure of the demand at the beginning of the system was such that it favoured the agricultural revolution as it provided an outlet for food products for the domestic market (historically this transformation of agriculture took the form of agrarian capitalism). Then, as we know, the textile industry and urbanization played a historical role (hence the saying 'when [building] construction is doing well, everything is doing well.' On the other hand, the consumer durables – as their production takes up much capital and skilled labour – developed late when productivity in agriculture and the industries producing non-durable goods had already reached decisive stages.

The Main Articulation in the Peripheral Model

The model of accumulation and economic and social development in the periphery of the world system has virtually nothing in common with the one outlined above.

At its origin we find the setting up – under the stimulus from the centre – of an export sector that was to play a determining role in the creation and shaping of the market. We will not advance much further by perpetually repeating the platitude that the products exported by the periphery are primary minerals and agricultural products, for which this or that region in the periphery has some natural advantage (abundant minerals or tropical produce). The ultimate reason that creates an export sector lies in the answer to the question about the conditions that make it 'profitable'. National capital is in no way obliged to emigrate because of insufficient outlets in the centre. However, it will emigrate towards the periphery if it is more profitable to do so. The equalisation of the rate of profit will distribute the benefits from this higher income and make the export of capital appear to be a way of combating the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. Obtaining from the periphery the products that constitute the basic elements of constant capital (raw materials) and variable capital (food products) at costs of production that are lower to

those of analogous products in the centre (or, evidently, substitutes in the case of specific products like coffee or tea): this is the reason for creating this export sector.

It is therefore here that the necessary theory of unequal exchange has to be introduced. The products exported by the periphery are interesting to the extent that – ceteris paribus – and here this expression means *equality in productivity* – labour costs can be inferior to those in the centre. They can be so because the society will be subjected by all possible means – economic and non-economic – to adapt to its new function: supplying cheap labour to the export sector.

This is not the place to develop the history of the shaping of the periphery to the requirements of the centre. We have also done this when we distinguished the stages of the development of capitalism (mercantilism, competitive industrialism without capital exportation, financial capitalism of the monopolies with capital exportation) on the one hand and, on the other hand, the different regions of the Third World' (Latin America, Africa, Asia). We shall just say that once a society – which has become in this sense dependent – has been subjected to this new function, it loses its 'traditional' character because it is obviously not the function of genuinely traditional societies (i.e., pre-capitalist) only to supply cheap labour to capitalism! All the problems of transforming so-called traditional societies must be re-considered in this context, without reference to 'dualism', that is to say at the supposed juxtaposition of an autonomous 'traditional' society and an extension of 'modern' society.

For, while in this model and at this stage there is no real articulation between the export sector and 'the rest of the economy', society is subjected to the principal requirement of supplying cheap labour to the export sector. The main articulation characterising the accumulation process at the centre – through the existence of an objective relationship between the cost of labour and the level of development of the productive forces – completely disappears. Wage remuneration in the export sector will therefore be as low as economic, social *and political* conditions allow. As for the level of development of the productive forces, it would be heterogeneous in this case (whereas it is homogeneous in the autocentric model): advanced (and sometimes very advanced), in the export sector and backward in 'the rest of the economy'. This backwardness – maintained by the system – is the condition that enables the export sector to benefit from cheap labour.

In these conditions, the domestic market engendered by the development of the export sector will be limited and biased. The narrow nature of this market is to be explained by the fact that the periphery attracts only a limited

amount of capital from the centre, even though it offers greater profits. The contradiction between the capacity to consume and the capacity to produce is overcome at the level of the world system as a whole (centre and periphery) by enlarging the market at the centre, with the periphery – fully deserving of its name – functioning only in a marginal, subordinate and limited way. This dynamic leads to a growing polarization of wealth to the benefit of the centre.

Nevertheless, based on a certain extension of the export sector, a domestic market made its appearance. In comparison with the market engendered in the central process, this market is biased – relatively speaking – against the demand for mass consumer goods, and – relatively speaking – in favour of that for 'luxury' goods. If all the invested capital in the export sector was foreign, and if all the profits of this capital were re-exported back to the centre, the domestic market would in fact be limited for mass consumer goods, all the more limited by the low remuneration of labour. But, in fact, part of this capital is local. In addition, the methods used to ensure this low remuneration are based on the reinforcement of different local and parasitical social strata that function as a conveyor belt: *latifundistas* here, kulaks there, commercial compradors or State bureaucratic bourgeoisie, etc. The domestic market will therefore be mainly on the demand for 'luxury' goods of these social strata.

It is this specific articulation – which is expressed by the export sector/luxury goods link – that is characteristic of the periphery model dependent on accumulation and economic and social development. Industrialisation, through the substitution of imports, will thus start at 'the end', that is by making products that correspond to the more advanced stages of development of the centre, the 'durable' goods. As we have already said, these products consume huge amounts of capital and rare resources (such as skilled labour, etc.), As a result there is a *basic distortionin* allocating resources in favour of these products, to the detriment of those in sector 2. This sector will be systematically penalised: it will not generate any 'demand' for its products and it will not attract any financial and human resources that enable it to modernise. Hence the stagnation of 'subsistence agriculture' is explained: its potential products are in low demand and it has no means of effecting a serious transformation in the allocation of scarce resources. All choices of 'development strategies' based on 'profitability', the structures for the distribution of revenue as well as the structures of price relative to those of demand being what they are, have necessarily led to this systematic distortion. The few 'industries' thus installed within this framework, will never become poles of development: on the contrary they

will accentuate the inequality within the system, impoverishing most of the population (who are included, as 'producers', in sector 2). Indeed, they enable a still greater integration of the minority into the world system.

Seen from a social viewpoint, this model will lead to the specific phenomenon of the *marginalisation* of the masses. By this we mean an ensemble of mass impoverishing mechanisms, which take various forms: the proletarianisation of the small agricultural producers and artisans, rural semi-proletarianisation and impoverishment without proletarianisation of the organised peasants in village communities, urbanisation and a massive increase in overt urban unemployment, under-employment, etc. Unemployment thus takes very different forms from those it took in the central development model: under-employment in general tends to grow rather than being relatively limited and stable – apart from conjunctural fluctuations. The function of unemployment and under-employment is thus different from its function in the central model: the weight of unemployment ensures a minimum remuneration of labour that is relatively rigid and blocked in both sector 1 and sector 3. Wages do not appear to be considered both as cost and income, creating a demand that is essential for the model, but only as a cost, the demand originating elsewhere: abroad or among the privileged social categories.

The 'extraverted' origin of the development which perpetuates itself in spite of the growing diversification of the economy, its industrialisation, etc. is not an *original sin, a deus ex macchina* outside the model of peripheral dependent accumulation. This is because it is a model that reproduces the social and economic conditions for it to function. The marginalisation of the masses is the very condition that enables the integration of a minority into the world system and a guarantee of growing income for that minority, which conditions the adoption by this minority of the 'European' consumer models. The extension of this consumer model guarantees the 'profitability' of sector 3, and strengthens the social, cultural, ideological and political integration of the privileged classes.

Thus, at this stage of the diversification and deepening of under-development, new mechanisms of domination/dependency develop – mechanisms that are cultural and political. But also through economic mechanisms: technological dependency and the domination of transnational companies. In fact, sector 3 requires capital-intensive investments that only the great transnational oligopolies can provide and they are the material support of technological dependency.

But also at this stage there appear more complex forms in ownership structure and economic management. Experience shows that in the

industrialisation process, the participation of local private capital through import substitution is often frequent, even if it is subordinate. It also shows that – at least in the large countries – there is a sufficient market created by the development of sectors 1 and 3 that can make the establishment of sector 4 feasible. This is often imposed by the State. However, the development of a basic industry and a public sector by no means ensures that the system will evolve towards a full-blown autocentric system. This is because sector 4 is at the service, not of the development of sector 2, but of that of sectors 1 and 3.

The analysis therefore poses the fundamental question: development for whom? If development only makes sense if it integrates the masses and their interests, the model of dependent peripheral accumulation leads to an impasse. A development strategy *for the masses* must be based on a fundamental revision of priorities in the allocation of resources and this implies rejecting the profitability rules of the system. This is where the real meaning of a transition strategy lies. Transition is nothing else but the historical period of revising the model, of reversing its priorities, from a gradual move from the articulation 1-3-4 to the articulation 2–4. It must be seen from this angle and not simply of that of the 'forms' of the economy: industrial diversification versus mono-production of exports, public ownership versus foreign capital, etc.

The passage of the dependent, under-development model (based on the main articulation 1-3) towards a genuine, autonomous and autocentric development model (based on articulation 2-4) is the essential content of the *transition* issue. The integration into the world system of countries that have become under-developed is at the origin of a specific contradiction of the system that tends to become its main contradiction: on the one hand it created the objective conditions of a need for development, which is felt as such by the peoples of the periphery, but on the other hand it blocks the road for these countries to achieve a full-blown capitalist development, which was the historical response to the problem of accumulation, the precondition for socialism. This is why this specific contradiction has become the main contradiction, that is to say, the one that is expressed by a rupture towards a surpassing of the system.

This is nothing more than yet another expression of the *law of unequal development*, according to which systems are destroyed and overtaken first not in their central core but based on their peripheries that constitute the weak links of a chain: those that express the contradiction in its maximum intensity.

The Political Economy of Africa in the Global System

Africa's Marginalisation

It is usually said that Africa is 'marginalised'. The phrase suggests that the continent – or at least most of it south of the Sahara, except perhaps South Africa – is out of the global system, or is at best integrated into it only superficially. It is suggested also that the poverty of African people precisely is the result of their economies being not sufficiently integrated into the global system. I challenge these views.

Let us consider first some facts which are hardly mentioned by the incense-bearers of current globalisation. In 1990 the ratio of extra regional trade to GDP was for Africa 45.6 per cent while it was only 12.8 per cent for Europe; 13.2 per cent for North America; 23.7 per cent for Latin america and 15.2 per cent for Asia. These ratios were not significantly different throughout the twentieth century. The average for the world was 14.9 per cent in 1928 and 16.1 per cent in 1990 (Source: Serge Cordelier, *La mondialisation au delà des mythes,* La découverte, Paris 1997, p. 141 figures from WTO 1995).

How can we explain this curiosity that Africa is apparently even more integrated in the world system than any other developed or developing region? Of course the levels of development, as measured by per capita GDP, are highly unequally distributed, and, from that point of view, Africa is the poorest region in the modern world system, its GDP per capita amounting only to 21 per cent of the world average and 6 per cent of that of the developed centres. Therefore the high proportion of Africa's extra regional trade with respect to its GDP would reflect the small size of the denominator of the ratio. Simultaneously, the exports (as well as the imports) of Africa represent only a minute proportion of the world's trade. And this is exactly the reason for which Africa is considered 'marginal' in the world system, i.e. having little importance ('the world could live easily without Africa'). That concept according to which a country or a region is qualified 'marginalised', if its quantitative weight in the global economy is small, assumes implicitly that the logic of the expansion of the global capitalist economy pursues the maximisation of production (and therefore also of trade). This assumption is utterly wrong. In fact it matters little that Africa's exports have represented only a minute part of world trade yesterday and today. Capitalism is not a system which sets out to maximise production and productivity, but one which chooses the volumes and conditions of production which maximise the profit rate of capital. The so-called marginalised countries are, in fact, the super-exploited in brutal ways and therefore, impoverished countries, not countries located 'at the margin' of the system.

The analysis needs therefore to be completed on other grounds. The relatively modest ratio for the developed areas – North America (USA and Canada) and Western-central Europe (the European Union, Switzerland and Norway) is associated not only to the highest levels of development but also with a qualitative characteristics that ought to be spelled out: all developed countries have been built historically as auto-centred economies. I introduce here that essential concept which is ignored by conventional economics. Autocentred is synonymous to 'basically inward looking.' not to 'autartic' ('closed'). That means that the process of capitalist accumulation in those countries which have become the centres of the world system has always been – and I submit continues and will continue to be so in the visible future – simultaneously inward-looking and open, even in most cases aggressively open ('imperialist'). That means therefore that the global system has an asymmetric structure: the centres are inward-looking auto-centred and simultaneously integrated in the global system in an active way (they shape the global structure); the peripheries are not inward-looking (not auto-centred) and therefore integrated in the global system in a passive way (they 'adjust' to the system, without playing any significant role in shaping it). That vision of the real world system is totally different from the one offered by conventional thought which describes superficially the world as a 'pyramid' constructed of unequally wealthly countries ranking from the lowest levels of GDP per capita to the highest ones.

My conclusion from this conceptualisation is that all the regions of the world (including Africa) are equally integrated in the global system, but they are integrated into it in different ways. The concept of marginalisation is a false concept which hides the real question, which is not 'to which degree the various regions are integrated' but 'in which way they are integrated'.

Additionally, the figures referred to above indicate that the degree of integration in the world system has not dramatically changed throughout the whole twentieth century, as is being suggested by the dominant fashion discourse on globalisation. There have been ups and downs but the trend which reflects the progress of the degree of integration has been continuous and rather slow, not even accelerating throughout the last decades. That does not exclude the fact that globalisation – which is an old story – has developed through successive phases that should be identified as qualitatively different, focusing on the specificities of each of them, in relation to the changes commanded by the evolution of the centres of the system, i.e., dominant global capital.

Africa's Integration into the Global System

On the basis of the methodology which I have suggested here, we can now look into the various phases of Africa's integration in the global system and identify the specific ways in which that integration operated for each of the successive phases analysed.

Africa was integrated into the global system from the very start of the building of that system, in the mercantilist phase of early capitalism (the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). The major periphery of that time was the colonial Americas where an outward-looking export economy was established, dominated by European Atlantic merchant capitalist interests. In its turn, that export economy focused on sugar and cotton, was based on slave labour. Therefore, through the slave trade, large parts of Africa – especially West Africa – were integrated into the global system in this most destructive way. A good part of the later 'backwardness' of the continent is due to that form of 'integration' which led to a decrease in population to the extent that it is only now that Africa has recovered the proportion of the global population of the world it had probably around 1500 AD. It led also to the dismantling of earlier larger state organisations to which were substituted with small military brutal systems and permanent war between them.

In America itself the mercantilist form of integration in the world system destroyed the potential for further development in many devastated regions. During that phase of early capitalism the highest rates of growth were achieved in areas such as the Caribbean, North-East Brazil, and the US South. An expert of the World Bank, if he had visited those areas at that time, would have written about their 'growth miracle' (the value of Saint Domingue's exports of sugar was, at a time, larger than the total exports of England !) and concluded that New England, which was building an auto-centred economy, was on the wrong track. Today, Saint Domingue is Haïti and New England has become the USA!

The second wave of integration of Africa in the global system was that of the colonial period, roughly from 1880 to 1960. Once conquered, it was necessary to 'develop' the Africa in question. At this juncture the logic of world capitalism enters the picture. A key question is: what natural resources do the various regions of the continent possess? It seems to me that in this context we would understand what each of the three models of colonisation operated in Africa were : the trading economy incorporating a small peasantry into the world tropical products market by subjecting it to the authority of a market of controlled oligopolies making it possible to reduce the rewards for peasant labour to the minimum and to waste

land; the economy of Southern Africa's labour reserves organised around mining, supplied with cheap labour by forced migration coming precisely from the inadequate ' reserves' to enhance the perpetuation of traditional rural subsistence; the economy of pillage which the concessionary companies embarked upon by taxing those enterprises that engaged in massive labour exploitation. Here neither the local social conditions permitted the establishment of 'trading' nor the mineral resources justified the organisation of reserves intended to furnish abundant manpower. The conventional Congo basin belonged to this third category in the main.

The results of this mode of insertion into world capitalism were going to prove also catastrophic for Africans. First it delayed – by a century – any commencement of an agricultural revolution. A surplus could here be extracted from the labour of the peasants and from the wealth offered by nature without investments of modernisation (no machines or fertilizer), without genuinely paying for the labour (reproducing itself in the framework of the traditional self-sufficiency), without even guaranteeing the maintenance of the natural conditions of reproduction of wealth (pillage of the agrarian soils and forests). Simultaneously, this mode of development of natural resources tapped into the framework of the unequal international division of labour of the time, and excluded the formation of any local middle class. On the contrary, each time that the latter started the process of its formation, the colonial authorities hastened to suppress it.

As a result, today most so-called 'less developed countries' are, as everybody knows, located in Africa. The countries which today make up this 'fourth world' are, for large part, countries destroyed by the intensity of their integration in an earlier phase of the global expansion of capitalism. Bangladesh, for example, is the successor state of Bengal, which was the jewel of British colonisation in India. Others have been – or still are – peripheries of peripheries. For example, consider Burkina Faso which has supplied most of its active labour force to Côte d'Ivoire. If one had taken into consideration the two countries as, in fact, constituting a single region of the capitalist system of the epoch, the characteristic rates of the 'Ivory Coast miracle' would have had to be divided by two. Emigration impoverishes the regions which feed its flow and thus support the costs of bringing up youth who are lost at the moment when they become potentially active, as well as the costs of supporting the old after their return. These costs, much greater than the 'money orders' sent to the families by the active emigrants, are almost always forgotten in the calculations of our economists. There are only few countries which are 'poor' and not integrated or little integrated in the global system. Perhaps North Yemen or Afghanistan were exceptions

in the past. Their integration which is underway to date, like that of others yesterday, produces nothing more than a 'modernisation of poverty' – the shantytowns taking on the landless peasants. The weaknesses of the national liberation movements and of the inheritor states of colonisation date back to this colonial fashioning. They are therefore not the products of the pristine pre-colonial Africa, which disappeared in the storm, as the ideology of global capitalism endeavours to derive its legitimacy from it, by holding forth its usual racist discourse. The 'criticisms' of independent Africa, of its corrupt political middle classes, of the lack of economic direction, of the tenacity of rural community structures forget that these features of contemporary Africa were forged between 1880 and 1960.

No wonder then that neocolonialism has perpetuated these features. The form that this failure took is quite fully defined by the limits of these famous Lome Agreements which have linked Africa to Europe of the EEC. These agreements have indeed perpetuated the old division of labour – relegating independent Africa to the production of raw materials, at the very time when – during the Bandung period (from 1955 to 1975) – the third world was embarking elsewhere on an industrial revolution. They have made Africa lose about thirty years at a decisive moment of historic change. Undoubtedly, African ruling classes were here maximally responsible for what was going to start the involution of the continent, particularly when they joined the neocolonial camp against the aspirations of their own people, whose weaknesses they exploited. The collusion between African ruling classes and the global strategies of imperialism is therefore, definitely, the ultimate cause of the failure.

Development without Industrialisation

Yet, having gained their political independence the peoples of Africa embarked as of 1960 on development projects the main objectives of which were more or less identical to those pursued in Asia and Latin America despite the differences of ideological discourses which accompanied them here and there. This common denominator is easily understood, if we simply recall that in 1945 practically all Asian countries (excluding Japan), Africa (including South Africa), and – although with a few nuances – Latin America were still bereft of modern industry – except mining here and there – and were largely rural by the composition of their population, governed by archaic regimes, land-owning oligarchies or were of colonial status (Africa, India, South East Asia). Beyond their great diversity, all the national liberation movements had the same objectives of political independence, modernisation of the State, and industrialisation of the economy.

There is today a great temptation to read this history as that of a stage of the expansion of world capitalism, which was said to have performed, more or less certain functions attached to primitive national accumulation, thereby creating the conditions for the next stage, which we are now supposed to be entering marked by the opening out to the world market and competition in this field. I will not suggest that we should yield to this temptation. The dominant forces in world capitalism have not 'spontaneously' created the model(s) of development. This 'development' was imposed on them. It was the product of the national liberation movement of the contemporary third world. The reading which I propose therefore stresses the contradiction between the spontaneous and immediate trends of the capitalist system, which are always guided only by the short-term financial gain that characterises this mode of social management, and the longer-term visions which guide the rising political forces, in conflict for that very reason, with the former. This conflict is certainly not always radical; capitalism adjusts itself to it, even profitably. But it only adjusts to it; it does not generate its movement.

All liberation movements in Africa shared this modernist vision, which for that very reason I qualify capitalist. Capitalist by its concept of modernisation, expected to produce the relationships of production and the social relationships basic and peculiar to capitalism: the wage relationship, business management, urbanisation, patterns of education, the concept of national citizenship. No doubt other values, characteristic of advanced capitalism, like that of political democracy, were woefully lacking, and this was justified by the exigencies of prior initial development. All countries of the region – radicals and moderates – chose by the same formula of the single party, farcical elections and leader-founder of the Nation. Yet, in the absence of a middle-class of businessmen, the State with its technocrats – was expected to substitute itself. But sometimes also, in so far as the emergence of the middle-class was held in suspicion on account of the priority that the latter would give to its immediate interests over the longer-term developmental projects under construction. Suspicion became, in the radical wing of the national liberation movement, synonymous with exclusion. This radical wing then believed naturally that its project was that of the 'building of socialism'. It then took up the Soviet ideology.

If we adopt the criterion of national liberation movement, that is 'national construction', the results are on the whole arguable. The reason is that whereas the development of capitalism in earlier times supported national integration, the globalisation operating in the peripheries of the system, on the contrary, breaks up societies. However, the ideology of national movement ignored this contradiction, having been enclosed in the bourgeois concept of 'making up for a historic backwardness', and conceiving this catching up by

passive participation in the international division of labour (and not trying to modify it by delinking). No doubt, according to the specific characters of pre-capitalist pre-colonial societies, the impact of this disintegration was more or less dramatic. In Africa, whose artificial colonial demarcations did not respect the previous history of its peoples, the disintegration wrought by capitalist peripherisation made it possible for ethnocentricities to survive, despite the efforts of some ruling groups following national liberation to get rid of its manifestations. When crisis came, destroying suddenly the increase in the surplus which had enhanced the financing of trans-ethnic policies of the new state, the ruling class itself broke up into fragments which, having lost every legitimacy based on the achievements of 'development', try to create for themselves new bases often associated with ethnic retreat.

While a number of countries in Asia and Latin America did embark during those 'decades of development' of the second half of the twentieth century on a process of industrialisation which turned out, in some cases, to be competitive on global markets, 'successful development' (in fact growth without development) remained in Africa within the old division of labour, i.e. providing raw materials. Oil countries are typical, since other major mineral resources, such as copper, suffer a long structural demand crisis, but also some 'tropical agricultural,' as Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malawi. These were shown as 'brilliant successes'. In fact they have no future, they belonged to the past from the very start of their prosperity. Therefore most of those experiences turned to be unsuccessful growth even within those limits of the old division of labour. This is the case of most of Africa. These difficulties were not necessarily the product of 'bad policies.' but of objective conditions. This type of development had already been achieved in the colonial times and reached its ceiling by 1960. This was the case of Ghana. The Ivory Coast miracle was just a matter of 'catching up' with colonial West African coast achievements!

Global Capital and Economic Regression in Africa

What followed the erosion of the national development projects of the 1960s and 1970s is well documented. The starting point was the brutal reversal in the balance of social forces, to the benefit of capital, which occurred in the 1980s. Dominant capital, as represented by the TNCs (transnational corporations) moved into the offensive, operating in Africa through the so-called 'structural adjustment programmes' enforced throughout the continent since the mid-1980s. I say 'so-called' because in fact those programmes are more conjunctural than structural, their real and exclusive target being the subordination of the economies of Africa to the constraint of servicing their

high external debt, which in its turn, is to a large extent the very product of the stagnation which started appearing in the LDCs along with the deepening crisis of the global system.

During the two last decades of the century, average rates of growth of GDP have fallen to roughly half of what they had been in the previous two decades, for all regions of the world, Africa included, except for Eastern Asia. It is during that period of structural crisis that the external debt of third world countries (and Eastern Europe) started growing dangerously. The global crisis is, indeed – as usual – characterised by growing inequality in the distribution of income, high rates of profits, and therefore a growing surplus of capital which cannot find an outlet in the expansion of the productive systems. Alternative financial outlets have to be created in order to avoid a brutal devalorisation of capital. The US deficit, the external debt of third world countries are responses to that financialisation of the system. The burden has now reached unsustainable levels. How could a poor African country earmark half or more of its exports simply to pay the interests of such a debt, and simultaneously be requested to be 'more efficient' and 'adjust'? Let us remember that, after World War I, the payment of German's reparations did represent only 7 per cent of the exports of that industrialised and powerful country. And yet most economists at that time considered the level too high and the 'adjustment' of Germany to it impossible! Germany could not adjust to a loss of 7 per cent of its export potential, but Tanzania is supposed to be able to adjust to a loss of 60 per cent of it!!!

The devastating results of these policies are known: economic regression, social disaster, growing instabity and even sometimes total disruption of whole societies (as in Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone). During the whole 1990s Africa's rate of growth of GDP per capita has been negative (- 0.2 per cent). Africa has been alone in that case. As a result, Africa's share of global trade decreased. That fact is precisely what is being qualified as 'marginalisation'. Instead one should speak here of a dramatic mal-integration in the global system. Conventional neoliberal economists pretend that this is only a 'hard transition' towards a better future! But how could it be? The destruction of the social structures, growing poverty, the worsening of education and health standards cannot prepare a better future, and cannot help African producers to become 'more competitive' as requested from them. Quite the opposite.

This neocolonial plan for Africa indeed reflects the worst pattern of integration in the global system. It cannot produce but further the decline of the capacity of African societies to meet the challenges of modern times. These challenges are surely to a certain extent new, relating to the long

run possible effects of the ongoing technological revolution (informatics) and through them, on the organisation of labour, its productivity and new patterns of the international division of labour. What ought to be said in this respect is that all of these challenges are operating in the real world through conflicts of strategies. For the time being, the dominant segment of global capital – the TNCs – appears to dictate what is favourable to the progress of its particular strategies. African peoples and governments have not yet developed counter strategies of their own, similar perhaps to what some Eastern Asian countries have been deploying. In that frame, globalisation does not offer Africa any solution to its nagging development problems. Foreign direct private investments in Africa are, as everybody knows, negligible and exclusively concentrated on mineral and other natural resources. In other words the strategy of TNCs does not help Africa moving beyond a pattern of international division of labour belonging to the remote past. The alternative, from an African point of view, needs to combine the building of auto-centred economies, social structures, and societies in order to participate more equally and fully in the global economy. This general law is valid for Africa today as it has been throughout modern history for all the regions of the world.

It is still too early to know if the African peoples are moving towards that goal. There is talk today of an 'African Renaissance' but its details are rather sketchy. No doubt that the victory of the African people in South Africa, i.e., the dismantling of the Apartheid system, has created positive hopes not only in that country but throughout large parts of the continent. But there are not yet visible signals of these hopes developing into alternative strategies. That would need dramatic changes at various national levels, going far beyond what is generally suggested under the labels of 'good governance' and 'political multiparty democracy', as well as at regional and global levels. Another pattern of globalisation would therefore gradually emerge from those changes making possible the correction of the mal-integration of Africa into the global system. The classical dependency-periphery theory that still holds today for a balkanised and economically exploited Africa must be confronted head-on by alternative theories stressing intellectual cooperation, political cooperation, and, above all, economic cooperation.

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Social Scientists' Failure of Analytical Nerve: 'Africa Rising' from Above, or Uprising from Below?

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Abstract

If Africa has been 'rising' since the outset of early 2000s commodity super-cycle, as so many of its elites and allied international economic actors claim, what are we to make of the evidence of growing popular uprisings? This survey of narratives and evidence finds convincing the converse claim that 'rising' translates into 'crashing' when a more accurate accounting is made of the continent's wealth. As a result of systematic looting, around 2010 the continent's most advanced social movements began awakening from the apparent 2000s slumber, in the wake of an earlier era of IMF Riots dating to the 1980s. At that stage, the intensity of rhetoric between the contending forces grew shrill, and some such conflicts were resolved only by recourse to state force. This is the point at which the failure of the progressive African intelligentsia's nerve was most acute: in its failure to either validate the merits of export-led growth based on extractive industries, as conventional wisdom had it but against which was all prior evidence and deep empirical observation, or to promote resistance by civil (and often uncivil) society. Will African social scientists return to some of the ideals that forty years ago helped make the continent one of the world's richest sources of revolutionary thought? Or instead, do the dialectics of wealth generation and social upheaval call forth no more than intellectual disinterest or, indeed, fear?

Resumé

Si l'Afrique a été « en développement » depuis le commencement du super cycle des matières premières au début des années 2000, comme l'affirme la plupart de ses élites et alliés qui sont des acteurs économiques internationaux, que devons-nous faire de la croissance des révolutions populaires évidentes ? Cette étude composée de résultats narratifs et réels qui cherche à convaincre l'opposition de sa sollicitation « grandissante » traduite en « bouleversement » quand une comptabilité plus précise est faite sur la richesse du continent. À la suite de pillages systématiques, aux alentours

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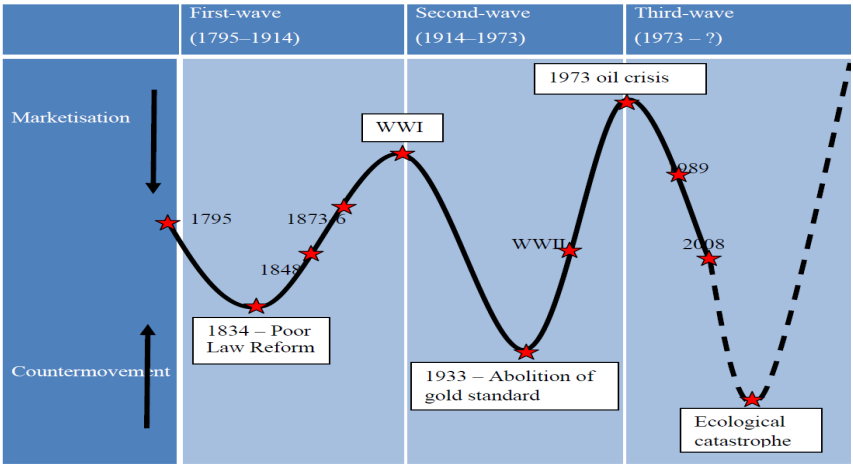
de 2010 les mouvements sociaux les plus développés du continent ont commencé à se remettre de la torpeur apparente des années 2000, dans le sillage d'une époque antérieure aux émeutes du FMI dans les années 1980. A ce stade, l'intensité des échanges avec l'opposition est devenue sévère, et certains de ces types de conflits ont été résolus que par le recours à la force de l'Etat. C'est à ce moment que l'échec du nerf de l'intelligentsia africaine progressive a été plus aigu : dans son incapacité à soit valider les qualités de la croissance tirée des exportations basées sur les industries extractives, comme l'avait la sagesse conventionnelle, mais pour lequel toutes les preuves antérieures et observations empiriques profondes étaient contre, soit favoriser la résistance de la société civile (et souvent incivile). Les chercheurs africains en sciences sociales retourneront-ils vers certains idéaux qui ont contribués, il y a quarante ans, à faire du continent l'une des sources les plus riches du monde en matière de pensée révolutionnaire ? Ou plutôt les conflits de la génération riche et le bouleversement social inviteront-ils à adopter pas plus qu'un désintéressement intellectuel ou, certainement, la peur ?

Introduction

For forty years, since the great Oil Producing Exporters Cartel shook the world economy and revealed Africa's vulnerability to global economic chaos, social scientists have grappled with how to characterise the 'neoliberal' (market-driven) turn in public policy and New Public Management, macro-economic discipline, shifting spending priorities, intensified resource extraction, and harsher state-society-nature relations. Results have included renewed enthusiasm for entrepreneurialism and microfinance, 'human capital' accounting and the pricing of nature – as Payments for Ecosystem Services (and related 'natural capital' valuations) – so as to save it. Many local, continental and international social scientists have tackled these developments in Africa with sympathy to those who are inevitably victimised, mainly as a result of not having market access. The essence of this problem was one described by Karl Polanyi as a 'double-movement' in which waves of marketization were met by waves of resistance.

Figure 1: Waves of marketisation and resistance



Source: Burawoy 2014.

But the steeply sloping downturn after 1974 in a stylised graphic by Michael Burawoy (Figure 1) is not how most social scientists are being told to understand the rise of markets in Africa. Instead, the typical neoliberal story line is that Africa declined after liberation from colonialism due to excessive statist intervention which inevitably turned into inefficient state predation via parastatals, resource nationalism, excessive taxation, corruption, unsustainable social welfare policies and an overly protected economy. Once more sensible policies were adopted – not by Structural Adjustment Policy compulsion as in the 1980s but by choice and public participation from the mid-1990s onwards – Africa inevitably grew by leaps and bounds. Where there was backtracking, this could be traced to incorrigible elites (e.g., Zimbabwe) or civil war.

This is how, for instance, World Bank economist Shanta Devarajan has constructed the narrative of Africa Rising: 'There's no question that the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s and early 1990s received a lot of criticism. But then ask the question, "what changed?" As I was saying, the growth has accelerated since the 1990s. We can't hide from that fact. And you look at what changed. And it's that these countries adopted exactly the Washington Consensus policies in the mid-1990s.'[1]

Or for the most brazen version, consider the argument by London financial researcher Charles Robertson in the 2013 YouTube version of what might be the most extreme case of 'Africa Rising' hype, *The Fastest Billion: The Story behind Africa's Economic Revolution*: 'Those billion Africans have just seen the biggest increase in wealth that the continent's ever experienced.'[2]According

to the multinational corporate 'Renaissance Capital' team[3] led by Robertson, 'Africa's growth could outstrip that of Asia' between now and 2050, with the former's GDP rising 'from $2 trillion today to $29 trillion in today's money by 2050.' Adds Nigerian finance minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala in the book's preface: 'Just as SubSaharan Africa (SSA) has suffered through its despots and destitution, so the seedlings of transformation have pushed through the African soil. As an increasing number of economists, investors and financial policy makers have realised, SSA has emerged from its own malaise, into a dawn that promises growth to rival, if not surpass, that recorded by Asia's Tigers over the past two decades.'

The hyperbole is, in part, irritating because Robertson understands a degree of political economy and explains post-independence poverty in familiar ways:

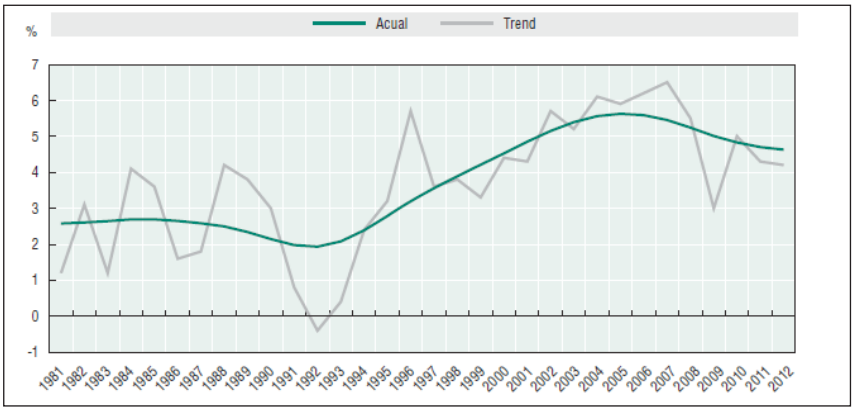
> Many of Africa's civil wars at this time were over valuable mineral resources and were supported, financed and armed by outside forces. Apartheid South Africa, acting as a Western outpost in Africa, caused considerable destabilisation in Southern Africa through murderous wars and devastated national economies at all levels through the use of land mines, many of which remain hidden in place to this day. Even the best African leaders were inexperienced and easily duped by sharp practices from the developed world. IMF and World Bank policies, which were primarily designed to extract debt-service revenues through exports, damaged agriculture almost beyond repair and conditionalities that forced governments to cut spending on education and health. Growth figures from this era mask the fact that a good deal of it was debt. Grandiose white elephant projects ate up precious foreign revenues and income from resources were looted by local elites in conjunction with their foreign collaborators. Trillions of dollars were siphoned out of Africa. These were harsh lessons but Africans learnt them – some more quickly than others.[4]

This article takes this perspective seriously but diverges 180 degrees when it comes to *which* Africans were educated by the last three decades of neoliberalism. Because 'Africa Rising' rhetoric reproduces the kinds of banal, export-led, primary product-dependent and extractive orientation we have seen for so long, and because it continues to insert Africa into the volatile world economy on adverse terms, it is more appropriate to re-label the lesson Robertson *should have* taken forward as 'Africa falling'.

Meanwhile, we must try to comprehend the central analytical argument in Robertson's narrative, namely: the African elite's 'learning by doing'. His underlying assumption is that even without any change in power relations and incentive structures at the global scale, the continent's rulers learned the merits of orthodox Western structural adjustment policies and no longer offered opposition: 'While Africa has got its macro-economic management right, the

heady heights envisioned for the continent will depend primarily on whether or not Africa can sustain its growth levels… Africa is on track to deliver on all fronts,' Robertson concludes. The main data used for celebrating 'Africa Rising' are in Figure 2: GDP and per capita GDP increases in Sub-Saharan Africa since around 1995, after fifteen years of decline.

Figure 2 : Africa's rising GDP (% real, 1981-2012) and per capita GDP (real $)



Source: African Development Bank et al. and Angus Maddison Project[5]

This supposed economic growth, plus the claim of a massive new middle class and explosive increases in cellular telephony capacity, are the essence of the 'Africa Rising' meme. Allegedly, 'one in three Africans is middle class' and as a result, Africa is ready for 'take-off", according to African Development Bank chief economist Mthuli Ncube, who defines middle class as those who spend between $2 (sic) and $20 per day, a group that includes a vast number of people considered extremely poor by any reasonable definition, given the higher prices of most consumer durables in African cities. Actually, according to even his data, those spending between just $2 and $4 per day constitute almost a fifth of all of Africa (and 'float' in and out of poverty), while the range from $4 to $20 per day amounts to 13 per cent, with only five per cent of Africans spending more than $20 per day. Below the $2 per day level, 61 per cent of Africans are mired in deep poverty.[6]

As Jacques Enaudeau has argued, the 'rising middle class' argument

> can be traced back to the strategic briefs and equity research notes published from 2010 onwards by Boston Consulting Group, McKinsey, Goldman Sachs or Deloitte, advertising 'the new African consumer', finally in a position to spend some cash in brand new supermarkets. In a time when growth rates of industrialized countries stutter and when the Chinese and Indian engines of the

> global economy are somewhat slowing down, financial analysts and investment consultants can't get enough of the one thing that they have dismissed for so long: Africa. 'That's where the flavor is,' said Thabo Ncalo recently, manager of the Africa Fund for Johannesburg-based Stanlib, 'the frontier markets,' like Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria or Rwanda. Close your eyes and let your imagination do the rest: hundreds of millions of purses loosening their strings…
>
> Of course it's difficult to sell such a vision if 'Africa' remains associated with deadly conflicts, food crises and looming poverty. Thus baiting nervous investors and lobbying the media with the 'African middle class' is downright genius: there's enough actual change taking place all over the continent to make the notion look respectable, and it remains vague enough to accommodate any expectation and get traction across the board. This is where development organizations, in their quest for better aid efficiency and alternatives to aid, join forces with investors.[7]

But no one should be fooled, argues Robert Bates:

> is demand for the stuff underneath it – Africa's mineral and oil wealth – that is driving the economic growth behind all these 'Africa Rising' narratives. The BRIC economies, and China in particular, have fuelled a commodities boom that has benefitted state coffers across the continent though questions remain over the actual extent (and the equities) of this boom. But perhaps the central reason we are seeing all this 'good news' in Western media links back to the West's own idea of itself and of Africa. Africans are now, 'finally', playing by the West's rules; as Professor Megan Vaughan, President of the African Studies Association of the UK, said in a recent speech, 'What is striking is the fact that what is 'saving' Africa is the supposedly redemptive power of capitalism', which, when coupled with the increasing adoption of liberal-democracy in Africa, vindicates the Western Way. Moreover, feelings of decline in the West – stubbornly low economic growth (or collapse), the threat of social upheaval, the rise of China, and so on – have made all these 'Africa Rising' narratives all the more breathless. *The Economist, Money Week,* and the rest seem to see in Africa's rise hope for the West's recovery.[8]

Ncube knows this, for as Enaudeau recalled, the African Development Bank economist

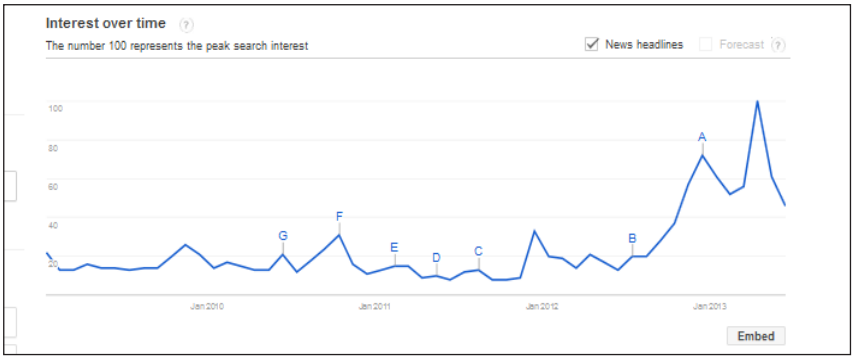
> gave it straight to CNN: 'it's a call to say "look, please invest in Africa".' Sure enough, if the new is made to look like the old, it gains the reassuring quality of being just the same. In that respect, the 'African middle class' is a means to an end, a programmatic concept: rationalize to normalize, normalize to legitimize.

Rick Rowden, too, finds a self-interested standpoint in the neoliberal celebration:

> Though African countries desperately need the policy space to adopt industrial policies, the rich countries are pushing loan conditions and trade and investment agreements that block them from doing so, all the while proffering a happy narrative about 'the rise of Africa.'[9]
>
> This is evident when considering how the World Bank's Devarajan rounds out his argument about how well neoliberalism works in Africa, and how durably the elites have learned by doing: 'The difference is that they did it out of their own accord, out of domestic political consensus, rather than imposed from Washington or Paris or London. And I think that's the point that people are not recognising, that the actual policies that are generating the growth, are actually very similar to what was criticised in the structural adjustment era.'[10]

Legitimizing the looting of Africa through the two words 'Africa Rising' can be measured quantitatively using a Google citation index. It was especially after the Time front-page story in December 2012, as Figure 3 shows, that the two words spread rapidly.

Figure 3: Google citation index of 'Africa Rising', 2009-2013



The means of communication are terribly important, and indeed another major reason for the new Afro-optimism is increased cellular telephony access in many areas that were formerly off-grid for communications. The World Bank's main 2011 Africa policy paper, for example, argued that the 'success of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), especially mobile phone penetration, shows how rapidly a sector can grow. It also shows how the public sector can set the conditions for the exponential growth of a vital industry that could transform the continent.'[11]

The reality is less encouraging. Although Africa is better off with cell phones than it was without (say, 20 years ago), the actual performance of the industry reveals profound weaknesses: the role of multinational capital in absorbing profits and dividends, the lack of genuine competition (collusion is notorious even in the largest economy – South Africa), relatively high prices for cellphone handsets and services, and limited technological linkages to internet service. Researchers Enrico Calandro, Alison Gillwald, MphoMoyo and Christoph Stork have remarked on a host of ICT deficiencies: 'the mobile market has experienced significant growth, [but] outcomes have been sub-optimal in many respects'.[12] As for Africa's internet use, Calendro et al. conclude: 'Large numbers of citizens across the continent still lack access to or cannot afford the kind of communication services that enable effective social and economic participation in a modern economy and society.'

A final illustrative example of dubious 'Africa Rising' hype comes from *Time* magazine's correspondent, Alex Perry, in a December 2012 cover story:

> Africa owes its takeoff to a variety of accelerators, nearly all of them external and occurring in the past 10 years:
>
> - billions of dollars in aid, especially to fight HIV/AIDS and malaria;
> - tens of billions of dollars in foreign-debt cancellations;
> - a concurrent interest in Africa's natural resources, led by China; and
> - the rapid spread of mobile phones, from a few million in 2000 to more than 750 million today.
>
> Business increasingly dominates foreign interest in Africa. Investment first outpaced aid in 2006 and now doubles it.[13]

Africa Falling

Perry should have had an editor revise his words as follows:

> Africa owes its economic decline (running at more than 6 percent of gross income per year once nonrenewable resource depletion is considered)[14] to a variety of accelerators, nearly all of them external and occurring in the past centuries during which slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism locked in the continent's underdevelopment, but several of which – along with climate change – were amplified in recent years:
>
> - stagnant overseas development aid[15] – around 60 percent 'phantom' anyhow[16] – to most African countries, except to 14 'fragile states',[17] with Washington leading further cuts in funding to fight HIV/AIDS and malaria;[18]

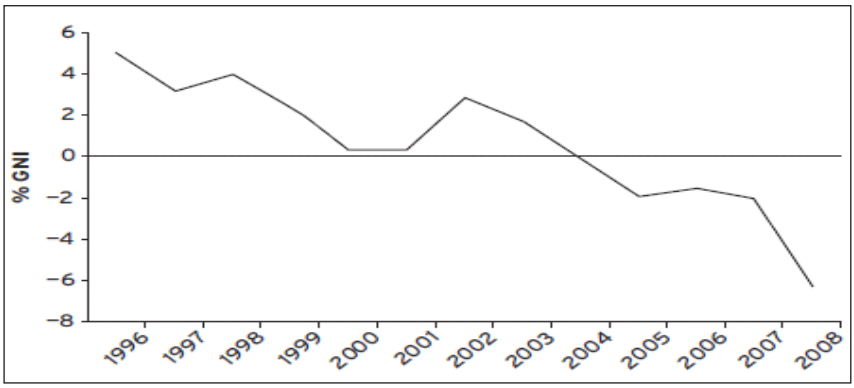
- tens of billions of dollars in foreign debt cancellation (of what was mainly unrepayable 'Odious' loans to dictators in 2005)[19] yet at the same time a squeeze on low-income African finance ministries that immediately afterwards caused a dramatic rise in debt repayments (from 5 to 8 percent of export earnings[20]);
- a concurrent looting of Africa's natural resources, led by China and the West, resulting in dramatic recent falls in mineral and petroleum wealth (when calculated as 'Adjusted Net Saving' to incorporate resource-stripping); and
- the rapid spread of mobile phones, which because of high costs and low internet connectivity, has done very little to solve the digital divide.[21]

Banking increasingly dominates foreign interest in Africa, as elite disinvestment into Western and Eastern financial markets continues to outpace aid and investment, amounting to an estimated $1.4 trillion in capital flight from the whole continent from 1970-2010.[22]

To be blunt, the implication that *wealth* is being created by *rising GDP* in Africa is completely fallacious. The best way of thinking about the recent period is to negate Robertson's words completely: 'Those billion Africans have just seen the biggest *decrease* in wealth that the continent's ever experienced.' Robertson ignores the dramatic decline in Africa's broadest measure of wealth, including 'natural capital' in the form of non-renewable minerals and petroleum, in contrast to those resource-rich countries (e.g. Norway, Australia and Canada) which ensure local reinvestment of the proceeds from extraction.[23] In Africa, once non-renewable resources are dug out of the soil by multinational corporations which repatriate the profits or transfer-price the revenues to their advantage, the permanent *debit* against genuine national savings (i.e. a decline in a country's natural capital stock, its 'family silver') far exceeds the momentary *credit* to GDP.

By how much? It is impossible to say with any degree of accuracy, but it is substantial and getting worse. Since the commodity boom began in the early 2000s, according to the 2011 World Bank report, *The Changing Wealth of Nations*, Africa has suffered negative 'genuine savings' mainly because of non-renewable resource decay in the context of resource-cursed neo-colonial politics. Figure 4 from that book shows that once non-renewable resources are removed from GDP (along with other small adjustments), the fall in 'adjusted net savings' is sharp, to negative 6 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2008.

Figure 4: Sub Saharan African adjusted net saving, percent of GNI (1995-2008)



Source: World Bank.[24]

Reading the business press, one would not know that Africa is *losing* an estimated 6 per cent of its wealth each year.[25] You would be forgiven for having the opposite impression when reading most reports from those with pro-globalisation, export-oriented, petro-minerals-centric economic ideologies. Most multilateral financial institutions celebrate Africa's national economies as among the world's leading cases of post-meltdown economic 'recovery'.[26] Yet the neoliberal position neglects several features that have made Africa's supposedly resilient economies far more vulnerable to both global and local economic and environmental crises. These include excessive financial and trade integration into a volatile world economy, resource extraction costs, the 'ecological debt' (as well as other non-remunerated value transfers) and climate change damage, as well as internal features of economies suffering from 'Resource Curse' and processes of extreme uneven and combined development. The correlation of decline in Africa's real wealth – in Africa and especially in North Africa (due to large volumes of oil extraction from Libya) – is *never* mentioned by 'Africa Rising' advocates. But the GDP measure is especially pernicious when applied in Africa, because it treats all resource extraction as a positive, without factoring in the decline in natural capital – a country's 'family silver' – which accompanies the extraction process.

This is no surprise, for Africa's exploitative trade, finance, investment and labour-migration relations within crisis-ridden world capitalism have intensified in recent years. From the early 2000s, ongoing resource extraction by Western firms was joined, and in some cases overtaken by

China and, as we see below, South Africa's role in the Brazil-Russia-India-China-SA (BRICS) bloc is as a gateway to yet more extraction, even at the risk of military chaos. Moreover, the phenomenon of 'land grabbing' in Africa has also combined with larger-scale development of biofuels and genetic modification. As for domestic economic dynamics, the process of financial liberalisation generated not only rising credit access, but also over-indebtedness.

Digging deeper into the data, it becomes obvious that Africa's alleged recovery is quite complex. As the world crisis unfolded in early 2009, for example, the continent's largest economy, South Africa, was recorded by *The Economist* as the riskiest among the world's 17 main emerging markets, largely due to its current account deficit.[27] That deficit had soared after 2001, thanks to capital flight by most of the largest companies formerly listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). At that stage, in order to pay its overseas liabilities (especially profit and dividend outflows) as well as host the 2010 Soccer World Cup, South Africa's foreign debt increased by around a quarter to $115 billion by early 2012 – having begun at just US$25 billion in 1994 when Nelson Mandela was elected president. (Other African countries with dangerously high debt ratios were Ghana, Mauritius and Senegal.)

The South African economy witnessed more than a million net job losses in 2009-10 plus worsening inequality, leaving it with the highest Gini coefficient among major countries, even worse than Brazil, in the wake of six currency crashes since 1994 and extreme stock market volatility. Yet, with minor exceptions (the promise of a National Health Insurance), there were no substantive changes in developmental or macroeconomic policy, not even with the potential that president Jacob Zuma would lean more to labour and even Communist influence. That proved elusive, and in late 2013, the largest union in Africa, the National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa), formally broke away from the ANC mainly on grounds of Zuma's persistent neoliberal policies.

Elsewhere in Africa, uneven development caused by adherence to the Washington Consensus in other smaller but higher-growth, resource-cursed economies, such as Equatorial Guinea,[28] was even more extreme. In spite of rhetoric about a Keynesian turn in October 2008 under Strauss-Kahn's leadership, IMF staff reaction to the crisis in Africa was a reversion to Washington Consensus dogma. Out of 22 IMF programmes on the continent underway in October 2009, according to the Center for Economic and Policy Research, 17 were contractionary orders and only five were expansionary.[29] Yet by late 2009, Africa's state deficits

were exploding because a very slight spending increase was conjoined with a huge revenue drop as commodity prices crashed, resulting in a dramatic switch from a positive fiscal balance (six per cent of GDP) to a huge deficit (minus six per cent) between 2008 and 2009.[30] The crisis meant capital inflows shifted from an $80 billion inflow in 2007 to a $25 billion outflow of portfolio investments (mainly in South African financial assets) and thus a net decline in total inflows. Although remittances held up, foreign direct investment fell back in 2009, leaving aid as the only rising financial inflow. But even this was conditional, with most flowing to 14 'fragile states': Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo and Zimbabwe.

Under the circumstances, most of Africa experienced a rising fiscal deficit and higher public debt. Most central banks imposed lower interest rates after 2009 than prevailed in 2007. Most let their money supply rise, in part to compensate for private credit contraction. A few countries went further: new exchange controls helped Tanzania, Rwanda and Kenya fend off hostile financial forces. These classically Keynesian strategies also explain why Africa did not suffer as much as other regions during the crisis, even if the IMF harried so many weaker debtors with austerity directives. Slightly relaxed macroeconomic strategies help explain, partially, why in the wake of a huge commodities boom (2002- 2008) and world-leading windfall profits for multinational extractive industries, a modicum of GDP growth was recorded in several African countries.

In reality, contrary to Devarajan's protestations, Africa's economic policies were indeed 'imposed from Washington'. According to John Weeks, 'Over twenty years, 1990–2009, the governments of 46 Saharan countries sought to manage their economies under IMF programmes during almost half the country years (417 of 920).'[31] Weeks concludes of the IMF and World Bank: 'The two international financial institutions played a major if not decisive role in policy making for all but a few countries of the region.' Only a few countries escaped Bretton Woods Institutions' direct tutelage for extended periods (though most had long bouts of home-grown neo-liberalism): Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, The Gambia, Liberia, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. As for every other country, as Weeks reports, '[t]here is little evidence, rigorous or circumstantial, to believe that the 'reforms' of the 1980s and 1990s lay the basis for that [2000s economic] recovery.' Instead, behind the recent GDP growth was

the combination of the post-conflict peace dividend and the 2000s rise of a commodity market super-cycle thanks to a last-gasp burst of sustained demand from Asian minerals and petroleum purchasers, as well as a modicum of internal domestic demand flawed by artificial characteristics as we will observe.

For example, Africa's long-deindustrialised manufacturing sector has been examined recently by Rowden,[32] and 'despite some improvements in a few countries, the bulk of African countries are either stagnating or moving backwards when it comes to industrialization'. As Table 1 shows, the proportion of GDP made up of manufacturing – a typical sign of maturing economic activity – has been shrinking in Africa, from a peak of 15.3 per cent in 1990 to 10.5 per cent in 2008.

Table 1: Manufacturing shrinkage and mining growth, 1970-2008

	% share of GDP	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2008
World	Industry	36.9	38.1	33.3	29.1	28.8	30.1
	Manufacturing	26.7	24.4	21.7	19.2	17.8	18.1
	Mining & utilities	3.9	7.1	5.2	4.5	5.5	6.2
Developing economies	Industry	27.3	41.1	36.8	36.3	38.9	40.2
	Manufacturing	17.6	20.2	22.4	22.6	23.3	23.7
	Mining & utilities	5.7	14.7	8.9	8.3	10.1	10.9
African developing economies	Industry	13.1	35.6	35.2	35.5	38.8	40.7
	Manufacturing	6.3	11.9	15.3	12.8	11.6	10.5
	Mining & utilities	4.8	19.3	15.2	18.4	23.0	25.8

Source: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)[33]

Indeed from 1990-2010, manufacturing value added (MVA) per person fell in 23 African countries and was weak in 27 others (with only Namibia, Mozambique and Uganda above 5 per cent annual growth).[34] Of even greater concern, Rowden reports, 'Africa is also losing ground in labour-intensive manufacturing: Its share of low-technology manufacturing activities in MVA Added fell from 23 percent in 2000 to 20 percent in 2008, and the share of low-technology manufacturing exports in Africa's total manufacturing exports dropped from 25 per cent in 2000 to 18 per cent in 2008.' At the same time, Africa's total imports and exports were falling in relative terms, from 6.5 per cent to 4.9 per cent of world volumes from 1980 to 2008 (Table 2).

Table 2: Manufacturing shrinkage and mining growth, 1980-2008

	Global trade volume (billions of tons)	Global trade volume (1980=100)	African trade volume (billions of tons)	African trade volume (1980=100)	Africa's share of global trade volume (%)
1980	4.0	100	0.3	100	6.5
1985	3.9	96	0.2	91	6.2
1990	5.0	124	0.3	102	5.2
1995	6.1	152	0.3	121	5.1
2000	7.6	189	0.4	156	5.3
2005	9.6	232	0.5	188	5.1
2008	10.3	257	0.5	195	4.9

Source: UN Conference on Trade and Development[35]

Seeking an understanding of Africa's economic plight thus requires much more serious inquiry than the multilateral institutions and their allies appear willing to consider. For example, a careful inspection of GDP shows clearly that the *internal* driver of growth in Africa during the 2000s, far outstripping exports, was 'private consumption'.[36] One side effect, given African deindustrialisation of even basic consumer-durable industries, was the rise of import bills. But it is instructive that private consumption across Africa was, from 2004 to 2008, well over twice as large a component of GDP growth as exports, as a result of the dramatic 'financial deepening' – the rise of private sector bank credit as a percentage of GDP – from 14.3 per cent in 2002 to 19.0 per cent by 2008.The period from 1980 to 2004 was replete with bank failures and credit contraction across structurally-adjusted Africa, and hence according to John Karikari, 'excluding the top 15 countries, the ratio of private sector bank credit to GDP declined by about 50 per cent, on average, from 17.2 per cent to 8.7 during this period.'[37] The uptick in credit availability after 2004, once the failed banks' assets had been written off and the new round of accumulation begun, did indeed drive a degree of domestic consumption, but the critical question of repayment remained a concern.

The untenable rise of credit in Africa, especially South Africa where consumer default rates are at an all-time and very dangerous high, goes unremarked upon by most commentators, including Ncube at the African Development Bank. South Africa's consumer debt crisis sheds light on African macroeconomic and microeconomic problems, for one reason that rising debt for working-class and new middle-class consumers was untenable was the rise in real property prices by 389 per cent between 1997 and

2008 (the highest in the world, with the second highest bubble, Ireland, at less than 200 per cent). Meanwhile, wage levels had been outstripped by profits for most of the previous 17 years of post-apartheid neo-liberalism, leaving workers to rely upon higher rates of consumer credit to make up the gap. By late 2010, the main state credit regulator registered 'impaired' status for 8.3 million South African borrowers, a rise from 6.1 million in 2007.[38] The role of over-indebtedness was central in the financial crisis experienced by workers at Lonmin's Marikana platinum mine in 2012, as well, as garnishee orders on salaries reduced paycheques to a bare minimum, resulting in very high militancy and demands for more than 100 per cent wage increases.[39] While there are not reliable data on consumer credit systems in most African countries as a result of the extent of informal and NGO lending, the overall world trend is highly disturbing. It offers no basis for claiming credit systems assist in 'Africa Rising'.

More recently, the trend in African financial markets has been for governments to mop up excessive savings in banks by issuing sovereign debt bonds, not just in South Africa but in ten other countries with growing domestic financial markets: Ghana, Gabon, the DRC, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Angola, Nigeria, Namibia, Zambia and Tanzania. According to Joseph Stiglitz and Hamid Rashid, 'By February 2013, these ten African economies had collectively raised $8.1 billion from their maiden sovereign-bond issues, with an average maturity of 11.2 years and an average coupon rate of 6.2 percent. These countries' existing foreign debt, by contrast, carried an average interest rate of 1.6 percent with an average maturity of 28.7 years.'[40] As a result of these yields and ongoing speculative funding flows emanating from northern financial centres, foreigners are seeking much higher lending rates available in Africa, according to Nairobi-based Stanlib banker David Makoni: 'Judging from high levels of order book subscription at issue, African sovereign debt seems to be "flavour of the month" with international investors.'[41]

From January-September 2013, the eurobond market hosted $8 billion in new African debt issuance, rewarding the governments of Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa. But Stiglitz and Rashid warn, 'Should oil and copper prices collapse, Angola, Gabon, Congo, and Zambia may encounter difficulties in servicing their sovereign bonds.' Indeed, they remind, 'the record of private-sector credit assessments should leave one wary' because when 'shortsighted financial markets' combine 'with shortsighted governments', this could lay 'the groundwork for the world's next debt crisis,' in countries which they term Africa's 'subprime borrowers'.[42]

In sum, 'Africa Rising'? No, only the corporations which loot Africa and a very few comprador elites are prospering, and at great risk to both long-term and short-term prosperity, thanks to the extreme distortions they introduce. As Jumoke Balogun put it at the *Compare Afrique* blogsite,

> Currently, the top five most unequal countries in the world are in Africa: Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, and Sierra Leone. Surprisingly, South Africa, the Continent's most influential and diversified economy, is slightly more unequal today that it was in 1993 shortly after apartheid ended. Further, three out of the twenty most expensive cities in the world are also on the continent: Luanda (2nd), N'Djamena (8th), and Libreville (20th) – all of which are more expensive than London… Considering that Africa is the poorest and most underdeveloped continent on the globe, these numbers provide a startling account of the current state of play: the few who have, have everything, and the majority who don't, have nothing. This is not to suggest that Africans who have amassed great personal wealth are culpable for the alarming disparity, but this is what uneven development looks like. This is where Africa is. This is what many deem worthy of celebration.[43]

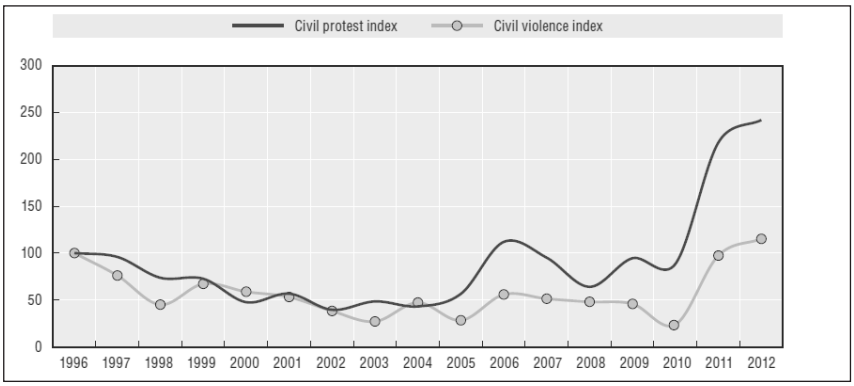
Another writer, Ama Biney, has also debunked 'Africa Rising' rhetorics:

> For whom does it rise? It rises for neoliberal and neo-colonial African governments selling off large tracts of land to outsiders for food or bio-fuel jatropha while their people go hungry and landless… It rises for a small African middle class whilst the 99 percent remain in the rural areas as farmers, unable to get subsidies like their European counterparts whose governments intervene on their behalf. Africa rises for those with forked tongue who 'talk left and walk right.' Africa is rising for the charismatic Christian preachers engaging in what they call 'prosperity preaching' to congregations obliged to pay one tenth of their miserly wages as tithes so the preacher can wear designer suits from Italy. Africa is rising for the continued exploitation of its enormous wealth by MNCs, tax evaders and those who engage in illicit wealth appropriation in a continued (not new) scramble for Africa. Africa is rising for a tiny black elite who believe in the New Partnership for Africa's Development and market fundamentalism alongside their governments committed to such policies. Africa is rising for those African women who equate economic freedom with the means to purchase Brazilian and Korean weave, false eyelashes and nails in their aspirations to resemble an African Barbie doll. Africa is rising for those few countries who have recently discovered oil: Uganda, Ghana, Ivory Coast – but will their people say the same in 20 years and not meet the same wretched fate as the peoples of the Niger Delta of Nigeria?[44]

Africa Uprising

The conditions created by the combination of austerity, dictatorial regimes, socio-political injustice and ecological stresses have generated a new wave of protests across the continent since 2010. In a 2013 measurement by the African Development Bank (AfDB) based upon Agence France Press journalistic data, major public protests rose from an index of 100 in 1996 to nearly 250 in 2012 (Figure 5), especially because 'Several countries saw strong protests against the increasing cost of living, including Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Egypt, Gabon, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia and Uganda.[4]

Figure 5: Public protests and civil violence in Africa, 1996-2012



Source: African Development Bank (2013)

As a result, the beginnings of a Polanyian 'double-movement' – i.e. excessive market penetration of society countered by social activism, as identified by Karl Polanyi (1944) in *The Great Transformation* – stirred in Africa around 2010. The upswing in uprisings began in the three North African countries where regime changes resulted within a year, but there is also evidence of increasing protest south of the Sahara, including in South Africa's platinum mines where the Marikana massacre of August 2012 was one result, and in December 2013 the cleavage of the largest trade union from the ruling party was another.

But a central challenge remains in most African countries: can nascent economic justice movements follow the Latin American road in which IMF Riots during the 1980s paved the way for more sustained construction of social movements to channel leftist activism more effectively, and even changes in government? Aside from ongoing progressive mobilisations in Egypt and

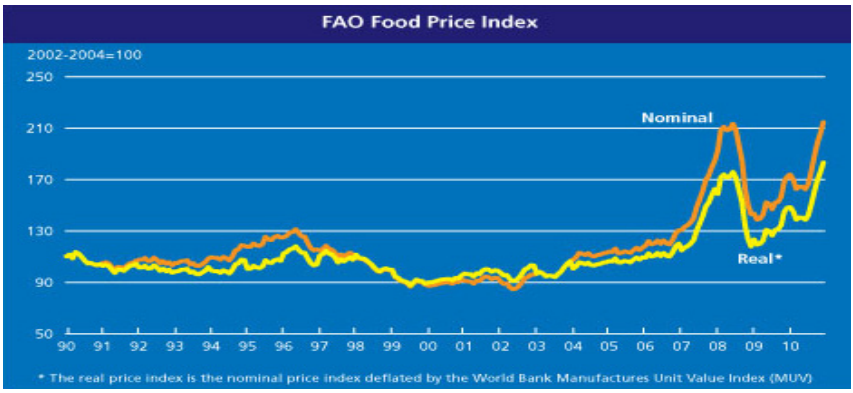
Tunisia in reaction to IMF and fundamentalist Islamic repression, only in South Africa is that process apparently ascendant. But the potential remains great, as Figure 5 shows. According to the African Development et al., 'Public protests in North Africa in 2012 had a political undertone that reflected an extension of the Arab Spring revolts. The protests were primarily motivated by calls for further and deeper political reforms… Protests in sub-Saharan Africa were mostly over economic concerns. More than half of public protests were to demand salary increases or to complain against the increasing cost of living.' In 2011, the Bank added, 'nearly all African countries faced increased protests' while the 2012 experiences were concentrated in fewer, larger countries.[46]

Of concern, however, is that these protest figures – only 250 in 2011, for example – are vast underestimates, given that in South Africa alone, the number of *violent* protests in the year 2012-13 was recorded by police as 1,882, with nearly 10,500 additional non-violent 'Gatherings Act' incidents. There, police minister Nathi Mthetwa observed that, 'Over the past four years, a total of 46, 180 protests were attended to and all were successfully stabilized, with 14, 843 arrests effected'[47] – although debate continues on how successful the police were in Marikana, as a result of incontrovertible evidence (most supplied from their own computers after clumsy cover-ups) that their massacre of mineworkers was premeditated, and entailed planting of weapons on mineworker corpses. Nationally, it is difficult to identify decisive trends and correlate these to particular political causalities, but it is evident that a higher level of violent incidents occurred after 2008, perhaps due to the combination of the global economic crisis (leaving more than one million South Africans newly unemployed) and the rise in electricity prices of 128 per cent that occurred over the subsequent four years.

The varied nature of these local gatherings makes them difficult to quantify, but according to official police 'crowd management' statistics, in the period 2009/2010 there were 8,905 incidents, 1,008 of them classified 'unrest' incidents. In the period 2010/2011 there were 12,654 incidents, 973 of them classified 'unrest' incidents. In the 2011/2012 period (as of April 2012) there were 11,033 incidents and 1,091 of these are classified 'unrest' as opposed to 'peaceful.' In the case of 'unrest' incidents the police intervene (often using force) where they perceive threats to security or damage to property. 'Peaceful' incidents are defined as those where there is co-operation between the police and the convener and where no police intervention is necessary. The many more incidents of protest where there are fewer than 15 people are not recorded by the police, as such events are not considered applicable under the Gatherings Act (yet in many cases, larger protests occur with participants placing themselves in groups of 14 or more at a 50 metre distance in the event they did not obtain police permission).[48]

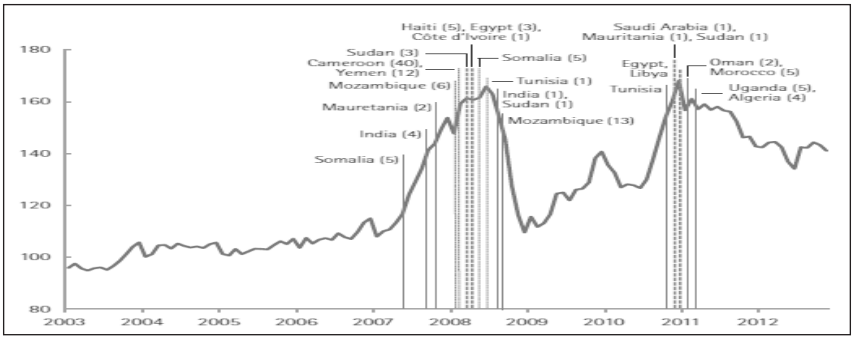
There are not many scientific studies of African protests to date, in part because of African social scientists' failure of analytical nerve, and the rest of this article relies mainly on qualitative analysis; but it is worth considering at least one of the causal vectors, namely rising food prices, where direct correlations between prices and food riots have been observed (Figures 6 and 7). There are a great many other areas in which such correlations could be made, including climate change, given that Africa has been an important source of core activist initiatives in the world movement for 'climate justice'.[49]

Figure 6 : Food and Agricultural Organisation Food Price Index, 1990-2011



Source: Food and Agricultural Organisation

Figure 7: African food riots, 2003-12



Source: Adapted from New England Complex Systems Institute, USA.

Another causal vector that will continue is the traditional class struggle. The ability of labour to move from micro shop-floor and industry-level demands to national policy will be crucial to Africa's future uprisings. For optimists, the World Economic Forum's September 2013 *Global Competitiveness Report* demonstrated that Africa's labour protesters are by far the world's most militant, even if not yet most effective. In one questionnaire given to representative samples of corporate managers, the topic of 'Cooperation in labour-employer relations' is quantified on a scale of 1 to 7, from 'generally confrontational' to 'generally cooperative'. The mean for the worlds' working classes was 4.3, i.e. with a bias towards quiescence. Table 3 shows the results from 148 countries, of which 39 are African: northern and Asian workers are most pliable, and African (especially South African) are most militant. Of the 39 African countries surveyed, 30 were higher than (or at) the world mean level of militancy. South Africa was by far the most militant working class, for the second year in a row.[50]

Table 3 : Africa's relative worker militancy, 2013, amongst 148 countries

(10 most pliable, along with 39 African countries, with 1 as most militant and 7 as least)		
1 Switzerland 6.0	63 Sierra Leone 4.4	117 Egypt 3.8
2 Singapore 6.0	66 Madagascar 4.4	118 Cape Verde 3.8
3 Denmark 5.8	67 Zambia 4.3	119 Tunisia 3.8
4 Norway 5.8	69 Ghana 4.3	121 Ethiopia 3.8
5 Netherlands 5.7	73 Kenya 4.2	122 Lesotho 3.8
6 Sweden 5.7	78 Liberia 4.2	123 Zimbabwe 3.7
7 Qatar 5.6	85 Libya 4.2	126 Cameroon 3.7
8 Hong Kong 5.6	91 Morocco 4.1	127 Benin 3.7
9 Japan 5.6	93 Uganda 4.1	130 Mozambique 3.6
10 Austria 5.5	95 Malawi 4.1	137 Algeria 3.4
28 The Gambia 5.0	100 Nigeria 4.1	141 Chad 3.3
32 Rwanda 4.9	102 Guinea 4.0	142 Mauritania 3.3
36 Côte d'Ivoire 4.8	104 Namibia 4.0	143 Burundi 3.2
38 Mauritius 4.8	108 Botswana 4.0	145 Angola 3.1
45 Seychelles 4.6	110 Burkina Faso 4.0	148 South Africa 2.6
54 Mali 4.5	114 Gabon 3.9	
57 Senegal 4.5	116 Tanzania 3.9	

Source: World Economic Forum (2013)

In addition to movements to democratise societies, which are invariably drawn from and compel further struggles for socio-economic justice, innumerable micro-struggles continue. These include community campaigns to preserve natural resources and rethink the merits of extractive industries (especially minerals, fossil fuels and river sources), in places like the Niger Delta, Zimbabwe's diamond fields and South Africa's platinum and titanium belts. Others are national initiatives of labour and its allies to meet basic needs and balance local economies through domestic ('import-substitution') production, with South Africans the most active, as we will conclude. Finally, there are numerous struggles associated with extremely serious Islamic or other religious-based insurgencies, in not only Egypt but Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria and Tunisia. Aside from occasional condemnations of US imperialism in Africa, usually these faith-based civil conflicts do not feature in the broader discourses of African citizenries rising up against injustice. But while chaos characterises large swathes of Africa, groups like The Lord's Resistance Army, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab will continue to prosper.

Specific African Uprisings

In addition to climate, the reproduction of Africa's exploitative trade, finance, investment and labour-migration relations within crisis-ridden world capitalism has met with sustained – albeit still uncoordinated and largely ineffectual – resistance, as the data reviewed earlier suggest. This is especially true in North Africa, where counter-revolution has prevailed in most countries. Since the Washington Consensus narrative was unchanged in all important respects, contradictions grew more extreme. Initially, for example, there was even awareness in Egypt's military that neoliberal reforms carried out by Mubarak were responsible for the revolts insofar as they compelled a core working-class constituency – independent trade unions – to view their struggles in political terms.[51] However, it is equally certain that the counter-revolutionary forces in Egypt, including the army leadership that retook power in 2013, would not be able to deliver the socio-economic progress demanded in Tahrir Square. They soon banned strikes and protests. With class struggles constantly breaking out as part of the process, Samir Amin celebrated the earlier groundedness of the movements:

The workers' strikes in 2007 (the strongest strikes on the African continent in the past fifty years), the stubborn resistance of small farmers threatened with expropriation by agrarian capital, and the formation of democratic protest groups among the middle classes (like the 'Kefaya'

and 'April 6' movements) foretold the inevitable explosion – expected by Egyptians but startling to 'foreign observers'… Although the youth movement is diversified in its social composition and in its political and ideological expressions, it places itself as a whole 'on the left'. Its strong and spontaneous expressions of sympathy with the radical left testify to that.[52]

What lessons would be drawn for other country-specific protesters, including the ways to spark such rapid and deep revolts that a dictator can be removed from power with at least temporary support from the military? Perhaps the most acute observer of the potential for emancipation in Africa is Sokari Ekine, who follows the continent's blogs at the weekly *Pambazuka News***.** Her mid-2011 review of developments in several countries is revealing: 'Uganda, Swaziland, Kenya, and Botswana actions are in response to concerns over food security, rising unemployment particularly amongst youth, political marginalisation, corruption of government officials and a pushback against the entrenched leadership of the circle of "rulers for life". Military dictators have been replaced by democracy dictatorships under militarised states.'[53]

Eastern Africa was typical of the resulting fusion of neoliberalism and repression. In Kampala, wrote Ekine, 'The government has blamed inflation on external factors out of their control, obviously believing Ugandans are so ill-informed as to not make the connection between the $740 million spent on fighter jets and tanks… Museveni who, in a show of militarism, chose to wear military fatigues during the recent swearing in of MPs, complained that his guests, President Kabila of the DRC and Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, were pelted with stones by people.' In Nairobi, Ekine reported, 'Grassroots movements such as Bunge La Mwananchi (The People's Parliament) and the "Unga Revolution" (a collection of civil society groups including Bunge La Mwananchi) campaigning for economic and social rights have been formed in response to the rising cost of living and loss of social benefits.'[54]

The same dynamic was observed in Southern Africa. In Manzini, 'The Swazi pro-democracy uprisings which began on 12 April were met with beatings, teargas and hundreds of arrests. Many of the protesters were driven 100 miles into the country where they were dumped by the police. Student leader Maxwell Dlamini and Musa Ngubeni of the Swaziland Youth Congress were arrested, tortured and remain in detention.' In Gaborone, 'Botswana, much revered in the west as 'Africa's success story', public sector workers – transport, schools, clinics and government staff – began striking on 18 April. The ruling party has been in power for

45 years and people are calling for a change. The leader of the opposition, Duma Boko has called for an 'Egypt'-style uprising.' In Harare in February 2011, Robert Mugabe's forces arrested 45 attendees of an International Socialist Organisation Zimbabwe meeting who were reviewing footage from Tahrir Square and Tunisia.[55]

West Africa had similar issues but more success with country-specific and demand-specific protesting. In Dakar, Senegal's well-respected mass movements rose up in June 2011, burning down the country's national electricity building and tax authority. They protested at cabinet ministers' houses to force both a resolution of an energy crisis and a withdrawal of President Abdoulawaye Wade's proposed legislation that would have seen him extend his neoliberal political rule. That protest was successful, as was the January 2012 'Occupy Nigeria' national demonstrations against the doubling of the fuel price mandated by IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde, who had visited a few days earlier. Millions of Nigerians took to the streets as an eight-day strike cost $1.3 billion in output. It quickly became evident to President Goodluck Jonathan that he would have to concede on the socio-economic front, or be ousted from power.

Conclusion: How much Pressure?

This degree of anger must, at some stage, result in a more effective Polanyian double movement than has happened to date. The earlier era of protests – in the form of IMF Riots – did not derail neoliberalism in Africa, even though after the debt crisis got underway in the early 1980s, World Bank president A.W. Clausen was worried enough to tell a board meeting, 'We must ask ourselves: How much pressure can these nations be expected to bear? How far can the poorest peoples be pushed into further reducing their meagre standards of living? How resilient are the political systems and institutions in these countries in the face of steadily worsening conditions? I don't have the answers to these important questions.'[56] More recently, the world's elites have been aware of the potential for more sustained critique, for in 2011, the IMF's then managing director, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, was asked by a journalist, 'Do you have any fears that there is perhaps a far left movement coming through these revolutions that want more, perhaps, closed economies? I mean, there have been a lot of pictures of Guevara there.' His answer:

Good question. Good question. There's always this risk, but I'm not sure it will materialize. Look, during the global financial crisis we went just through, at the beginning many were afraid of the possibility of an increase in protectionism. It didn't happen. Why? Because, I think, that

most governments, maybe not all of them, but most governments and most people, man on the street, have understood that there was no good solution in this direction. I'm not saying that everybody agrees with this, but most had understood that the closed economy were not the way to benefit from global growth and certainly from investment. And we're in a globalized world, so there is no domestic solution.[57]

To make the case that we need not worry about Africans inspired by Che – whose mid-1960s fight against Mobutu alongside (briefly) the father of current DRC president Joseph Kabila, was utterly miserable – Strauss-Kahn used 'protectionism' as a proxy. In the case of South Africa, normally amongst Africa's most aggressively neoliberal regimes, Strauss-Kahn should have been worried, for in 2009, a Communist Party member, Rob Davies, was made trade minister, and by 2013 he had begun widespread cancellation of free trade deals, and even imposed an 82 per cent tariff on import of Brazilian chickens. The 'domestic solution' Strauss-Kahn despises is also to be found in the reimposition of capital controls, defaults on Odious Debt, state-directed investment and favourable interest rates (Asian 'developmental state'-style), Keynesian reflation and more social spending. These strategies are all gaining steam, leading *The Economist* to worriedly headline its 12 October 2013 special issue on the world economy, 'The Gated Globe'.

What the IMF leader should also have considered was a deeper set of critical reactions to the era of African neoliberalism in which financialisation has fused with extractivist accumulation, and in which the 'Africa Rising' argument is increasingly revealed as far from the truth. If so, then the 'far left movement' seeking 'closed economies' – i.e., those protected from especially the ravages of deregulated global finance – would find a much more compelling Polanyian double movement which has emerged in civil (and often uncivil) society. As we have seen, the resistance stiffened especially beginning in 2011. This is true not only in North Africa where socio-economic grievances were central to understanding revolts in even the (neo-liberally) best-performing of African countries, Tunisia, but also in Sub-Saharan Africa, where after years of ineffectual IMF riots, growing unrest was observed in crucial sectors and geographical spaces from Senegal in the west, to Uganda in the centre and to Swaziland in the south.

Most crucially, the South African bottom-up rupture with the African neoliberal-nationalist script is worth following; indications in late 2013 are that connectivities can be found in sites of grassroots and labour struggle, offering hope for stronger alliances of poor and working people than

we have ever known here, perhaps also beyond South Africa's borders. A February 2014 General Strike call against the South African finance ministry – on Budget Day speech in parliament – would be one indication of the ability of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa to reach downwards into the unemployed and especially the youth, for 'united front approach' support and linkage to the communities' service delivery protests (as per the local phraseology).

But to do this kind of linkage-formation properly – first within countries so that substantial national movements form and then across the continent, region by region – will surely require much more than the bravery of ordinary people to contest the elite's Rising Africa meme in practice. The uprisings of North Africa as well as many other African sites since around 2010 also demonstrated a failure by street activists to ensure that their national intelligentsia came on-side and remained there. The organic intelligentsia in the social movements can only go so far, before encountering the necessity of being joined by Africa's social scientists to give intellectual aid, legitimation and often, too, a good dose of constructive criticism when called for.[58] And as Fanon remarked more than a half-century ago, 'One of the greatest services that the Algerian revolution will have rendered to the intellectuals of Algeria will be to have placed them in contact with the people, to have allowed them to see the extreme, ineffable poverty of the people, at the same time allowing them to watch the awakening of the people's intelligence and the onward progress of their consciousness.'[59]

Notes

1 Quoted in Bond 2010.
2. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1krRT3R9cc and http://www.fastestbillion.com
3. Coauthors include Yvonne Mhango, Michael Moran, Arnold Meyer, Nothando Ndebele, John Arron, Johan Snyman, Jim Taylor, DraganTrajkov, Sven Richter and Bradley Way.
4. Robertson 2013.
5. African Development Bank et al. 2013 and Angus Maddison Project 2013.
6. Smith 2011.
7. *Enaudeau 2013.*
8. Bates 2012.
9. Rowden 2013.

10. Quoted in Bond 2010.
11. World Bank 2011.
12. Calandro, Gillwald, Moyo and Stork 2010. Cell phone penetration 'figures tend to mask the fact that millions of Africans still do not own their own means of communication.' Moreover:

- Africa continues to lag behind other regions both in terms of the percentage of people with access to the full range of communications services and the amounts and manner in which they can be used – primarily as a result of the high cost of services;
- the cost of wholesale telecommunication services as an input for other economic activities remains high, escalating the cost of business in most countries;
- the contribution of ICT to gross domestic product, with some exceptions, is considerably less than global averages;
- national objectives of achieving universal and affordable access to the full range of communications services have been undermined either by poor policies … [or] regressive taxes;
- as a general trend across the continent, while the voice divide is decreasing, the internet divide is increasing and broadband is almost absent on the continent; and
- the fixed-line sector continues to show no signs of recovery…

13. Perry 2012.
14. World Bank 2011.
15. Elliott 2012.
16. ActionAid 2006.
17 IMF 2009.
18. Shaw 2012.
19. CADTM 2008.
20. IMF 2009.
21. Calandro et al 2010.
22. Ndikumana and Boyce 2011, 2012a, 2012b.
23. Most of the extractive corporations operating in Africa send profits to London, New York, Melbourne, Paris, Toronto, Rio de Janeiro, Shanghai or Beijing, with Johannesburg representing a 'branch plant' halfway house (no longer the site of accumulation for South African mining capital). The world's largest mining and metals house, BHP Billiton, is actively disinvesting, and Africa's largest company, Anglo American, continues its investment shift abroad.
24. World Bank 2011.
25. *The Changing Wealth of Nations* is rather conservative in calculating non-renewable resource depletion, leaving out several important minerals (including diamonds and uranium), and also neglecting the tax fraud and transfer pricing associated with transnational capital. These problems are documented by Khadija Sharife (2011) in *Tax Us If You Can and* by Leonce

Ndikumana and James Boyce (2011, 2012a, 2012b) in various studies that deserve much more attention, e.g. their recent book on *Africa's Odious Debts* and updated 1970-2010 estimates of flight capital from Africa.

26. See, e.g., a report by the Washington-based International Institute of Finance (2012); the *African Economic Outlook 2011* from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations Development Programme and African Development Bank (2011); the World Economic Forum's (2011) *Global Competitiveness Report*; the African Development Bank's (2011) discovery of a vast new middle class; the International Monetary Fund's (2011) *Regional Economic Outlook*; the World Bank's (2011) Africa strategy; and IMF (2011) research on African growth.
27. *The Economis*t, 26 February 2009.
28. Appel 2011.
29. Weisbrot et al. 2009.
30. IMF 2009.
31. Weeks 2010.
32. Rowden 2013.
33. Unctad 2011.
34. Unctad 2011.
35. Unctad 2012.
36. A degree of domestic economic reflation was recorded in most of Africa, including all oil exporters and middle- and low-income countries alike. Certainly, in the subsequent period, after 2008, when private sector decline was initially dramatic, African governments showed the ability to raise consumption using three Keynesian countervailing measures: budget deficits (so that falling tax revenues were not 'pro-cyclically' amplified throughout the economy), lower interest rates, and expanded money supplies. In spite of their overall orientation to the Washington Consensus, IMF staff were sufficiently worried about the depth of the world crisis in 2008 to 2009 in allowing large deficits, especially in regionally-powerful countries such as South Africa.
37. Karikari 2010.
38. Davel 2011.
39. Bond 2013.
40. Stiglitz and Rashid 2013.
41. Thomas 2013.
42. Stiglitz and Rashid 2013.
43. Balogun 2013.
44. Biney 2013.
45. AfDB et al. 2013.
46. AfDB et al. 2013.
47. Mthetwa 2013.

48. Bond and Mottiar 2013. Data of this sort should be considered valid only insofar as reliable trends can be discerned, and this is a matter of subjectivity when it comes to protest, given that definitions vary dramatically and that those recording the events – especially Agence France Press journalists – do so in a manner that fluctuates over time. Protests become regular and hence no longer of news value.
49. Bond 2014.
50. World Economic Forum 2013.
51. Meckay 2011.
52. Amin 2011.
53. Ekine 2011.
54. Ekine 2011.
55. Ekine 2011.
56. Clausen 1983.
57. International Monetary Fund 2011.
58. E.g. Mamdani 2012.
59. Fanon 1963.

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Creolising Political Identity and Social Scientific Method

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Abstract

Both nurturing and giving institutional expression to a solidarity of diverse people and scholarly communities on the African continent and its transnational diaspora, CODESRIA has embodied the imperative of continuing the unfinished work of building a world that is no longer colonial. But which methods are best suited to such decolonizing work? In what follows, I suggest that the concept of creolization, that emerged to grasp the distinctly African world of the Caribbean, remains an especially useful resource, especially if rearticulated and qualified in the ways for which I advocate.

Resumé

À la fois attentionné et donnant une expression institutionnelle à une solidarité de diverses personnes et communautés académiques sur le continent africain et sa diaspora transnationale, le CODESRIA a incarné l'impératif de poursuivre le travail inachevé de la construction d'un monde qui n'est plus colonial. Cependant, quelles sont les méthodes les mieux adaptées à un tel travail de décolonisation ? Dans ce qui suit, je suggère que le concept de *créolisation*, qui a émergé pour saisir le monde distinctement africain des Caraïbes, reste une ressource particulièrement utile, surtout si reformulé et qualifié au sens dans lequel je préconise.

When accepting the 2013 Latin American and Caribbean Regional Integration Award, the Executive Secretary, Dr. Ebrima Sall, emphasised the special poignancy of receiving the recognition just as CODESRIA celebrated its fortieth anniversary. Stressing that the project of political independence in continental Africa and the Global South was also necessarily an epistemic undertaking, Sall explained that decolonising both what we know and how our knowledge is generated must involve critically considering the linguistic and disciplinary boundaries that have

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organised the colonised (and neo-colonial) world and how it is studied.[1] This is precisely a mission shared by the Caribbean Philosophical Association (CPA) that organised its work around the bold aim of 'shifting the geography of reason'. In challenging the estimations of the people and circumstances from which historic thought could and can emerge, CPA refused to continue to divide up the Caribbean as Europe (and most subsequent regional and US.-based scholarly groups) did. From the outset, it therefore operated in multiple languages and insisted that theoretical work is necessarily transdisciplinary. Put slightly differently, the CPA treated the contours of the intellectual domain as an open rather than closed question. Lastly, even if imperfectly, the organisation has made a project of being humanistic. Inspired by the jazz communities of northeastern US cities that cultivated relations that produced classic recordings featuring men in their teens and early twenties, CPA sought also to be a community within which extraordinary young male and female talent was identified and nourished as part of the larger project of articulating ideas rooted in reflection of what it is to occupy the modern world as black. These reflections did not only aim at description but also at contributing to the generation of concepts and aspirations that could guide the shaping of a future that we might enthusiastically inhabit. Similar commitments inform the global liberatory pan-Africanism for which CODESRIA so importantly stands. Both nurturing and giving institutional expression to a solidarity of diverse people and scholarly communities on the African continent and in its diaspora, CODESRIA has embodied the imperative of continuing the unfinished work of building a world that is no longer colonial. But how are such heterogeneous African diasporic intellectuals to collaborate? Which methods are best suited to such decolonizing work? In what follows, I suggest that a concept that emerged to grasp the distinct nature of African diasporic world of the Caribbean remains an especially useful resource, especially if rearticulated and qualified in the ways for which I advocate below.

Defining Creolisation

While the first written use of the word 'creole' dates back to the 1500s to name people of mixed blood (Chaudenson 2001:87), *creolisation* emerged in its descriptive mode in the nineteenth century to explain what were seen as unique and aberrational symbolic forms borne of plantation societies primarily in the New World, but also within comparable situations on the coasts of Africa and Asia where trading outposts similarly brought enslaved Africans in contact with Europeans in lands either without

indigenous populations or nearly cleared of them through genocide. In all such instances, previously unconnected people – a colonial class, slaves, dwindling indigenous populations, and subsequent waves of (usually indentured) labourers – whose mutual recognition was unprecedented, were thrown together in violently unequal relations, threatening any and all existing orders of collective meaning.

Out of these sudden ruptures, new perspectives, based largely in reinvention, resituating, and mistranslation began to take shape (Buck-Morss 2009). What distinguished creolisation from other more familiar and ongoing forms of cultural mixture were the radical and intensified nature of the interchange of symbols and practices that constituted the encounters among displaced groups of individuals who were neither rooted in their new location nor able meaningfully to identify with great civilizations elsewhere (Eriksen 2007:155). Rather than a spread of coexisting parallel direct transplants, though these did also remain, new combinations of once disparate meaning took on degrees of stability and standardisation, charting a distinctive genealogy newly indigenous to the place.

Against the grain of once conventional scholarly wisdom, the cultural forms and meanings were neither evidence of Africans stripped of their culture and singularly acculturated into European ways of acting, nor of Africans enveloped in ossified, if pure, remnants and retentions from the mother continent. Instead, in the midst of extreme brutality those who unequally occupied such societies did not remain sealed off from each other but lived within relations marked by mundane dependency and antagonism, by intimate and complex interpenetration (Gilroy 1993: 48-49) that belied the project to create more Manichean worlds. In these relations of proximity, older habits, customs, and forms of meaning-making were not only retained or rejected; they were resignified in an 'embattled creativity' (Mintz 1998:119) that, in the language of Stuart Hall, enables us to envision how 'the colonized [also produced] the colonizer' (1996:6).

In most descriptive social scientific work, creolisation is used retrospectively to capture a *fait accompli***.** Indeed, as Michel-RolphTrouillot observed, 'the long-term impact of cultural imports is often proportional to the capacity to forget that they were once acquired or imposed' (Trouillot 2003:34).

So creolisation names the uniqueness of Jamaican Patois or Haitian Creole; the music one hears throughout the Caribbean or the Cajun food now local to Louisiana.

In each are evident the full range of contributing sources which, given prior political histories would not have been expected to converge, that in their combination represent both continuity and something radically new.

Among their noteworthy features are:

1. Elements that are brought together are not translated back into the language or symbolic framework of the one who does the borrowing. They are instead incorporated. One tries in vain, for example, to find an English equivalent for the Jamaican word ratid; one simply learns how to use it. Such acts of incorporation often involve the transculturation that Michaelle Browers (2008) and Mary Louise Pratt (1992) have correctly suggested we need not lament. In other words, an idea, linguistic form, or ingredient with one origin may willfully be resituated with meaningful implications. This is why Raquel Romberg, for instance, has urged theorists of creolisation to rethink the neat distinction between creativity and imitation since at the core of Caribbean creolised practices is 'the strategic unauthorized appropriation of symbols of power against their initial purpose'(2002:1) or, as Michel de Certeau has suggested, employing hegemonic forms of culture for ends foreign or antagonistic to them (1984:xiii).

2. One can, even within what has emerged as a new form in its own right, trace the contributory origins (themselves often highly syncretised) of elements that now converge. This is precisely why many listeners find Haitian Creole so remarkable: audible are not only sounds they associate with France but those of the Niger-Congo region; they hear each of these discretely enough to name them separately and the distinctness that is their combination. The conditions of the creolised product will eventually be forgotten, as Trouillothas emphasised, but within environments characterised by valuing or making creolisation central to their self-identities, one witnesses a greater awareness of the permeable and forged nature of all symbolic forms. Patterns of mixture are therefore valuable mirrors into relations that structure a given society and its availability or lack of access to social, economic, and political upward mobility: A particular group that is still relatively marginal to the national political community may significantly mark another domain, such as that of food or music. While one does not want to diminish the significance of any of these spheres – indeed turning to the full range of them is thoroughly consistent with the prescription that we do not assume in advance to know the sectors of life worlds within which the philosophical insights of specific communities were most richly developed – a legacy of the colonial world is the relative comfort of many whites with black and brown contributions to the aesthetic and emotive as opposed to more explicitly discursive political and intellectual areas. In this sense, a group may have significantly contributed to the symbolic life of a given community without possessing the equivalent power to define its guiding ultimate aims. Or, as with Victor Turner's category of the

liminal (1995 [1963]), may be used to inform the defining contours of hegemonic self-understandings without being able to direct how they are mobilised.[2]

3. As should be evident from the prior point, framing instances as those of creolisation requires a particular approach to the study of the past. Frequently, creolisation describes forms that have become relatively stable, even ossified, especially in those circumstances in which their marketability is linked to their branding and commodification as creole. The larger point, however, is that the expectations with which we approach prior historical moments are significantly shaped by how we conceive of symbolic life and its relationship to patterns of human movement. Particularly creolised forms can therefore themselves, if we are willing to grapple with them, belie ways of narrating the past that impose on them a *de facto* purity. The history of radical antislavery organisations and of the Haitian Revolution offer a good example: both were thoroughly transnational, with half of the slaves who fought in Haiti born in Africa; leaders and replenishing waves of new slaves coming in from other Caribbean islands; abolitionists of various allegiances entering from various elsewheres, including the United States and Europe. In a context in which most who laboured and fought and led were illiterate, their *lingua franca* was Creole (Fischer 2006:371-373).

4. Creolisation does suggest an intensity of interaction, a much more than casual cohabitation of social and political worlds, opportunities for which are typically furnished by fresh bouts of voluntary or coerced migration. However, situations that render creolisation likely may also be due to changes that do not involve crossing dramatic geographical distances but that are also described in spatial terms. For example, the movement of cultural or religious outsiders up or down the class ladder may lead to individuals among them more consistently or intensely interacting with members of communities with whom their previous relations had been at best distant. Their sudden proximity then raises anew very old questions of what in the lives of others to incorporate, mimic, or reject. The flipside of this is also important: often what are considered the most authentic forms of a creolised language are those that have sedimented precisely because the encounters of people that initially produced them have significantly dwindled due to more extensive racial segregation and isolation as a result of changed social norms or economic mandates or through the abandonment of efforts to assure that benefits distributed by local, national, or regional governments are equitably dispersed.

But perhaps most significantly, unlike the multitude of other forms of cultural mixture, creolisation has referred very explicitly to *illicit blendings* **(**Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant 1990) or to those that contradicted and betrayed the project of forging a Manichean racial order amidst the heavily mixed and transnational plantation societies of the New Worlds on both sides of the Atlantic. In particular, unlike other instances of cultural mixing, in which it is assumed that members of particular cultures will take an idea derived from elsewhere and make it local in an ongoing process of give and take, what is unique about what is now termed creolisation is that it refers to instances of such symbolic creativity among communities that included those thought incapable of it. Racialised logics forged in European modernity suggested a necessary relationship between one's blood as evident in one's phenotype and one's relative ability to be the source and custodian of culture, civilisation, and language. Cultural mixing described the interactions of those on comparable rungs. By contrast, what came later to be called creolisation described what at the time of their development were seen less as new syntheses than as unilateral corruption or erosion of forms of cultural life that necessarily originated elsewhere.

One example can illustrate this point succinctly: Guus Meijer and Pieter Muysken (1977) explain that European languages were thought to contain morphological distinctions and syntactic categories that supposedly simple black and brown people could not emulate. If, as nineteenth-century linguistic hybridology claimed, different races belong to varied evolutionary stages, with contact, their linguistic templates cross-fertilised at the lowest common denominator of structural complexity with the more primitive grammar of lower race speakers imposing an upper bound or limit (DeGraff 2003:295). It was, wrote Pierre Larousse in the *Grand Dictionnaire* of 1869, this stripping of linguistic sophistication that created creoles. He offered this definition: 'The creole language, in our colonies, in Louisiana and Haiti, is a corrupted French in which several Spanish and gallanicized words are mixed. The language, often unintelligible in the mouth of an old African, is extremely sweet in the mouth of white creole speakers' (cited in Meijer and Muysken 1977:22). Pieter A.M. Seurenmore recently argued that Creole grammars lacked the 'more sophisticated features of languages backed by a rich and extended cultural past and a large, well-organized literature society' (1998:292-93). Others still described Haitian Creole simply as 'French back in infancy' (DeGraff 2003:392).

If the concept of creolisation was developed to illuminate processes seemingly peculiar to and perhaps most pronounced in the Caribbean of Europe's early modernity, creolising practices are also in evidence

beyond it. At the same time, these approaches to or ways of engaging with (often hostile and unequal) difference have historically been noticed most precisely when they inspire dread or bemusement for combining previously distinctive genealogies.[3] In these instances of mergings provoking misgivings, those who understood themselves through terms of distance and separation encounter evidence of their mutual constitution near impossible to ignore. It is this disturbing aspect that in fact drew attention to phenomena that while widespread, especially within any empire of major geographic proportions, could otherwise go unnoticed. In appearing where they were not supposed to, creolised forms exemplified and therefore pointed to key features of how human worlds are often forged. Still, the most vital instances of creolisation emerge when they are not the aim; when instead groups located differently together try to forge more viable collectivities that necessitate contesting existing symbols in ways that produce newer ones. In other words, creolisation is progressive not when we are deliberately rejecting being straitjacketed by any and all existing practices or when we seek novelty as proof of our capacity to create. It is the logical conclusion when we are not constrained by the misleading commitments that would frame a resulting creolised form as a problematic betrayal.

The Creolising of Political Identity

In the Caribbean independence era, there were many efforts deliberately to craft a national identity that emphasised the multiple origins of emergent citizens (Bolland 2006:2). With no singular primordial nation to which the emergent state could refer, recognising the pluralistic culture that had become local could endanger no original purity. Still, these projects have been attacked as severely limited. Many brands of creole cultural nationalism were seen to enshrine only one form of hybridity, usually the kind of nationalist leaders at the forefront of efforts to oust white foreigners. Instead of an ongoing process of creolisation, one ossified instantiation was privileged to the exclusion of others in ways that cultivated antipathy toward people who failed to exemplify such mixture. Percy Hintzen (2006:29) has argued that the distinction between creole and non-creole hid commonalities in racist social practices that might otherwise have been the basis for political organising. For Mervyn Alleyne (2003:41), 'creole' was still colour inflected, marking a distinction between non-local whites and less mixed Africans. These criticisms are also heavily associated with East Indian Caribbean writers (Puri 2004; Khan 2006) and those indigenous to the region (Segal 1993) who, re-

spectively, have asked whether one can arrive too late or be present too early in creolisation processes – whether one can remain outside of that which converges whether as a permanently unmixable Eastern person or as what was eradicated lest the newly indigenous can emerge.

More common at present than valorising creolisation are projects of decreolisation or those through which efforts are made to purify cultures of what are seen as external and contaminating influences. Earlier examples of this phenomenon are efforts to stave off the Anglicising of the French language. There are certainly moments in which creolisation is avoided because it seems only to amount to embracing assimilation into a colonising culture. This is a position advanced by several leading US Afrocentrists for whom creolisation is to be further polluted by an already ubiquitous and dehumanising Eurocentrism. The difficulty with this position is that New World Africa cultures, even in their most strongly black nationalist and Africa – affirming and – engaging varieties, are already inescapably creolised – communicated in and in resistant response to English or Portuguese or Dutch or French.

One could argue in the case of the former set of objections that what is being challenged is not the process of creolisation as much as the ways in which its discourses and practices were monopolised and hijacked by a creole elite that set themselves up as idealised hybrid exemplifications and gatekeepers in order to interrupt the living processes of creolisation that would have better reflected the full range of the relevant societies. In so doing, they are much like the national bourgeoisie that Fanon so scathingly criticised that remained locked in a self-serving xenophobic nationalism rather than setting conditions to express and nurture a national consciousness that would have had to be radically redistributive. In these instances, creolisation is not unlike the heavily prescriptive ideal of 'colorblindness' in the United States and 'mestizaje' in much of the Latin Caribbean. In both, a normative project is made of not seeing the very lines of difference crucial to diagnosing the historical and ongoing unequal distribution of life opportunities through vastly opposed estimations of the value of different human communities. There is no doubt that in these circumstances, the language of creolisation could be used to pursue highly conservative ends, with the implication that there is nothing intrinsically progressive in forms of mixture that emerge out of processes of creolisation unless in them is an ongoing commitment to an ever enlarged generality or ever improved articulation of that which the meaningful differences of those in a society have in common. Even then, there are forms of difference that cannot be reconciled. One cannot, for instance, find generality between those who

would bar entire groups of people from political life and the barred or those who would insist on arrangements in which the vast majority is immiserated to shore up further profits for some and the negatively implicated.

With the aim of distinguishing among the implications of disparate forms of creolisation, Vijay Prasad (2002), under the name of 'polyculturalism', explores when separate marginalised groups fight together. Though it is not their aim or purpose, these collective efforts produce practices, symbols and language that blend those previously thought to belong to discrete and often antagonistic groups and traditions in ways that foster and sustain alliances that those hostile to their potential fruit sought deliberately to block. It is in this sense that we might call Fanonian national consciousness 'creolizing', since all efforts to articulate that which is consented to and right for all would have to be creolised. The vitality of the products is striking since rather than funnelling intellectual, creative, political and moral energies into preserving existing identities that dictate appropriate behaviour and aims, polycultural or creolising processes pursue a world more befitting the range of people that occupy it, assuming that there are no complete, readymade existing blueprints of how this must look. What materializes is unlikely perfectly to mirror all of the various groups that might seek less constrained social and political conditions, but efforts in this direction introduce new repertoires and examples that might in turn be reworked and recast. But crucially, the creolising of practices, languages, and ideas is not the object in such moments. It is, however, the inevitable consequence of together diagnosing a shared world for the sake of generating more legitimate alternatives.

One could pause here to consider the very different reactions of the French government to the Négritude writings of Leopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire, on the one hand, and Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism***,** on the other. Négritude, in many ways, is much more compatible with a multicultural than a creolising model. Although critically engaging the mutual constitution of the designations 'white' and 'black', in it, each community or racial group's 'culture' is a territory with fortressed boundaries. In the case of the recently colonised, such life worlds (even if in petrified or zombified form) are a sanctuary into which one retreats, having conceded, at least temporarily, that the public terrain of politics is that of the settler. By contrast, Fanon capture**s** how disturbed these same settlers were when they suddenly heard North Africans using 'their French', the language that the colonised supposedly *could not* learn, to converse animatedly with one another about the progress of anticolonial efforts. Suddenly, a creolised *lingua franca* (that combined the French lexifier with the full range of North African substrates) that could only have emerged in that precise way through the introduction of

colonisation was being used to interrupt and eradicate it. And indeed, in terms of the fate of books advancing these respective visions: it was Fanon's that was banned six months after it came to print.

In this sense, in defense of creolising projects in the Caribbean, while these may have fallen far short of the more profound ideal of independence as bringing a substantive end to colonial forms of life and value, what has emerged in their stead is certainly no better. Indeed, the ascendant logic of neoliberalism which encourages a branding of difference framed as cultural as carefully protected sites of exclusion, leverage, and potential enrichment in an increasingly scarce terrain has not proven any more effective at addressing racialised forms of radical inequality (Thomas 2004).

All efforts at forming new hegemonies, even those linked to creolising forms of struggle, will be faulty. Even then, what singles out creolisation for consideration is its disposition toward the nature of symbolic life. The concept emerged to illuminate processes of creating that which is local by paying attention to the ways in which what we call 'cultures' are tied to racial and class locations that are incoherent if delinked from their role in defining spectrums of opportunities and their denial. In other words, creolisation insists on the politicised nature of what is muted and in the more euphemistic and preferred language of 'diversity'. On the other hand, creolisation also offers a useful antidote to those who in the name of its protection would exaggerate cultural distinctiveness to the point of mutual untranslatability, in a trend much criticied by Kwasi Wiredu (1996) who emphasises that while contexts of meaning are fundamentally shaped by historical contingencies, within these are remarkably consistent struggles over power, authority, direction, and purpose.

Finally, creolisation need not (as it has in most social scientific research) always refer to what transpires in colonised settings or among the damned of the earth. Unanticipated trajectories in the development of ideas and practices can transpire wherever there is literal or metaphorical migration. Still, the insistence that creolisation not only involves distinctive syntheses, but those that would embody more meaningful approximations of the needs and hopes of the society at large implies an ongoing relation to those seeking progressive political transformation. Put slightly different, those who benefit from partial arrangements masked as benefitting all are more likely to oppose the appearance of more legitimate alternatives that clearly reveal previous claims to generality or representativeness as phony. As such, they are more likely to reject further creolising products as illicit, impure, or otherwise undesirable, opting instead for already existing and sedimented instantiations of mixture.

The Creolisation of Social Scientific Method

It is illuminating to distinguish creolisation from multiculturalism and hybridity, especially when we turn explicitly to questions of method because, *however unwittingly*, the way we conceptualise the meaning of culture and symbolic life decisively overdetermines how we envisage the disciplines from and through which we think.

A common response, for instance, to the significant challenges posed by heterogeneity to earlier aspirations to formulate universal theories has been to call for interdisciplinary or mixed-method research. These, at the level of method, mimic the politics and mode of multiculturalism: distinct disciplinary approaches, each with unique genealogies of commitment are aggregated in the hope that together the discrete pieces amount to a complete picture that, if not comprehensive, is at least less partial.[4] Each party to such endeavours is understood to contribute most if it authentically represents each of their respective traditions. Those skeptical about such initiatives frequently see ensuing intellectual mixtures only in terms of dilution or corruption. The products appear illicit. Preferable in times framed as those of scarcity such as our own is to develop the most specialised of masteries, shoring up the necessity of this particular area of study and the indispensability of these specific (decreolised) practitioners.

Creolisation by contrast assumes that disciplines are the culmination of particular genealogies taken up to make sense of particular problems and circumstances. These will render specific elements of fairly sedimented practices especially relevant as others become less so. One is likely to find as well that dimensions of other disciplinary formations, those not typically employed, offer categories, foundational analogies, forms of evidence, and ideas that are highly illuminating. One will not, however, turn to these for the sake of being ecumenical or exemplifying inclusivity but, instead, because they offer magnifying routes into and through a dilemma that one otherwise would lack. Even then, one does not simply add these respective methods up – with the implication that one might say that the work is 10 per cent economic and 65 per cent sociological, etc.

To creolise social scientific and theoretical approaches then is to break with an identity-oriented understanding of disciplines and methods in which one and one's work can only emerge as meaningful by being isomorphic with pre-existing conceptions of what a scholarly designation would indicate one must do. Just as creolisation cannot and does not prioritise 'cultural maintenance' or 'cultural preservation', its aim, if used as an approach to scholarship, is instead guided by another *telos*: that of

contributing to the construction of an inhabitable social world. In so doing, one cannot but grapple with how to think among multiple registers in conversations that do not all partake of the same conventions. In treating our unavoidable epistemological limitations as sites of openness, we restore ourselves as value-giving subjects with meaning-making capacities, which in turn require engagement with the plurality of intellectual heritages or a teleologically open approach to the symbolic world (Cornell and Panfilio 2010; Gordon 2006). This is crucially also to reject being overtaken by post-structural suspicions of the inevitably totalising and repressive nature of any collective aspirations.

The creolising processes of New World plantation societies operated differently in distinct domains. As Robert Chaundenson (with Salikoko S. Mufwene) has described it, 'the centrifugal force' of the settler class was most pronounced in the linguistic terrain and in others most suffused with the oral and written word. It is precisely this uneven quality of creolisation and its legacies that informed Paget Henry's seminal *Caliban's Reason*: Henry observed that while creolisation was fully evident in Caribbean literature, folklore, music, and theatre, when one turned to Caribbean philosophy, the same process was skewed and incomplete. In this 'most quintessentially rational area of inquiry and work' (2000:70), the ongoing presumed authority of Europe continued. In response, Henry argued, intellectuals needed to undertake a project of re-enfranchising African and Afro-Caribbean philosophies, recentring long-concealed areas of the imagination and re-establishing their ability to accumulate authority. Rejecting 'negative evaluations that block African and European elements from creatively coming together' (2000:88), creolisation, in this context, involved the act of deliberately indigenising theoretical endeavours, of drawing on local resources of reason and reflection to illuminate local aspirations and assuming that the fruit of these particular endeavours could, as had proved true of their European counterparts, be valuable in themselves and to projects elsewhere.[5]

Creolisation, after all, offers a model of how it is that people have constructed collective worlds out of necessity. It is not through tiny unassociated parts coexisting in mutual hostility but by recognising, exploring, and enunciating complex interdependencies in ways that transcode and incorporate so that each is understood in and through the terms of the other mirroring the processes through which conditions of mutual intelligibility and sociality emerge. In this sense, a creolised method for political life and for social science is one that aims in its guiding assumption to treat symbolic worlds, 'culture', as Sigmund Freud argued

in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, as the efforts of human beings to forge domains that mirror their values and their selves within an otherwise indifferent or inhospitable natural world.

One could similarly say that politics and social scientific investigations of it are centuries-long endeavours to fashion a province guided by a set of rules and shared practices distinctive from those of the market and of war. In the audacious imagination of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, we seek in politics to set conditions for our collective thriving. In such endeavour, we become something other than what we are when merely duplicated and multiplied as discrete individuals, an indivisible part of the qualitatively different category of political generality, a citizenry, or a sovereign people. As with creolisation, in this formulation, we are distinguished as individuals in and through our combination with others into something continuous and new. Rather than lost in a totality, generalities magnify the distinctiveness of their component parts.

By Way of Conclusion

CODESRIA was founded on the acknowledgment that genuine political independence demanded epistemological decolonisation as well. Part of this involves determining the aims and audience of one's intellectual labour – who and what is of value and to be prioritised. In the case of CODESRIA, this has meant work undertaken in the service of humanity that could be advanced by, and in turn accelerate, the unifying of a fragmented Africa. Such pan-African movement, that continues a long history of collective struggle against unfreedom, will of necessity be a creolised one. It is in that spirit that I offer this outline of a concept borne of efforts to make sense of the tenaciously innovative spirit of members of the African diaspora to equip us both intellectually and politically with orientations that can enable us to break genuinely new ground.

Notes

1. For the complete transcript, visit http://www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/Award_Acceptance_Speech_Santiago_Chile_Thursday_3_October_2013_Autosaved_.pdf
2. For further discussion of liminality, see AsmaromLegesse (1973).
3. A good recent example of this is when the recent riots in London were blamed on the (omni)presence in the city of Jamaican patois.

4. A common response to the Eurocentrism of much work on political thought has been to call for comparative work. Although this has created some professional room to enlarge what we might seriously study and has been applauded by non-theorists looking to make their universities more international and global, there are many problems at the core of this enterprise. Among them are the ongoing focus on Arab, Indian, and northeast Asian thought to the almost complete exclusion of theory emerging from Native or Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. In an approach that still needs the 'near' and 'far' and 'here' and 'there', thought from the African and Latin diasporas appears both insufficiently similar and inadequately different, as a relative rather than genuinely comparative term. Put slightly differently, much of this research has duplicated rather than illuminating the specificity of what Walter Mignolo has called 'the colonial difference', or the lines that divide metropolitan Being from peripheral non-Being. The work of George Ciccariello-Maher and Katherine Gordy are important exceptions to these more general trends in comparative political theory.
5. Although I have explored Frantz Fanon's work as that which creolises the central problems explored by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, another rich example of creolisation are in the writings of the early 20th century Peruvian socialist journalist and political thinker, José Carlos Mariátegui.

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Disciplinary Decadence and the Decolonisation of Knowledge

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Abstract

In celebration of the fortieth anniversary of CODESRIA, an institution from the Global South devoted to taking responsibility for the production of social science knowledge, this article explores what it means to pursue such a task under the threat of colonial imposition at methodological and disciplinary levels, which, the author argues, carries dangers of disciplinary decadence marked by the fetishisation of method. The author offers alternatives through what he calls 'a teleological suspension of disciplinarity, and raises the question not only of the decolonisation of knowledge but also norms.

Resumé

Pour célébrer le quarantième anniversaire du CODESRIA, une institution des pays du Sud dévouée dans la production de connaissances en sciences sociales, cet article explore les implications de mener une telle tâche sous la menace de l'emprise coloniale à des niveaux méthodologiques et disciplinaires, qui, selon l'auteur, provoque des dangers sur la décadence disciplinaire marquée par la divination de la méthode. L'auteur propose des alternatives à travers ce qu'il appelle « une suspension téléologique de l'interdisciplinarité, et pose la question non seulement de la décolonisation de la connaissance, mais aussi celle des normes.

This article, offered in celebration of CODESRIA's fortieth anniversary, addresses some recent theoretical developments in the decolonisation of knowledge. That knowledge has been *colonised* raises the question of whether it was ever free. The formulation of knowledge in the singular already situates the question in a framework that is alien to times before the emergence of European modernity and its age of global domination, for the disparate modes of producing knowledge and notions of knowledge were so many that *knowledges* would be a more appropriate designation.

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Unification was a function of various stages of past imperial realignment, where local reflections shifted their attention to centres elsewhere to the point of concentric collapse. On their way, those varieties of knowledge coalesced into knowledge of the centre, and successive collapses of centres under the weight of other centres led, over time, to the global situation of *the centre* (centrism) and its concomitant organisation of knowledges into knowledge.[1] This path has not, however, been one exclusively built upon alienation, for along with the strange and the alien were also the familiar and, at times, the welcomed.

Enrique Dussel is a member of a community of scholars who have questioned the logic of self-reflection offered by the most recent stage of centric productions of knowledge.[2] The philosophical framework of such rationalisation is familiar to most students of Western philosophy: René Descartes reflected on method in the seventeenth century, grew doubtful, and articulated the certainty of his thinking self in opposition to the fleeting world of physical appearance. A result of such intellectual labour is a shift of first questions from meditations on what there is to what can be known. This focus on epistemology as first philosophy charted the course of philosophy in modern terms against and with which contemporary philosophers and social theorists continue to struggle and grapple. For political thinkers, the new beginning is a little earlier, in the late fifteenth century – through early sixteenth-century reflections on politics by Niccolò Machiavelli. Against these intellectualist formulations of modern life, Dussel raises the question of its underside, of the geopolitical, material impositions and the unnamed millions whose centres collapsed not simply from the force of ideas but sword and musket. That modernity was ironically also identified by Machiavelli but is often overlooked through how he is read today: in *The Prince*, Machiavelli wrote of the effects of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella's victory over the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula.[3] His focus on the repression wrought in the name of Christendom presumed, however, the continued significance of the Mediterranean in the commerce of world-constituting activity. Dussel's (and others') work argues that the continued conflict spread westward across the Atlantic Ocean, and by October of that year, 1492, a series of new relations were established with a New World that de-centreed the Mediterranean, stimulated a new economy and, with it, an organisation of its management (new epistemologies), and re-aligned the western peninsula of Asia into a new political territory in the form of a continent, namely, Europe.[4]

Prior to the emergence of Europe, there were maps of the Mediterranean that would have to be turned upside down to be familiar to contemporary travellers, for, as was the case with ancient organisations of locations of

regions that included northeast Africa, whose most known civilisation was Egypt (Km.t, as it was originally known before acquiring the Greek name by which it is now known), 'upper' pointed south, and 'lower' northward.[5] One, in other words, travelled *up* to what became known as Africa and down to what became known as Europe. The birth of new centres produced new geopolitical relations, and as focus on the New World eclipsed the effort to establish trade with southwest and middle Asia, the bourgeoning economies affected the cultural life as well. In the production of cultural considerations also emerged those of new forms of life. A transition followed from Jews, Christians, and Muslims to Europeans, Asians, Africans, and New World peoples forced into some variation of the misnomer 'Indians' or 'red savages' at first along old Aristotelian categories of developed versus undeveloped 'men'. This movement, negotiated through conquest, colonisation, disputations, and enslavement, brought to the fore reflections of 'man' on 'man,' with constant anxiety over the stability of such a category. In such study, the process of discovery, of uncovering, also became one of invention and production: The search to understand 'man' was also producing him. Its destabilisation was inevitable as *his* possibilities called his exclusion of 'her' into question. The concomitant reorganisation of understanding him and her is oddly a schema that befits the dominating knowledge scheme of the epoch: Science.

The word 'science,' although also meaning knowledge, reveals much in its etymology. It is a transformation of the Latin infinitive *scire* (to know), which, let us now add, suggests a connection to the verb *scindere* (to divide – think, today of 'schism'), which, like many Latin words, also shares origins with ancient Greek words, which, in this case would be *skhizein* (to split, to cleave). Oddly enough, this exercise in etymology is indication of a dimension of epistemological colonisation, for most etymological exercises report a history of words as though language itself is rooted in Greek and Roman classicism. The tendency is to find the sources of meaning from either the European side of the Mediterranean or from the north. There is an occasional stop off in Western Asia, but for the most part, the history of important terms suggests a geographical movement that is oddly similar to the movement of *Geist* in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.[6] Some further inquiry reveals, however, the relationship of the Latin and Greek words to more ancient Egyptian/Km.tian words *Crethi* and *kotket* by way of the Hebrew *Crethi***,** which was derived from the root *carath*, which means 'to cut'. The word *Crethi* referred to the ancient Egyptian/Km.tian royal armies, which were split into two classes.[7] We thus see here

a transition from one form of ancient centre to various others on a course to European modern times. Oddly enough, there is an etymological link during the Latin transition with another Latin infinitive, *secare* (which also means 'to cut'), through which is more transparently connected the Hebrew *carath* (if one imagines *cara* as a possible spoken form). *Secare* is the source of the English word *sex*. A link between science and sex brings biology to the fore and the question of life sciences. Such a consideration indicates the importance of life reflections on the unfolding developing of systematic inquiry: As the question of a supreme deity motivated theological reflections and metaphysical inquiry, so, too, did concerns over the generation of life initiate scientific inquiry, although life was loaded with metaphysical content as anxieties and fear over the salvation of the soul without the theological guarantees attested to this day.

The subsequent unfolding story is familiar to most of us who study colonisation. Along with the expansion of Christian kingdoms into nation-states and their colonies, which resulted over the course of a few hundred years into European civilisation on a global scale, was also a series of epistemological developments that have literally produced new forms of life: new kinds of people came into being, while others disappeared, and whole groups of them occupy the age in an ambivalent and melancholic relationship by which they are indigenous to a world that, paradoxically, they do not belong to.[8] These people have been aptly described by W.E.B. Du Bois as 'problems'.[9] They are a function of a world in which they are posited as illegitimate although they could exist nowhere else. I am speaking here primarily of blacks and Indians/Native Americans, and by blacks I also mean to include Australian Aboriginals and related groups in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean. Such people are treated by dominant organisations of knowledge, especially those falling under the human or social sciences, as problems instead of people who face problems. Their problem status is a function of the presupposed legitimacy of the systems that generate them. In effect, being perfect, the systems that produce their condition resist blame for any injustice or contradiction that may be avowed by such people. They become *extraneous* to those systems' functions in spite of having already been generated by them. The contradictory nature of such assessments distorts the process of reasoning and the production of knowledge into doubled structures of disavowals and concealment, at times even with claims of transparency, and more problem people result. A consequence of such reflection is the proliferation of more kinds of problem people. Since 2001, when the US War on Terror was inaugurated, the production of such people has increased.

At this point, I should like to make some distinctions that may anchor some of the abstract terms of this discussion. That modes of producing knowledge can be enlisted in the service of colonisation is evident. Frantz Fanon, for instance, reflected, in *Peau noire, masques blancs,* that methods have a way of devouring themselves.[10] In doing so, he brought into focus the problem of evaluating method itself, of assessing methodology. If the epistemic conditions of social life were colonised, would not that infection reach also the grammatical level, the very grounds of knowledge? Put differently, couldn't there also be colonisation at the methodological level? If so, then, any presumed method, especially from a subject living within a colonised framework, could generate continued colonisation. To evaluate method, the best 'method' is the suspension of method. This paradox leads to a demand for radical anti-colonial critique. But for such a reflection to be radical, it must also make even logic itself suspect. Such a demand leads to a distinction between rationality and reason. The former cannot suspend logic, for to be what it is, it must, at minimum, demand consistency. The demand for consistency eventually collapses into maximum consistency, in order to be consistent. In effect, this means that rationality must presume its method, and it must resist straying from its generating grammar. Reason, however, offers a different story. To be maximally consistent, although logically commendable, is not always reasonable. Reasonability can embrace contradictions. Even more, it *must* be able to do so in order to evaluate even itself. This means that the scope of reason exceeds rationality.

Science is more at home with rationality than it is with reason. Departure from consistency-maximisation would disintegrate an important foundation of modern science, namely, the notion of a law of nature. A law in this sense cannot have exceptions. Since reason at times demands exceptions, a marriage between science and reason would be shortlived. The project of much of modern European philosophical thought, however, has been the effort to cultivate such a marriage. Toward such a goal, the instruments of rationality are often unleashed with the result of the effort to yoke reason to rationality. This effort could be reformulated as the effort to colonise reason.

The effort to colonise reason has had many productive consequences. Many disciplines have been generated by this effort. On one hand, there are the natural and exact theoretical sciences. On the other, there are the human sciences. The former set seems to behave in a more disciplined way than the latter. Although disciplining the latter has resulted in a variety of disciplines, the underlying goal of maximum rationalisation has been

consistently strained. The source of such difficulty – *reality* – has been unremitting. Karl Jaspers, in *Philosophy of Existence***,** summarised the circumstance well: reality is not always obedient to consciousness.[11] Any discipline or generated system for the organisation of reality faces the problem of having to exceed the scope of its object of inquiry, but since it, too, must be part of that object (if it is to be something as grand as reality), it must contain itself in a logical relationship to all it is trying to contain, which expands the initial problem of inclusion. There is, in other words, always *more* to, and of, reality.

Failure to appreciate reality sometimes takes the form of recoiling from it. An inward path of disciplinary solitude eventually leads to what I call *disciplinary decadence***.**[12] This is the phenomenon of turning away from living thought, which engages reality and recognises its own limitations, to a deontologised or absolute conception of disciplinary life. The discipline becomes, in solipsistic fashion, *the world*. And in that world, the main concern is the proper administering of its rules, regulations, or, as Fanon argued, (self-devouring) methods.[13] Becoming 'right' is simply a matter of applying, as fetish, the method correctly. This is a form of decadence because of the set of considerations that fall to the wayside as the discipline turns into itself and eventually implodes. Decay, although a natural process over the course of time for living things, takes on a paradoxical quality in disciplinary formation. A discipline, e.g., could be in decay through a failure to realise that decay is possible. Like empires, the presumption is that the discipline must outlive all, including its own purpose.

In more concrete terms, disciplinary decadence takes the form of one discipline assessing all other disciplines from its supposedly complete standpoint. It is the literary scholar who criticises work in other disciplines as not literary. It is the sociologist who rejects other disciplines as not sociological. It is the historian who asserts history as the foundation of everything. It is the natural scientist that criticises the others for not being scientific. And it is also the philosopher who rejects all for not being properly philosophical. Discipline envy is also a form of disciplinary decadence. It is striking, for instance, how many disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences are now engaged in intellectual history with a focus on the Western philosophical canon. And then there is decadence at methodological levels. Textualism, for example, infects historiography at the level of archival legitimacy. Or worse, in some forms of textualism, the expectation of everything being contained in the text becomes evident in work in the human sciences that announce studying its subject through an analysis exclusively of texts on the subject. There are scholars in race theory, e.g., who seem to

think that theorising the subject is a matter of determining what has been said on it by a small set of canonical texts. When appearance is reduced to textuality, what, then, happens to inquiry? What are positivism and certain forms of semiological imitation of mathematical phenomena but science envy? When biologism, sociologism, psychologism, and many others assert themselves, to what, ultimately, are they referring? In the human sciences, the problem becomes particularly acute in the study of problem people. Such people misbehave also in disciplinary terms. The failure to squeeze them into disciplinary dictates, from a disciplinarily decadent perspective, is proof of a problem with the people instead of the discipline. It serves as further *proof* of the pathological nature of such people.

A response to disciplinary decadence (although not often identified as such) has been interdisciplinarity. A problem with this response is that it, too, is a decadent structure. This is because presumed disciplinary completeness of each discipline is compatible with disciplinary decadence. Disciplines could simply work alongside each other like ships passing in the night. A more hopeful route is *transdisciplinarity*, where disciplines work *through* each other; yet although more promising, such a route is still susceptible to decadence so long as it fails to bring reality into focus. But doing that raises questions of purpose. It raises considerations that may need to be addressed *in spite of disciplinary dictates*. I call this process a *teleological suspension of disciplinarity*. By that, I mean the willingness to go beyond disciplines in the production of knowledge. This 'beyond' is, however, paradoxical. In some instances, it revitalizes an existing discipline. In others, it generates a new one. For example, a teleological suspension of philosophy generates new philosophy in some instances, and in others, it may generate new social thought that may not be philosophical. A teleological suspension of topology, chemistry, and biology could offer much to genetics and other sequencing notions of life. Germane to this special forum, it could also transform ways in which one theorises the relationship of dependency to development.

Teleological suspensions of disciplines are also epistemic decolonial acts. The discussion I have offered thus far places such acts squarely in, although not exclusive to, Africana philosophy. By Africana philosophy, I mean the exploration of modern life as understood through contradictions raised by the lived-reality of African Diasporic people. Because such people are often linked to many other communities whose humanity has been challenged, Africana philosophy is also a philosophy that speaks beyond the Africana community. Among the pressing themes of Africana philosophy are: (1) philosophical anthropology, (2) freedom and liberation,

and (3) metacritiques of reason. Their presence in this discussion is evident, but to summarise: The first is raised by the dehumanisation of people (making them into problems) in the modern world; the second pertains to the transformation of (emancipation from) that circumstance; and the third examines whether the first two, especially at the level of the reasons offered in their support, are justified. I cannot provide a detailed discussion of these thematics here because of limited space. Instead, I should like to close with several additional considerations.

The first is regarding the political significance of this critique. For politics to exist, there must be discursive opposition over relations of power. Such activity involves communicative possibilities that rely on the suspension of violent or repressive forces. In effect, that makes politics also a condition of appearance. To be political is to emerge, to appear, to exist. Colonisation involves the elimination of discursive opposition between the dominant group and the subordinated group. A consequence of this is the attempted elimination of speech (a fundamental activity of political life) with a trail of concomitant conditions of its possibility. It is not that colonised groups fail to speak. It is that their speaking lacks appearance or mediation; it is not transformed into speech. The erasure of speech calls for the elimination of such conditions of its appearance such as gestural sites and the constellation of muscles that facilitates speech – namely, the face. As faceless, problem people are derailed from the dialectics of recognition, of self and other, with the consequence of neither self nor other. Since ethical life requires others, a challenge is here raised against models of decolonial practice that centre ethics. The additional challenge, then, is to cultivate the options necessary for both political and ethical life. To present that call as an ethical one would lead to a similar problem of coloniality as did, say, the problem of method raised by Fanon. European modernity has, in other words, subverted ethics. As with the critique of epistemology as first philosophy, ethics, too, as first philosophy must be called into question. It is not that ethics must be rejected. It simply faces its teleological suspension, especially where, if maintained, it presupposes instead of challenging colonial relations. Even conceptions of the ethical that demand deference to the Other run into trouble here since some groups, such as blacks and Indians/Native Americans, are often not even the Other. This means, then, that the ethical proviso faces irrelevance without the political conditions of its possibility. This is a major challenge to liberal hegemony, which calls for ethical foundations of political life, in European modernity. It turns it upside down. But in doing so, it also means that ethics-centred approaches, even in the name of liberation, face a similar fate.

This challenge to ethics raises the question of the scope of normative life. An example of this is the presumed universality of the concept of justice. What many people in the Global South have experienced is that justice could be consistently advanced in the interest of profound suffering simply by rendering illegitimate the humanity of whole groups of people. Thus, it could be claimed that justice was achieved in the United States through the Civil Rights Movement and the legislation it occasioned or that it was accomplished in South Africa through the ending of legal Apartheid and the process of the Truth and Reconciliation commissions, or that the many former colonies that have become what Achille Mbembe aptly calls 'postcolonies'.[14] These moments of justice (or, as some readers might prefer, supposed justice) did not transform the question of the human status of black peoples and the presumption of humanness enjoyed by people with, or those who have managed to acquire, the special credit or capital of whiteness. The result has been an effort to seek in normative life what is, in effect, beyond justice. In fact, the particularity of justice could be such that while necessary for a certain dimension of political and legal activity, it is insufficient for the deeper question of establishing a human relationship to human institutions. If this is correct, a more radical inquiry into the decolonisation of normative life is needed along with that of epistemic practice.

The third is about the imperial significance of standards as a correlate of the second critical concern. Consider the problem of philosophical anthropology. Simply demonstrating that one group is as human as another has the consequence of making one group the standard of another. In effect, one group seeks justification while the other is self-justified. The demonstration itself must be teleologically suspended. Shifting the geography of reason means, as we take seriously such developments as South-South dialogue and what the Caribbean Philosophical Association has called 'shifting the geography of reason',[15] that the work to be done becomes one that raises the question of whose future we face.

Fourth, at least at the epistemological level, every empire has a geopolitical impact by pushing things to its centre. In the past, the range of empires was not global. Today, because global, we face the question of the traces they leave when they have dissolved. In the past, empires constructed civilisations that lasted at least a few thousand years. They soon diminished to several hundred, then to a few hundred. Today, time is imploding under the weight of rapid and excessive consumption (with the bulk of natural resources being consumed in North America, Europe, and increases on the horizon in Asia), and we must now struggle through

a complex understanding of decay and the dissolution of empires. As with all empires, the consciousness from within continues to be susceptible to an inflated sense of importance, where the end of empire is feared as the end of the world.

Fifth, subjects of dehumanising social institutions suffer a paradoxical melancholia. They live a haunted precolonial past, a critical relation to the colonial world from which they are born, and a desire for a future in which, if they are able to enter, they are yoked to the past. A true, new beginning stimulates anxiety because it appears, at least at the level of identity, as suicide. The constitution of such subjectivity, then, is saturated with loss without refuge.[16]

Sixth, the theme of loss raises challenges of what decolonial activity imposes upon everyone. I call this *the Moses problem***.** Recall the biblical story of Exodus, where Moses led the former enslaved Israelites (and members of other tribes who joined them) to the Promised Land. Moses, we should remember, was not permitted to enter. Commentary, at least at Passover Seders, explains that Moses's sense of power (and ego) got in the way, and he presented his might as a source of the Israelites' liberation. There is much that we who reflect upon decolonisation, those of us who seek liberation, could learn from the mythic life of ancient people. Fanon paid attention to this message when he wrote the longest chapter of *Les Damnés de la terre*, namely, 'Les Mésaventures de la conscience nationale'.[17] The admonition is this: Those who are best suited for the transition from colonisation/enslavement to the stage of initial liberty are not necessarily the best people for the next, more difficult stage: Living the practice of freedom. It is no accident that instead of the end of colonisation, new forms of colonisation emerge. The movements, in other words, are as follows: from initial freedom to bondage/colonisation, to decolonisation/initial liberation, to neocolonisation, to internal opposition, to postcolonies (neocolonialism in a world in which colonialism is shameful), to concrete manifestations of freedom. What this means is that the more difficult, especially in political and ethical terms, conflict becomes the one to wage against former liberators. Like Moses, they must move out of the way so the subsequent generations could build their freedom. We see here the sacrificial irony of all commitments to liberation: It is always a practice *for others*.

And seventh, but not final, as a consequence of the problem of leadership, Fanon was critical of what is now called postcolonial leadership and ruling groups in many Afro-majority societies. This leadership, whose moral evocations led the process of decolonization, continues to formulate capital in moral terms. Theirs is a supposedly or at least avowedly *moral* leadership.

The European bourgeoisie developed concepts, however, in coordination with infrastructural resources with great social reach. We see here another blow to the kinds of liberation argument that prioritise ethics over other modes of action and the organisation of knowledge. The poor, as a category to stimulate an ethical response, need more than submission and tears from their leadership. Meditation on and cultivation of maturity, of how to negotiate, live, and transform a world of contradictions, paradoxes, uncertainty, and unfairness, may be the proverbial wisdom well sought.

Notes

1. On this matter, see, e.g, Walter D. Mignolo, Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, ed., Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies (London, UK: Verso, 2008). Cf. also, Lewis R. Gordon, 'Esquisse d'une critique monstrueuse de la raison postcoloniale,' Tumultes, numéro 37 (October 2011): 165–183 and Jane Anna Gordon, Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Fanon (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).
2 See, e.g., Enrique Dussel, The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation, ed. and trans. Eduardo Mendieta (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996). This community of scholars includes Linda Martín Alcoff, Paget Henry, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Eduardo Mendieta, and Walter Mignolo, works by all of whom, among others, I discuss in An Introduction to Africana Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Cf. also Walter Mignolo's recent, The Darker Side of Western Modernity (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012). To this epistemic challenge, I would also add the problem of the decolonisation of normative life. On this matter, see Mabogo More, 'South Africa under and after Apartheid' in Kwasi Wiredu, ed., A companion to African Philosophy (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 148–157. A variety of expanded definitions are offered in Drucilla Cornell and Noyoko Muvangua, eds, Law in the Ubuntu of South Africa (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012). Cf. also Leonhard Praeg, ed., Thinking Africa: A Report on Ubuntu (Scottsville, SA: UKZN Press, 2014).
3. See, e.g., Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, trans. Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 76.
4. For discussion of the historical process and the historians and theorists who demonstrate it, see Lewis R. Gordon, An Introduction to Africana Philosophy, chapters 1 and 2.
5. E.g., see, Liz Sonneborn's discussion of the Medieval Islamic empires in the first two chapters of Averroes (Ibn Rushd): Muslim Scholar, Philosopher, and Physician of the Twelfth Century (New York: The Rosen Publishing

Company, 2005). Cf. also M. R. Greer, W. D. Mignolo, and M. Quilligan, eds, Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

6. G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures in the Philosophy of History, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956).
7. See The Academy of St. Louis, Transactions of the Academy of Science of St. Louis, vol. 1, 1856–1860 (St. Louis, MO: George Knapp and Company, 1860), p. 534.
8. For more discussion, see, e.g., Lewis R. Gordon, 'Not Always Enslaved, Yet Not Quite Free: Philosophical Challenges from the Underside of the New World', Philosophia 36.2 (2007): 151–166; 'When I Was There, It Was Not: On Secretions Once Lost in the Night,' Performance Research 2, no. 3 (September 2007): 8–15; and 'Décoloniser le savoir à la suite de Frantz Fanon,' Tumultes, numéro 31 (2008): 103–123.
9. See W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903). For discussion, see Lewis R. Gordon, Existentia Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought (New York: Routledge, 2000), chapter 4, 'What Does It Mean to be a Problem?'
10. Frantz Fanon, Peau noire, masques blancs (Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1952).
11. Karl Jaspers, Philosophy of Existence, trans. Richard F. Grabau (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971).
12. For more detailed discussion, see Lewis R. Gordon, Disciplinary Decadence: Living Thought in Trying Times (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006).
13. See Fanon, Peau noire, masques blancs, chapter 1.
14. See Achille Mbembe, De la postcolonie: Essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine (Paris: Karthala, 2000).
15. See that organisation's website: http:// wwwcaribbeanphilosophicalassociation.org/
16. For more discussion on this way of reading melancholia, see Paul Gilroy's Postcolonial Melancholia (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), Nathalie Etoke's Melancholia Africana: L'indispensable dépassement de la condition noire (Paris: Éditions du Cygne, 2010), and Lewis R. Gordon, 'When Reason Is in a Bad Mood: A Fanonian Philosophical Portrait,' in Hagi Kenaan and Ilit Ferber, eds, Philosophy's Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking (Dordrecht: Springer Press, 2011), pp. 185–198.
17. Frantz Fanon, Les damnés de la terre (Paris: La Découverte, 2002).

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On the Problematic State of Economic 'Science'

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Abstract

Economics is arguably the most important social science on account of its fundamental and valuational role in human decision-making. Accordingly, it is a fit discipline for probing analysis. In its present dominant configuration as 'neoclassical economics', it presents itself as a species of engineering thereby ignoring its evolutionary history. An examination of such will reveal that economics was and is most cognitively comprehensible in its guise as 'political economy'. Economics' transition to 'economic science' can be best explained by the mathematisation of the empirical world by empirical science and an ideologically derived attempt to evade the serious sociological and political implications of macroscopic political economy as was evidenced in the works of the classical political economists including Marx. The new approach was founded on an abstract and individualised decision-making with little relevance to the real world. Thus the important issues concerning human welfare, equity and the decisive role that politics plays in economic decision-making were all regarded as irrelevant to neoclassical economic theory. A now-dominant neoclassical economic theory means that it has become standard academic fare in African universities. Given the ideological role that neoclassical economics plays in the ongoing *pillage du tiers monde*, new and revived counter-theses are necessary for more effective economic analysis.

Resumé

L'économie est sans doute la plus importante des branches de la science sociale en raison de son rôle fondamental et de son importance dans la prise de décision humaine. En conséquence, elle est une discipline appropriée pour l'analyse profonde. Dans sa configuration dominante actuelle en tant qu' « économie néoclassique », elle se présente comme une espèce de génie ignorant ainsi son histoire évolutive. Un tel examen révélera que

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l'économie était et est une pensée plus compréhensible dans sa forme en tant qu' « économie politique ». La transition de l'économie vers « la science économique » peut être mieux expliquée par la mathématisation du monde empirique par la science empirique et par une tentative idéologique dérivée pour échapper aux graves conséquences sociologiques et politiques de l'économie politique macroscopique comme démontré dans les travaux des économistes politiques classiques y compris Marx. La nouvelle approche a été fondée sur une prise de décision abstraite et individualisée avec peu de pertinence pour le monde réel. Ainsi, les questions importantes concernant le bien-être humain, l'équité et le rôle décisif que joue la politique dans la prise de décision économique étaient tous considérés comme étant sans apport à la théorie économique néoclassique. Maintenant une théorie économique néoclassique dominante, elle est devenue une norme académique standard dans les universités africaines. Selon le rôle idéologique que joue l'économie néoclassique dans le pillage continue du Tiers Monde, des antithèses nouvelles et ravivées sont nécessaires pour une analyse économique plus efficace.

Introduction

The founder of modern macroeconomics, John Maynard Keynes, known for his often pithy remarks, once (1936) noted that the ideas of economists were much more influential than is usually thought. In fact, according to Keynes, the ideas of economists govern the world. The truth is that economics is essentially about human decision-making, choice, and opportunity costs, which are all part of the set of asymmetric constraints that constrict human action. Humans live in a world of ideas that directly and indirectly influence their choices and subsequent actions. On account of this, individuals known as economists have developed theories according to which optimal choices regarding the world's resource banks are to made. So in this scramble for finite resources where human wants are unbounded, economic theories of optimality are bound to be varied.

The now dominant neoclassical economics paradigm views the human decision-making through the theoretical lenses of individualistic rather than group optimality. Over decades and centuries, this has set up an essential and necessary tension between theories of equity and efficiency. This tension has been playing out now for centuries ever since the birth of modern economics. But the neoclassical paradigm has assumed dominance for some time now. It treats economic decision-making as a species of engineering without much regard to the evolutionary history of economics and the strident contentiousness of economic issues in the context of political wrangling. As a paradigm focused principally on

individual choice, social issues of equity are solved by the constraining principle of a non-egalitarian Pareto optimality.

The contemporary global reach of neoclassical economics is such that in a world of a very uneven distribution of resources and wealth, students of economics in those areas most affected by the worldview of neoclassical economics are made to understand economics just in those terms. This is the case with the instruction of economics in contemporary Africa. Economics as an evolutionary discipline is evidently the optimal way to comprehend real human choice within society. This is not the approach in the African university in general. In a Gini coefficient diagram reflecting the world distribution of wealth and human welfare, African populations will occupy the rank of the least beneficiaries. Such facts are not seriously debated in core courses of university education in Africa. Marx made some interesting points about the way economies are structured within the context of real economic decision-making, and political and sociological wrangling. The ostensible purpose of instruction in economics in contemporary Africa is merely to train individuals to become bureaucratic factotums of international capital for the benefits of the 10 per cent of corporations and individuals to whom 80 per cent of the world's wealth accrues. This situation needs attention on the basis of issues not only of efficiency but equity. In what follows I propose to unpack the innards of economics as social science to determine in what ways it could be subject to criticism so as to open the floor for discussion by those who may be skeptical about the way this discipline is dispensed in contemporary times.

On Economics as 'Science'

Of all the social sciences economics is evidently the most comprehensive because all the other social sciences depend fundamentally on the economic activity of humans. The other social sciences implicitly have economics as a base. One recalls, of course, that the social sciences came into being in the same fashion as the natural sciences. As testable empirical knowledge grew, 'natural philosophy' morphed into 'natural science'. It was the same with what was called 'moral philosophy' which became 'the moral sciences', then eventually the 'social sciences'. Empirical natural science defines itself as the analysis of the natural empirical world according to the certifiable content of that world and its seeming regularities, usually called 'laws'. Given the fact that the studied empirical objects of the natural world were assumed to have no intrinsic motive forces, their Aristotelian *vis viva* was then discarded. To

understand the actions and behaviour of empirical phenomena, all that was needed for scientific analysis was just static and dynamic analysis. Out of these repeatable observations, measurable principles and laws could be established.

As science advanced, the observed behaviour of humans also became a fit subject for empirical analysis. Thus, as was noted, the moral sciences became the social sciences, known too as the human sciences. But there was a double problematic. Humans could not be subjected to the strict laboratory data control as with the natural and biological sciences. Thus, in this instance, the natural sciences requirement of prediction with its concomitant explanations could not be realised. Once the prediction and explanation of phenomena were possible, the issue of control of the observed phenomena naturally followed. In fact, this is the normal path for medically curative research. In the case of the social sciences which dealt with the behavioural choices of humans, the predictive aspects of social science theory was thereby compromised. The social sciences can often offer plausible explanations for social phenomena but in terms of prediction there is an evident weakness.

The second problematic is more important because it involves an issue not germane to the natural sciences. Human behaviour is characterised not only by overt behaviour but also by subjective motives and reasons. This dual consideration is not applicable to natural science phenomena. The problematic here is that in order to explain the behaviour of human agents, the social scientist must appeal ultimately to motives and subjective reasons. But such are not empirically accessible as is the behaviour of the inanimate objects of natural science or the instinct-driven behaviour of non-human animals. This disjunction between overt empirical behaviour on the part of humans and their non-observable reasons is what has set up the perennial 'reasons-causes' debate in social science theory.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about humans as sentient beings is the fact that they are all fully self-conscious. This is not the case with other sentient beings. On account of this, human behaviour is only partially instinct-driven. In most cases behaviour is deliberative and effected with full recognition that such behaviour is consciously rule-governed. Thus in most cases – except in cases of clinically perverse behaviour – when some human effects some action, A, he or she could at the same time have chosen not to effect A. It is for this reason that human behaviour is deemed non-predictable. The question is how does social science deal with this issue? Social science deals with this issue optimally by arguing more for explanation than for prediction – though, in this instance, appeals

to motives and reasons do not reduce to neuronic causes. Explanation is deemed more effective when a macroscopic approach is taken, as is the case with all the social sciences except economics in its expression as microeconomics. Quantitative data collection allows the sociologist and political scientist to document macroscopic social phenomena and to offer explanations in terms of beliefs and motives of the agents involved.

As mentioned above, economics is the foundational social science for all the other social sciences; but prefers now to distance itself from them, given its heavy reliance on quantitative expression. At one time economics was known as 'political economy', a discipline which included elements of all the other social sciences. And given what was stated above about the nature of human behaviour, normative considerations necessarily entered the picture given that self-conscious human choices are always made in the context of value-laden motives and reasons.

The fact that economics, as expressed according to its dominant paradigm, neoclassical economics, views itself as a positive science along the lines of applied sciences such as engineering, it was forced to make fundamental assumption that allowed its theories to make predictions according to its principles and laws. But there is an evident problematic in all this. The predictions of neoclassical economic theory are hardly as robust as the predictive theories of the natural sciences. The joint research of Kahneman and Tversky amply bears this out. It is for this reason that mainstream neoclassical economics is now being challenged by newer theories such as behavioural economics (Camerer et al. 2004) and neuroeconomics (Camerer et al. 2005). But old paradigms are hardly ever replaced until there is a complete breakdown and a more effective theory is at hand. Thus, at the moment, the neoclassical paradigm remains so dominant that even its challengers such as behavioural economics have seen fit to adopt some of its measures. Evidence of this is afforded by the fact that the university training of economists at the world's leading universities still uphold the neoclassical paradigm in instruction. And it is this approach that informs the way highly influential international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank appraise economic phenomena. In practice neoclassical economics translates into what is known universally as 'neoliberalism'.

Thus neoliberalism has become the dominant paradigm in economic practice world-wide. The result is that the international status quo in terms of economic structures and exchange remain intact to the benefit of those nations and institutions that enforce the principles of neoliberalism. Thus the purpose of this article is to demonstrate that economics in its reified

forms of neoclassical economics and neoliberalism can be subjected to critique on grounds of empirical inadequacy in terms of prediction, explanation, and a normative universalism. I will begin first by showing how political economy morphed into 'economic science' which is now formulated according to the theories of neoclassical economics. The practice of contemporary neoclassical economics as neoliberalism will also be examined. Under these circumstances, alternative approaches such as the Marxian and Austrian paradigms, and contemporary institutionalism, will also be examined in terms of theory and practice. A final section will make the recommendation that economics is most effective as an explanatory social science when it adopts its expression as political economy which is what made Adam Smith's and Keynes's analyses so comprehensively analytical.

On Political Economy

One can argue that all living biological creatures do practice a form of economics of some sort. The economic activities involve the acquisition of the wherewithal for survival including energy-producing inputs and the establishing a lived-in habitat within a claimed territorial space. In the case of mammals, ethologists who describe such hardly see themselves engaging in the economics of animal behaviour in the way that modern economists do. There is no need for Lagrange multipliers or bordered Hessians for such analysis. After all, animals do maximise and minimise their 'expected utilities' the way humans seek to do. Similarly, the pre-modern economy as described by anthropologists such as Malinowski (1922) and Karl Polanyi (1944) offered fully comprehensive analyses of the economic structures of the non-market economy. The result of the mixing of land, labour, and capital in such economies measured optimality in terms of concepts such as 'reciprocity and redistribution'. Admittedly such economies were quite small and self-enclosed; but, again, there was no need for optimisation techniques as is the case with the analysis of microeconomic units. That tradition has continued with contemporary economic anthropology in which intelligible explanations are obtained without appeal to the ornate techniques of microeconomic analysis. Analysis was more descriptive and anthropologically predictive.

Matters were almost similar with the advent of analysis according to the principles of political economy as expressed in the writings of Smith, Ricardo and Malthus. It was evident to these authors that the empirically observable lives of humans in their capacities as economic beings were much intertwined with their political and sociological lives. Smith's

contribution to political economy was essentially a political attack on mercantilism and a thesis for the promotion of free markets. There was an argument too on behalf of the idea that human self-interest best explains the dynamics of economic exchange. The same ideas were held by David Ricardo who made interesting observations on the dynamics of economic growth and the logic behind the ideas of comparative and absolute advantage in trade matters. All these ideas were expressed in his *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817). In like vein, Thomas Malthus (1798), was noted for his theory of economic growth as expressed in his *An Essay on the Principle of Population* in which he argued that population growth in Britain had to be curbed if famines were to be averted, on the grounds that food production was being outstripped by population growth. This political-economic approach was still pursued by theorists such as J.B. Say, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, von Thunen, and others. The motivating principle here was that economic analysis was umbilically linked to the economic conditions that existed in the real world. As an example, we can take the case of J.B. Say and his idea that supply of produced commodities always elicits an equal demand under conditions of equal flexibility of prices and wages. Say's law($\sum$n I =1 Pi Di = $\sum$ in=1Pi Si) was a cornerstone of classical economics and represented the axiomatic instantiation of how the market economy works in actuality. This does make empirical sense for the generic barter economy but becomes problematic when money as a store of value enters the picture.

Say's Law was eventually challenged by Marx whose central equation of M-C-M' demonstrated that the quantitative difference between M and M' refutes that law. On this basis, it is quite possible that an economy's supply of goods would not automatically match the demand for such goods. Marx's theory of surplus value which lies at the heart of his critique of capitalism constitutes the political economy of Marxism as it seeks to explain the fact that capitalist market economies periodically experience periods of recession and depression when demand is less than supply, potential or actual. Keynes (1936) also recognised the fallacy of Say's law in his magnum opus, *The General Theory of Employment Interest and Money,* when he observed that market economies could be in equilibrium when demand and supply are not equal on the basis that wages could no longer be adjusted downwards in order to bring forth more demand and the full utilisation of all factors of production. This Keynesian response to Say is what warranted the development of modern macroeconomics. And the ongoing theoretical conflict with

monetarism affords further proof that political economic conditions are still very much at the heart of the modern economy. Such considerations also apply to branches of economics such as international economics and development economics.

So what were the considerations that led to the transformation of economics as political economy to become 'economics as science'? The answer is that as empirical science as a mode of exploring and analysing nature grew in importance, the idea developed that its methodology could also be applied to the social sciences, especially political economy. Whether in reaction to Marx's strictures on capitalism and its supporting class, 'the bourgeoisie', economics began to shed its political economic identity and to shift its interests from the macroscopic to the individual units of economics, both the consumer and the firm. This was the period that witnessed the birth of microeconomics with the formulation of the marginalist paradigm as expressed principally by Jevons, Menger, and Walras. The utilitarianism of Mill and the quantitative psychometrics based on the Weber-Fechner Law (Fechner 1860) were the tools apparently appealed to as in the case of Jevons (Blaug 1996). The assumption was that subjective utilities of economic agents could be measured incrementally, giving birth to the problematic idea of cardinal utility. It was during this period that the transition from political economy to economics as science began. There were also the reactions from researchers such as Menger, Bohm-Bawerk, Wieser, and others on the issue of the measurability of utility in its cardinal sense.

With the marginalist paradigm economics was now entering the phase where strict quantification based on the measurable choices of individual units paved the way for the formulations of general equilibrium theory. The preferred approach to economic thinking was no longer the macroscopic approach of political economy as was the case with the classical political economists. Of interest too is the fact that it is claimed that both Jevons and Menger arrived at the same marginalist conclusions as Walras. The individual, instead of the whole economy, was now the central element in economic analysis. It was at this juncture that utility theory became the dominant paradigm in microeconomic theory. At that point it was easy, eventually, to introduce concepts such as marginal utility, diminishing marginal utility, indifference curves, maximisation of utility, all under the quantitative rubric of differential calculus. Jevons promoted this new approach to economics in his *The Progress of the Mathematical Theory of Political Economy* (1862) *and The Theory of Political Economy* (1870). With the classical political economists, it was the macroeconomy with its

three components – land, labour, and capital – that was discussed within the context of a political system.

With Menger (1871, 2007), economics was reduced to a subjectivist discipline according to which the value of commodities was determined according introspective subjective tastes that were subject to marginal calibration. Menger's instantiation of his subjectivist approach was offered by his explanation of the diamond-water paradox, first discussed by Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*. Though Menger approached economic decision-making from the marginalist positions of Jevons and Walras, his subjectivist position was at variance with the objectivist and quantitative orientation of Jevons and Walras. It was this subjectivist approach that set the foundations for what became known as Austrian economics, a school of thought later developed by theorists such as Bohm-Bawerk, von Mises, and Hayek. The key principle here is that the basis for economic decision-making was subjectively introspective and not subject to quantitative analysis. In a series of exchanges with Walras, Menger made the point against the former by arguing that mathematics was not the proper tool to explicate economic operations. As Sandye Gloria-Palermo (1999) put it: 'Through a close look at the correspondence between Walras and Menger, it is possible to understand the circumstances giving rise to the differences in their positions regarding the use and the type of mathematical tools in economics' (Gloria-Palermo: 33). Menger refused 'to consider mathematics as a method of investigation. In this perspective, the author remains strictly loyal to the analytico-compositive approach guiding his developments as a whole. Menger clearly states that it is not mathematics in itself that he rejects but rather the role attributed to it by Walras, because it goes beyond the scope of mere exposition (Gloria-Palermo: 33). In sum, ' the mathematical method used by Walras seems far from being appropriate to Menger's objective, that is knowing how to determine the *essence* of complex phenomena' (Gloria-Palermo: 33).

But the attraction of quantitative formalisation for the marginalists was sufficiently strong for the mathematical method of Walras to be eventually adopted. Walras attempted to set down the dynamics of the total economy by setting up a set of simultaneous equations that would signify the trading activities of all agents within the economy. This trading activity between economic agents was described by Walras as a moment by moment tatonnement process of marginal demand and supply. Equilibrium would be attained when all the equations are solved for a unique solution. The key question here was to determine whether at equilibrium there could be proof for the existence, uniqueness, and stability of equilibrium.

The point is that whereas classical economics focused on the economy as whole in comprehensive fashion with the labour theory of value as the underlying dynamic, Walrasian marginalism focused on the sum of the individual demand and supply units in the economy, each with a subjective interpretation of the dynamics of the situation. On account of its comprehensive scope, Walrasian marginalism became the foundational matrix on which modern neoclassical economics was founded. This fact is underscored by the later work of theorists such as Arrow and Debreu (1954) and Debreu (1959).

At this point the formalisation of all aspects of the marginalist paradigm was effectively being put in place. The transition from 'political economy' to 'economic science' had been undertaken from the decades following the marginalist transformation. What was common to the marginalist trio was that economic analysis began with the microeconomics of individual choice and not with the overarching macroeconomics of the classicals. It was on this basis that the concept of utility was introduced to hold a central role in economic decision making. This takes us to the well-known 'diamond-water paradox' that Smith discussed in his *Wealth of Nations.* Smith argued that some commodities had use value – as in the case of water – but did not have as much exchange value as diamonds which have negligible use value. However, in the final analysis, Smith argued, the real value of a commodity was determined by the cost of the labour and other inputs that went into its production.

The marginalists attempted to refute Smith and his labour theory of value by arguing that value was determined not by labour inputs but by the incremental utility subjectively experienced by the consumer as principal economic agent. This standing of political economy on its head could be seen as an attempt to undermine the labour theory of value central to classical political economy. The problematic here is that the critique of Smith's example of the relative values yielded wrong results. First of all, Smith's example of water and diamonds demonstrates the difference between use and exchange value are not really apt. On account of their scarcity, implying that much labour must be expended to obtain them, they are deemed more valuable than water which in most circumstances is more easily obtainable. But there are situations in which the difficulty of obtaining water makes water just as scarce as diamonds. At that point the exchange value of water approaches that of diamonds. Smith's point is that diamonds have exchange value but little use value. Not really, given that they may be used for ornamental purposes. In modern times there are a number of industrial purposes which diamonds may be used.

But given the fact that diamonds do have exchange value on account of human fiat, they do indeed have use value in much the same way that paper money does. Thus diamonds – along with gold and silver – have been used as a kind of numeraire.

Yet all this does not deny the fact the shifting values of water and diamonds are determined by the demand for such items. In cases where water is scarce and diamonds are plentiful, as near a newly discovered diamond mine, diamonds would indeed carry much use value with their capacities for exchange for items of immediate use.

On Value Theory

The fundamental issue in theoretical economics is that concerning how 'value' is ascribed to items in economic exchange. In fact many of the disputes in economics from the days of classical political economy to modern times stem from the question of how to calculate value. For the early theorists of the market economy the value of a commodity was determined by the cost of the quantity of labour that went into its production. In fact this was the standard position taken with some modification by Smith, Ricardo, and Malthus of classical British political economy. This idea was later adopted by Marx in his attempt to demonstrate that labour was exploited in the generic capitalist economy. According to Marx, the value of a produced item was the 'socially necessary labour' to produce the item. Of course, it is a fact some item could be produced at the labour cost of X but could be eventually sold at a cost less than X owing to lack of effective demand, and so on. In fact, this is a normalcy for producers in the capitalist market system: businesses often fail because selling prices are persistently less than costs of production or the 'socially necessary labour' to produce the items.

Humans as all living organisms must do work in the form of transforming nature for survival purposes. That is why the human species has been variously referred to as the 'tool making species'. Tools are created which are then used in harvesting the resources of nature for survival purposes. This harvesting takes the form of what economists refer to as 'production'. Thus it would follow logically that the value of items produced would be determined principally by the costs that were incurred in the production process. This was the basis for the 'labour theory of value' and the Marxian argument that the costs to labour were the major determinants of value. From this idea was generated Marx's idea of 'surplus value' and its ramifications.

Marx's key observation was that the incentive to capitalist production stemmed from expected realisation of the following situation. Money is first presented which in turn is then employed as capital with hope that at the end of the operation it has increased in value: M-C-M'. It is the calculated difference between M and M' that determines the amount of surplus value gained by the capital initiative. It is this calculated difference that includes interest, depreciation, rent, wages for labour, and, most importantly, profits for the investors. Thus, it is always in the interest of the entrepreneur to widen as much as possible the monetary gap between M and M'. It is also always in the interest of labour as a factor of production to garner as much as possible of the difference between M and M'. This is the basis for the unceasing primordial conflict between capital and labour. According to classical political economy, the implicit argument is that labour produces items for consumption and it is for this very reason that labour embarks on the production enterprise. This is the basis for the adoption of the labour theory of value on the part of the classical political economists. On this basis, the inferred point here is that the quantitative difference between M and M' is to be founded on the collective efforts of all those involved in the production process. The point is that if too much of the surplus accrues to those who provide and manage investment capital (M) over time the market economy would be affected by periodic downturns. This is exactly what the Marxian critique of capitalism is founded on, and what Keynes(1936) sought to analyse in his *General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*.

Keynes' key point was that an economy could attain a level of stationary equilibrium at less than full employment, due principally to lack of effective demand for produced items. The assumption that the entrepreneurial class to which a disproportionate portion of the surplus accrued would spend that surplus on the rest of the consumption items has been demonstrated to be empirically wrong over time. The logical solution has always been to ensure that for each accounting period consumption of all output approaches a maximum and that inventory accumulation be reduced to a minimum. Under such circumstances the classical labour theory of value is justified. But the problematic here lies with the 'animal spirits' that, according to Keynes, motivate human behaviour. Individuals in the modern era, and in large societies where kinship bonds are non-existent or minimally controlling, prefer to engage in economic transactions based on the expectation of gain. But given the imbalance between those who provide capital and those who join with capital to produce commodities economic, productive investment occurs

only when the owners of capital believe that M' will be greater than M. The problematic for the labour theory of value arises when capital and labour are owned differentially. Marx's critique led to the conclusion that labour should own capital maximally. The Keynesian and the mixed economy solution is that government could play the role of arbiter in determining what portion of the economic surplus should be returned to labour. Politics in the so-called Western democracies is essentially about that issue – conservative political parties engaged in constant wrangling with democratic/liberal/socialist parties about the modalities of sharing the surplus.

On account of this ongoing conflict and scramble for ΔM, capital seeks to increase its share of the surplus by engaging in technological innovation. The result is that productivity increases, relatively less labour is employed and as a consequence less of the surplus accrues to labour. But on account of just that, the overall rate of profits tends to fall so capital sets out to further exploit labour, hence a relentless search for cheaper labour with pressures put on labour organisations. One solution has been that adopted by welfare state societies where progressive taxation measures are adopted as the mechanism by which economic surpluses are redistributed across society. This helps in boosting demand by way of a more universal sharing of the economic surplus, ΔM. Under these circumstances, the classical labour theory of value is salvaged. The implicit principle here is that the Keynesian argument vindicates the old labour theory of value. It is on this basis that Say's Law and Walras's general equilibrium theory of zero excess demand are seen to approach vindication. In both cases $Pi(D) = Pi(S) = 0$

But the discussion on value just did not immediately come to that conclusion. The vindication of the role of labour in the production process was challenged by theorists who argued that the value of commodities was determined not by 'socially necessary labour' but by subjective tastes and utility. This was the basis on which the 'marginalist revolution' was founded. The general thesis put forward by Jevons, Menger, and Walras was that the value of a commodity was determined by the amount of subjective utility that the consuming agent derived from decreasing or increasing quantities of the commodity. The principle of diminishing marginal utility was derived from this, together with the idea of a measurable or cardinal utility. But a problematic was immediately created with the idea of a measurable utility given that utility is a subjective concept that is impermeable to objective measurement. The idea of a measureable utility was borrowed from the idea of measurable

stimuli according to the Weber-Fechner law (1860) of 'just noticeable differences' in the invented field of psychophysics. Since measurement was involved, mathematics was invoked to do the measuring. But the question still arose: how does one measure 'utils'? Both Jevons and Walras saw the merit of subjecting the individual choices of individuals to mathematical measurement by way of the calculus, but Menger, though a marginalist, was not convinced. The measurability of utility was cast in doubt because for the Austrian version of utility the discreteness of choice and the accompanying indeterminism in terms of behaviour militated against a continuously measurable utility according to the way Jevons and Walras saw it. According to Jevons and Walras, utility could be understood cardinally while for Menger it should be understood ordinally. When individuals made choices it was always in terms of comparisons between discrete objects or discrete amounts of some item. The differential calculus was not the proper operational tool.

The ordinalist approach to utility measurement was ultimately adopted by way of Hicks-Allen (1934) and Hicks (1939) who popularised – Edgeworth, Pareto, Slutsky, Johnson, et al. all made contributions – the idea of the indifference curve to describe the discrete choices made by individuals. In ordinary cardinal utility analysis the simple model used – introduced by Jevons then adopted later by Marshall – was based on a single consumer obtaining less and less satisfaction as more and more of an item is consumed. The idea of 'diminishing marginal utility' in terms of utils was the explanatory mechanism here. The recognition that utility itself was a subjective concept that was proper to the individual consumer only meant that alternative explanatory mechanisms had to be devised to explain individual economic choice. The consumer was now seen to operate on the basis of choosing different quantities of two items that offered the same satisfaction. All this was laid out on an 'indifference curve' map consisting of 'indifference curves' the shapes and positions of which were determined by set rules. For example, normal indifference curves were required to be convex to the origin on a positive plane quadrant and could not intersect. Central to these assumptions was the principle of the 'diminishing marginal rate of substitution' and the principle of transitivity.

At this point all of the machinery was in place to establish the conditions for consumer maximisation. The consumer maximised utility when there was a tangent between the highest indifference curve and his or her linear budget constraint line. At that point maximum satisfaction is attained with the choice of a mix of the two commodities, say, x and y. For situations

where the consumer purchased a set of items, maximisation instruments involving Lagrange multipliers and other techniques were introduced. But the issue of the measurability of utility still lurks on account of the continuous exchange of items and the fact that the consumer is seen at equilibrium to maximise utility. In fact, the orthodox formulation of such is that at equilibrium the consumer 'maximises expected utility subject to a budget constraint'. But the methodological issue remains: how does one measure utility? It is on this basis that ordinal theory in terms of the strict revealed preferences of economic agents according to the 'axioms of revealed preference' took centre stage. Very similar operational principles are employed for the optimisation schedules for firms with the appeal to concepts such as isoquant lines and isocost constraints. It should be noted though that under such conditions optimisation in terms of profits or costs turns out to be much more manageable than maximisation in terms of utility.

The first key point that one must recognise in all this is that as the ideology behind the labour theory of value began to be embraced by those who recognised that labour was being exploited in the developing capitalist system, the switch to an individualist and subjectivist approach to economics became the new programme for theoreticians who saw that the labour theory of value could threaten the established order. The second point is that in an age – the latter part of the nineteenth century – that witnessed the growing influence of empirical science, especially physics, it was believed that creating an economics that was seemingly scientific in structure would augur well for its intellectual reputation. This explains the direction into which theorists such as Walras, Jevons and Pareto were taking the discipline. Later theorists such as Marshall, Edgeworth and Johnson followed suit in seeking to transform political economy into the supposed science of economics.

A culmination point was reached when Lionel Robbins (1945) in his path-breaking *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science* in which it was argued that there is such a science that deals with humans as they make choices in the context of scarce means to attain chosen ends among alternatives (Robbins 1945:16). Robbins also argued that economics as a science could not countenance normative questions that were ethical in nature. In other words, economics was no longer the empirical and moral science of political economy. Thus the idea of positive and normative economics was developed. Consider, in this regard, Robbins. statements on the matter. 'Economics is neutral as between ends. Economics cannot pronounce on the validity of ultimate

judgments of value' (Robbins 1935:147). Recognising the limitations put on economics as a neutral value-free science some of Robbins' contemporaries argued for a normative economics. Robbins wrote: 'Mr. Hawtrey and Mr. J.A. Hobson, for instance have argued that Economics should not only take account of valuations and ethical standards as given data in the manner explained above, but that also it should pronounce upon the ultimate validity of these valuations and standards' (Robbins 1935: 148). Robbins then writes: 'Unfortunately it does not seem logically possible to associate the two studies in any form but mere juxtaposition. Economics deals with ascertainable facts; ethics deals with valuations and obligations. The two fields of inquiry are not on the same plane of discourse' (Robbins:147).

Before Robbins wrote this determinative statement on economics there was ideological ferment from the period of the marginalists onwards. Political economy was increasingly seen as a science with Walras arguing that it was a mathematical science as opposed to Jevons who saw it as a more empirical discipline. Then Marshall, John Neville Keynes, Edgeworth, and others – all in the latter part of the nineteenth century – argued for political economy as a scientific discipline. The German historical school led by Schmoller was being ultimately pushed by economic marginalism as it grew in influence in Britain and France. It eventually lost the *methodenstreit* battle. In Britain, J.N. Keynes' (1890) *The Scope and Method of Political Economy* became the wave of the future. Political economy was a science that was tripartite in structure according to J.N. Keynes. There was its positive, normative, and applied sections. The positive component included the supposedly scientific content of political economy, the normative aspect deals with the evaluative aspects of economics, while applied political economy dealt with political economy as an art.

Underlying this transformation of political economy as a 'moral science' into a putatively genuine science according to which subjective and marginal choice were the major modalities of behaviour instead of the valuation of objective labour, there was the strong ideological argument against the role of labour as the *sine qua non* of valuation. Note in this regard the titles of two key books in this regard, Hicks' (1939) *Value and Capital: An Inquiry into Some Fundamental Principles of Economic Theory,* and Debreu's (1959) *The Theory of Value: An Axiomatic Analysis of Economic Equilibrium*. The fundamental question was: how is value determined? The marginalist approach structured according to the subjective and utility-bearing decisions made by single

individuals became the dominant paradigm of the era. And this approach was clothed in the quantitative language of physical science. There were axioms, theorems, and laws all expressed in the language of mathematics that referred especially to individual choice founded on the principle of marginal utility. But before the new theory could get started its major agent had to be reduced to manageable proportions. This was the basis for the birth of 'rational economic man' who became the major actor in the marginalist theory, neoclassical economics.

Neoclassical Economics and 'Rational Economic Man'

The basis for the development of neoclassical economics was that the foundations of classical political economy of value and distribution were thenceforth understood as determined by a marginally measurable subjective utility of agents rather than by the costs incurred by labour inputs. The shift was from understanding the economy essentially in macroeconomic terms – i.e. the returns to land, labour, and capital – to the microeconomic terms of terms maximisation of utility and the maximisation of profits for entrepreneurs. But once basic economic behaviour was reduced to the marginally incremental choices of some ideal choice maker, the path was opened for the *homunculus* known as 'rational economic man'. The characteristics of rational economic man were all preset by the neoclassical theorist who determined that the choices of rational economic man were to follow the postulate of rationality. The postulate of rationality stated that rational economic man's choices were to be consistent according to stated axioms of reflexivity, completeness, and transitivity. According to this postulate the goal and results are always optimality in terms of utility or profits.

But as sceptics pointed out and as dictated by the principles of scientific research, there was a problematic with the measurement of the differential utilities of different individuals, in other words, the issue of the 'interpersonal comparisons of utility'. It is this that led Samuelson (1938) to introduce the idea of revealed preference as a way of overcoming the issue of how to measure an introspectively sensed utility. As he put it: ' the discrediting of *utility* as a psychological concept robbed it of its only virtue as an *explanation* of human behaviour in other than a circular sense, revealing its emptiness as even a construction…. Consistently applied, however, the modern criticism cuts back on itself and cuts deeply. For just as we do not claim to know by introspection the behaviour of utility, many will argue we cannot know the behaviour of ratios of marginal utilities or of indifference directions' (Samuelson

1938:61). Samuelson also states that: 'Hence, despite the fact that the notion of utility has been repudiated or ignored by modern theory, it is clear that much of even the most modern analysis shows vestigial traces of the utility concept' (Samuleson 1938:61). Samuelson's solution to this issue is as follows: 'I propose, therefore, that we start anew in direct attack on the problem, dropping off the last vestiges of the utility analysis' (Samuelson 1938:62). According to Samuelson, others may continue to use the traditional utility analysis but the virtue of the new approach is that 'it can be carried on more directly and from a different set of postulates' (Samuelson 1938:62).

But Samuelson's newly revealed preference approach is compromised *ab initio* by the fact that the new model is based on what he calls 'an idealised individual not necessarily, however, the rational *homo-economicus'* (Samuelson 1938:62). The point is that once the model is not constructed from the actual choices of real, existent individuals it has failed to satisfy the criteria for genuine scientific status. Samuelson's goal in all this is to establish microeconomc theory on firm scientific foundations according to the model set by Robbins et al. According to those who seek to analyse and explicate the processes of scientific analysis, a genuine science seeks to explain relevant phenomena according to the consistently operational laws or principles of some overarching theory. Explanations are then further confirmed if the theory is successful in making predictions according to variations in its variables. And even sciences that deal with phenomena of the past, such as archeology, do rely on basic predictive theories from foundational scientific research areas such as physics, chemistry, and biology. It is the joint operations of explanation and prediction that allow scientists to control the outcome of their experiments. Thus explanation, prediction, and control, taken together, are the necessary and sufficient criteria for genuine scientific status.

The question then is: did Samuelson and others of similar disposition shape the new economics to conform to the required criteria expected of any science? The answer is in the negative because an *idealised individual* cannot properly represent the individual choices of all individuals whose specific choices are often at variance with the prescribed choices of Samuelson's 'idealised individual'. These prescribed choices are formulated according to three postulates that Samuelson sets down in his 1938 paper. In terms of the principles of scientific analysis Samuelson's third Postulate (Postulate III) is perhaps the most important in that, according to Samuelson, Postulate III already implies Postulates I and II (see Samuelson' addendum to his paper: 'A Note on the Pure Theory of Consumer's Behaviour: An Addendum'),

and that its key point is that the consumer's choices are always consistent and in line with the three postulates.

Samuelson concludes his 1938 paper with the claim that his paper sought to rid microeconomics theory 'from any vestigial traces of the utility concept ' and that the new 'revealed preference' theory is logically equivalent to the traditional 'reformulation of Hicks and Allen' (Samuelson 1938:70-71). Samuelson sought later to buttress his theory of revealed preference with a 1948 paper titled 'Consumption Theory in Terms of Revealed Preference' by using as his decisional reference point an 'individual guinea-pig' – much like the 'idealised individual' of his 1938 paper who by ' his market behaviour , reveals his preference pattern – if there is such a consistent pattern' (Samuelson 1948). But what does Samuelson mean by 'consistent pattern'? I would want to think that he means 'consistent' according to his three postulates of his 1938 paper. But as I pointed out above the *a priori* requirements of consistency according to postulates of rationality undoubtedly compromise the scientific project of describing the market behaviour of economic agents.

Samuelson's approach did garner much support from theorists of microeconomics such as Houthakker who extended Samuleson's two good axiom of revealed preference to cover choice sets of more than two commodity bundles and two price vectors. Houthakker's axiom is known as the ' Strong Axiom of Revealed Preference' in contrast to Samuelson's two good case which is known as the 'Weak Axiom of Revealed Preference'. As Houthakker put it: 'Professor Samuelson's "revealed preference" approach has proved to be a useful basis for deriving a considerable part of the static theory of consumer's choice. Its existing versions are not sufficient, however, to determine whether or not consumer's preferences can be described by a utility function of the customary type (the problem of integrability), except in the unrealistic case of two commodities. In this note Samuleson's 'fundamental hypothesis' will be generalised so as to imply integrability while continuing to satisfy the methodological requirements of the revealed preference approach and without losing its plausibility' (Houthakker 1950:159). And theorists such as Varian have later pursued this approach to consumer theory (Varian 2005).

But before the embellishments by Varian et al, theorist Stanley Wong(1978) argued that the Samuelson-Houthakker programme failed on account of its inability to go beyond an operational description and offer a proper scientific explanation of consumer choice (Wong 1978:86). For Samuelson, the purpose of scientific analysis is not about 'explanation' but about 'description' since what we take to be explanation is essentially

about further description (Wong:107). In sum, Wong's critique of the Samuelson-Houthaaker programme is stated as follows: '…revealed preference theory, as revised by Houthakker, is not an explanation but a restatement of ordinal utility theory. Second, revealed preference theory is not verifiable empirically because it uses unrestricted universal statements. Third, it is not empirically verifiable because its key term "revealed preference", is not defined exclusively in observational terms, and therefore does not denote observable experience….' (Wong:121). In the final analysis Wong makes the claim that revealed preference theory 'is not the observational equivalent of ordinal theory, and is not therefore the solution to the problem of finding the observational equivalent of ordinal utility theory'(Wong:121).

The issue all along has been to establish a genuine science of economics as it shifted its paradigm from political economy to 'scientific economics'. Samuelson's 1938 paper was just a more formal approach to the problem following the earlier pioneering works by theorists such as Cournot, Dupuits, Marshall, and Neville Keynes. Robbins later sought to cement matters with his *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economics Science* written at approximately the same time as Samuelson's 1938 paper. Yet, again, one must note the influential paper written by prominent theorist, Milton Friedman. Friedman published his influential paper 'The Methodology of Positive Economics' (Friedman:1953) in which he argued that the validity of a scientific theory should be judged mainly on its predictive strength than otherwise. In this regard, the assumptions of a theory are of no special import. But Friedman was not theoretically successful on this because his instrumentalist approach to the evaluation of economic theory failed to vindicate his position. Economic theories were not shown to be successfully predictive in their assessments. But apart from this he was taken to task by Samuelson on this issue.

It was the persistent failure of economic theory founded on the principle of rationality that led theorists such as Hebert Simon to develop the theory of 'bounded rationality' which postulated the idea that actual human decision-making was rarely ever made under conditions of perfect information. Simon pursued this idea in articles such as 'A Behavioral Model of Rational Choice' (1955), and 'Theories of Decision Making in Economics and Behavioral Science (1959). Later articles such as 'Theories of Bounded Rationality' (1972) and 'From Substantive to Procedural Rationality' (1976) are also of note in this regard. The essential point being made in these writings is that we witness a move away from economic man as a theoretical construct to a more realistic model of decision making

founded on the idea that limited information would often lead to sub-optimal decisions in practice. On account of cognitive limitations the economic agent would not maximise satisfaction according to the standard model but would only 'satisfice'.

These developments set the foundations for the development of the behavioural models of human economic decision formulated by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (1979), and *Choices, Values, and Frames* (2000). In 'Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk' (1979) Kahneman and Tversky write: 'Expected Utility Theory has dominated the analysis of decision making under risk. It has been generally accepted as a normative model of rational choice [24], and widely applied as a descriptive model of economic behaviour, e.g [15,4]. Thus, it is assumed that all reasonable people would wish to obey the axioms of the theory [47, 36], and that most people actually do, most of the time…. The present paper describes several classes of choice problems in which preferences systematically violate the axioms of expected utility theory. In the light of these observations we argue that utility theory, as it is commonly interpreted and applied, is not an adequate descriptive model and we propose an alternative account of choice under risk' (Kahneman and Tversky 1979:263). The new theory that Kahneman and Tversky provide is what is known as 'prospect theory' according to which individuals are observed to be 'irrational' in their flouting of the axioms of expected utility theory and demonstrate different choice patterns according to their psychological dispositions as 'risk takers' or 'risk averters'. Individuals who observe human behaviour are all aware of the fact that there exists a minority of individuals who are inordinate risk takers in all decision making areas. Think of cliff divers and surfers as risk takers in physical areas and gamblers in financial matters.

As an example of prospect theory consider the following generic example: Some agent Alpha, say, has $1,000 and is offered the following choices: 1) A) Alpha has a 50 per cent chance of winning $1,000, and a 50 per cent chance of winning $0. B) Alpha has a chance of winning $500. 2) Alpha has $2,000 and has A) a 50 per cent chance of losing $1,000 , and a 50 per cent chance of losing $0. B) Alpha has a 100 per cent chance of losing $500.

The logically consistent choices for both situations would be either A or B in both cases. But research has shown that majorities choose B) for question 1 and A) for question 2. Thus economic agents make choices based on how a single proposition is framed. This is indeed problematic for utility analysis given that two (2) separate indifference situations could arise for

basically the same choice situation. In this regard, prospect analysis has been of particular interest for those analysts who study the behaviour of agents who purchase and sell stock in the equity markets. The upshot of all this is the evident evolution of orthodox utility analysis dating from its marginalist foundations through the critique of Simon culminating in the paradigm shift of Kahneman and Tversky's prospect theory. The theoretical result we have today is what is known as Behavioural Economics. Its presumed forte is that its theories are founded on the actual behaviour of economic agents as opposed to the formal presentation of the homunculus 'rational economic man' with his decisions and choices determined a priori by the axioms of rational choice. It is the empirical refutation of the prescribed choices of ideal rational agents that serves as the foundations of behavioural economics. Prominent theorists in this regard are Colin Camerer et al (2004).

But it should be noted that the basis for the Kahneman-Tversky approach to choice-making was afforded by Maurice Allais's 1953 article that demonstrated that individual choices were often inconsistent with the predictions of expected utility theory. Allais's observations gave the lie to the independence axiom of agent choice theory. Note that the independence axiom merely states that if X is preferred to Y then that preference would still hold if some other choice item is included at equal probabilities for both X and Y.

The modalities of human thought are also borne out by examples afforded by Kahneman and Tversky within the context of what they call 'framing theory' according to which agents tend to prefer positive statements of the same proposition than negative. Thus agents tend to favour, for example, a statement that 'there is an 80% survival rate if some new drug (X) were taken' than if the same proposition were framed as 'there is a 20 per cent death rate if some new (X) drug were taken'.

Thus economics is at the stage where axiomatic neoclassical theory is being pressured by the behaviourist school to deal with the theoretical issues that arise when the formal theory is matched with the actual empirical choices made by individuals. But are we any closer to theory-practice illumination? The problem for microeconomics as neoclassical theory is that given the multiplicity of choices that individual agents could effect, what kind of theoretical structure would be appropriate for the theorist to construct so as to capture all possible kinds of choice-making? The answer is that none would be appropriate. Proof of this is that in areas such as finance theory where prospect theory has been applied the results have not been promising.

Rational expectations theory (John Muth 1961 and Robert Lucas 1987) widely applied to the world of finance economics has not saved the world from the huge paper losses of 2008. The same with the Efficient Market Hypothesis (Eugene Fama 1976) and Robert Shiller (2005) which, like the rational expectations theory, claims that agent market choices are effectively rational in the sense that they mirror the market. A Hegelian point being made here: what is real is rational and what is rational is real. So what should the theoretical future hold? Clearly, there is a palpable disconnect between the world of stock trading and the real economy. The fact that behavioural economics has not really answered the question of how to construct proper predictive and explanatory theories as replacements for the formal theories of neoclassical economics has pushed its advocates to explore the connections between economic decision-making and actual brain circuitry in the extension area of neuroeconomics. From a strictly scientific point of view, it is indeed useful to explore the reasons why individuals react more emotively to losses than to gains of equal amounts. Or the puzzling issue of why some agents become compulsive gamblers and spenders reflecting issues involving emotional health, and so on.

But the fundamental question still arises: how to map the choice paths of individual agents as they pursue their economic activities. We have seen that in terms of actual empirical observations it is really not possible to establish a tested choice path for the generic agent. The works of Simon, Allais, Kahneman-Tversky bear this out. Economics in general concerns the choice paths of millions of human agents in their daily lives. Under uncontrolled conditions is it is just not possible to map the choice paths of millions of individuals in real time. First, it has been established that utility is not measurable but it must also be recognised that utility functions are not stable and are constantly changing. Furthermore, it is unclear what variables should be included in any particular utility function. It could be the fact that an individual may be satiated after consuming some particular item but may not be satiated regarding the consumption of other items. And even so, some particular individual may never experience diminishing marginal utility for the consumption of some items. And again, the generic consumer would be puzzled that his or her choice path is described at its completion by 'bordered Hessians alternating in sign'.

Would it be cognitively more fruitful to treat economic decision making in holistic and macro terms in much the same way that the gas laws in physics are established? The behaviour of individual molecules

is of little moment in establishing such laws. Rather it is the behaviour of the gas as a whole that determines the gas laws. In the case of economics this would seem to have been the model until the advent of marginalism as advocated by Jevons, Menger, and Walras, and later extended by theorists such as Marshall, Edgeworth and Bowley.

Given the evident problematic concerning the neoclassical economic model founded on a defined postulate of rationality one solution has been to amplify agent decision-making by game theoretic models. But this does not solve the problem of unrealism given that the postulate of rationality isnecessarily assumed so that formal decision-making solutions be worked out. The point is that each game-theoretic situation is unique in real terms and just cannot be shoe-horned into some ideal model.

Econometrics and Economics

Some theorists argue that the scientific credentials of economics are much boosted by its econometric exercises. Econometrics is defined as that branch of economics that is founded on seeking statistical correlations between quantitatively formulated data to determine whether they conform to the assumed laws of economics. The statistical tool of linear regression is the orthodox starting point. This approach seeks to establish correlations between sets of variables so as to determine whether the variables in question are causally related. In fact, econometric techniques are employed not only in economics but also in other social sciences such as sociology and history. But the mere fact of expressing economic phenomena in strict statistical terms would not be sufficient to render the discipline impervious from epistemological criticism (Edward Leamer 1983; Aris Spanos 1995). (See also Aris Spanos(with G.D. Mayo), (*Error and Inference: Recent Exchanges on Experimental Reasoning, Reliability, and the Objectivity and Rationality of Science* [2010]). There are the obvious problems with choosing the correct variables from a multiplicity of such. But, again, should all interactive variables be chosen? This has led to the problem of 'data mining' according to which the researcher just seeks out the data that could confirm the hypothesis in question; and issues of heteroskedasticity and multicollinearity which would seem to be unavoidable.

The major issue with econometrics in its quest for scientific status is that researched models cannot be replicated for the reason that the collected data is open-ended and always changing. This is not the case with the laboratory-bound natural and biological science research. Thus, when some researcher gathers data from which a hypothesis could be tested, replication by others for confirmation purposes would not be fully possible.

But apart from that problem econometrics has not replaced the nuanced ideas presented in microeconomics, monetary theory, and development economics which require much more than regression analysis. So the problems with economics as a purported scientific discipline remain. Economists have often been reproached for having what is called 'physics envy' on account of the way modeling in economics is conducted. This approach is problematic because according to physicist Lee Smolin (2013) neoclassical economic theory operates as if its theories were constructed in a timeless universe given its fixation on the concept of a timeless equilibrium. Smolin writes: 'How is it possible that influential economists have argued for decades from the premise of a single, unique equilibrium, when results in their own literature by prominent colleagues showed this to be incorrect? I believe the reason is the pull of the timeless over the timebound. For if there is only a single timeless equilibrium, the dynamics by which the market evolves over time is not of much interest'(Smolin 2013:259). According to Smolin, neoclassical economic theorists treat their discipline as being 'path-independent' when in actual fact the practice of economics is 'path-dependent'– that is dependent on events in time. Smolin writes: ' Neoclassical economics conceptualizes economics as path-independent. An efficient market is path-independent, as is a market with a single, stable equilibrium. In a path-independent system, it should be impossible to make money purely by trading, without producing anything of value. This sort of activity is called arbitrage, and basic financial theory holds that in an efficient market arbitrage is impossible, because everything is already priced in such a way that there are no inconsistencies…. Nonetheless, hedge funds and investment bankers have made fortunes trading currency markets. Their success should be impossible in an efficient market; but this does not seem to have bothered economic theorists' (Smolin 2013:260).

But the opposite holds as in the cases of the great losses incurred by the hedge fund Long-Term Capital Management in 1998. This hedge-fund was noted for its heavy reliance on quantitative methods with Nobel Prize winners, Myron Scholes and Robert Merton on its board of directors. The same principle holds regarding the world economic crisis of 2008. As Smolin puts it: 'In the thinking of the economic gurus who won the day for deregulation, the role of human agency was neglected, in deference to an imagined mythical timeless state of nature. This was the profound conceptual mistake that opened the way for the errors of policy that led to the recent economic crisis and recession' (Smolin 2013:259-260). Smolin finally states tellingly that 'To do real economics, without

mythological elements, we need a theoretical framework in which time is real and the future is not specifiable in advance in principle' (Smolin 2013:263). The point is that neoclassical economics as it is structured, even when buttressed with econometrics does not, at its foundational levels, offer an accurate scientific analysis of the economy.

Political Economy Revisited

The classical economists such as Ricardo, Say, Malthus, and others all wrote about the economy as an ongoing dynamic between labour, rent, and capital. And this was the essential point later taken up by Marx in favour of labour. We recall, of course, that an important cornerstone of classical economics was the labour theory of value. The logical implication of this ongoing dynamic was amply pointed out by Marx in his copious writings. The classical labour theory of value leads directly Marx's theory of surplus value, which on its formalisation has ever since been a topic of great controversy. It was at this point that there was a gestalt switch among the theorists of economics to focus more on the decision-making of individuals. This was the point at which theorising efforts of the marginalists were bent on arguing that economic behaviour was at base individualist and subject to strictly axiomatic representation.

But this approach was strictly evasive because of the constantly interactive nature of economic behaviour within society as a whole. The most important features of the economy as a whole are to be understood macroscopically. It is for this reason that the most important works written in economics are those that deal with the economy as a whole. Think of the works of the classical political economists including those of J.S. Mill and J.B. Say. Even the marginalist, Walras, sought to understand the economy as the interactive choices of all agents in the social economy. This explains Walras's attempt to map the economy as a whole with his general equilibrium theory. On this issue we can think analogically with regard to gas theory laws. According to gas theory, the behaviour of individual molecules is of little import given the greater importance of variables such as pressure, temperature, and volume. The equation for the Ideal Gas Law is PV = nRt where n refers to the number of moles of molecules all taken together. Analogically, the understanding of the dynamics of an economy derives not from analysing the paths of single molecules but of understanding the behaviour of the gas as a collection of gas molecules subject to the variables mentioned above.

Viewed macroscopically the most important aspects of an economy are general prices, employment levels, inflation rates, governmental fiscal

and monetary policies, and at a more analytical level the relationship between capital and labour. The choices made by some idealised consumer are of minimal significance. In this regard, economics becomes a more comprehensive discipline as political economy than as economics as a positive science. Works such as *The Political Economy of Growth* (Paul Baran 1957)*, The Development of Underdevelopment* (Andre Gunder Frank 1966), *The Modern World System* (Immanuel Wallerstein 1974, et seq.), etc., are much more illuminating for the understanding of the dynamics of economics than otherwise. In sum the macroscopic thrust of Marx's *Capital* and J.M. Keynes's *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* are more meaningful for understanding economics than, say, Debreu's *Theory of Value: An Axiomatic Analysis of Economic Equilibrium*.

There are others who would argue that the microeconomic aspects of the economic landscape should be taken into consideration as in the case of understanding the modalities for optimisation in the case of firms. Of course, such can be done on a case by case analysis. The techniques of linear and non-linear programming have been applied in such situations and have been quite effective. One might even apply the same techniques to individual agent decision-making, treating the agent as an optimiser according to set production outputs. Appeal to such techniques would be more reliable than the orthodox approaches now taken according to traditional microeconomic approaches based on equality constraints. The goal here, it must be admitted, is to offer realistic analyses rather than ideal-type abstractions.

In this regard, it should be recognised that notions such as equilibrium states of the economy according to which microeconomic and macroeconomic solutions are established do not really exist. There are no equilibrium states of the economy given that there is constant motion among its constituent parts. Proof of this derives from the fact that the world economic recession of 2008 was not predicted by most of the 'efficient market' theorists who argue that the behaviour of financial markets reflect the correct choices of the decision makers operating therein. From John Muth to Eugene Fama the attempts to establish some kind of structured decision-making rationality for agents in the market have failed for the most part. Proof of this is the fact that the world economic recession of 2008 was not predicted by most economists.

On account of all these observations it is incumbent on theorists of economics to seek to establish novel paradigms that would better explain economic decision-making. In this sense a more comprehensive

approach is required. This would mean approaching economics not as a narrow, ideal-type discipline whose actors are imbued with an unrealistic rationality which leads to equally unrealistic results, but as a comprehensive discipline constructed along the lines of traditional political economy. When this approach is assumed it becomes clear economic decision-making by individuals in whatever guise is a complex matter determined by political, sociological, and historical variables. In the final analysis, the decision-making map for the whole dynamic is determined by an ongoing conflict between labour and capital. This recognition would not be grasped were economics reduced to the analysis of neoclassical economics.

The present economic structure of the world requires investigation given the huge economic imbalances that exist between individuals and nations. It is a matter of great concern when the collective wealth of a mere eighty five individuals is on par with the wealth of approximately 50 per cent of living humans, that is, some 3.5 billion persons. The same could be said for the income disparities that exist for a number of non-industrialised nations especially those of Africa. Neoclassical economics is just not equipped with the appropriate tools to analyse this phenomenon given its dogmatic mantra that all factors of production are rewarded in the production process with the values of their marginal products. Given the original meaning of 'economics' – derived from the Greek term '*oikonomos*' meaning 'care of the household' – the present structure of the world's economic arrangements needs analyses of existing socio-historical and political structures, and the political behaviours of governments and corporations. There must be explanatory focus on the role that the Bretton Woods institutions exercise such influence on the world's economies, the fact that there exists both a world's reserve currency and convertible currencies, the fact that the exchange values of currencies are so disparate, the fact that neoliberal market economics strongly endorses the free flow of capital but not the free flow of labour, and so on. Answers to these economic questions cannot be answered by neoclassical economics in any meaningful way. What this means is that contemporary students of economics should recognise that that there are more meaningful paradigms of economic behaviour than neoclassical economics and that questions concerning economic structures could be more realistically answered within a framework of political economy.

In the particular case of Africa the dominant paradigm in its theoretical guise is neoclassical economics which translates into the practice of neoliberalism as advised by the dominant international lending agencies

such as the IMF and the World Bank. The results are that the majority of nations on the lowest tier of the UNDP's Human Development Index are on the African continent. This situation can be reversed only by a rethinking of orthodox economic theory in favour of political economy. In this regard, theories such as dependency theory, critical Marxism, world systems theory should be dusted off and brought to the forefront of critical economic analysis. Africa's universities and social science research centres have a crucial role to play in this regard.

Conclusion

This article derives from the fact that contemporary economics, dominated as it is by neoclassical economics and its empirical practice, neoliberalism, has failed to offer genuinely scientific explanations of economic phenomena. In order to solve this issue a paradigm shift has been proposed. This new direction entails a return to the more comprehensive analysis of economic behaviour in terms of its past as political economy. In this context, economic behaviour was understood as human decision-making structured comprehensively as it was on the other social sciences of politics, sociology, and history. This novel approach was recommended after it was demonstrated that economics (with microeconomic foundations) could not sustain itself empirically based as it is on the assumption of rational agent behaviour. The research findings of Kahneman and Tversky clearly confirmed this fact. It is for this reason that behavioural economics and neuroeconomics have become increasingly popular. But even this approach would not be adequate given that human behaviour is so complex that any theory proposing to explain and predict some aspects of behaviour could be easily refuted by falsifying instances. The modelling of economics as a species of engineering or physics has not yielded the expected results. The failures of neoclassical economics are obvious given that any social science claiming to be 'scientific' must be able to offer not only realistic descriptions of reality but also to explain existing phenomena and to offer accurate forecasts.

The neoclassical economics paradigm has become so dominant in these contemporary times of globalisation that its pedagogic instruction in Africa's universities is now the norm. But its practice as economic neoliberalism has spelled doom for Africa with the frequent IMF and World Bank ministrations of Procrustean 'structural adjustment' programmes. Capital continues its centrifugal flight from Africa even as its governments are advised to practice 'open markets' and to offer

'investor friendly' economies. The result is just as in the ' old days': Africa exports cheap raw materials and imports relatively expensive finished value-added products – especially from China, a growing economic superpower. It is evident, therefore, that alternative and modified theories not so popular in the technologically developed West, must be revisited for their viability in Africa's mostly tiny and unviable economies. Political economic analyses must be an integral part of new solutions in the forms of regional integration, viable currencies and effective monetary reforms. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, thus the current model of the European Union with its single currency, freedom of movement, and coordinated infrastructures, and so on, is a viable way forward with the appropriate modifications.

But one should be aware that though the end goal should be a political and economic Africa structured along the lines as recommended Kwame Nkrumah and C.A. Diop, the necessary infrastructure to effect this is not in place. To emphasise again: there is much need for more think tanks, research universities, publishing houses, journals, and bookshops, all existing within the context of a modernising social matrix. In other words, for Africa to develop intellectual cultures, it must necessarily develop *pari passu*. Ideas from all parts of the globe should be made available instantaneously and studied. But that is not what obtains at the moment. How many bookshops or university students in the area of economics have access to texts such as *How Rich Nations Got Rich and Why Poor Nations Stay* Poor authored by Eric Reinert (2007)? Ideally, the very recent text, Capital in the 21st Century (Thomas Piketty, 2014) should be available at university libraries at the same time it is available elsewhere. There should be ongoing debates in African universities as whether this text is just another instance of 'old wine in new bottles' with weak recommendations or otherwise. After all, the global economic crisis of 2008 did affect Africa maximally.

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Thinking Political Emancipation and the Social Sciences in Africa: Some Critical Reflections

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Freedom is not identitarian; it is at the very least an inflexion of, at most a rupture with the identitarian register, insofar as the latter is a prescription of the Other (Alain Badiou Séminaire 2011-12, 18 April 2012. My translation).

At the present time, the world is at an impasse. This can only mean one thing: not that there is no way out, but that the time has come to abandon all the old ways, which have led to fraud, tyranny, and murder (Aimé Césaire letter to Maurice Thorez, 24 October 1956).

Abstract

The freedom which Africa was to attain with liberation from colonialism had originally promised to emancipate all the people of the continent from poverty and oppression. Yet anyone can observe that this has not happened. Uhuru is still elusive; freedom seems unattainable. Nationalist, socialist and neo-liberal conceptions of human emancipation have all failed to provide a minimum of freedom for the majority of Africans who are living under conditions which worsen daily as the crisis of capitalism and liberal democracy worsens. All three of these views of freedom were elaborated and theorised as universal by the social sciences. It is these conceptions which still orientate our thought. The fact that freedom has not been achieved evidently means that our thinking has so far been deficient. This article argues that the social sciences have played their part in our inability to think freedom and are consequently in need of fundamental restructuring. Central to their limitations if not their failure to comprehend emancipation in a manner adequate to the problems of the twenty-first century in Africa, has arguably been their inability to take what excluded people say seriously enough. In the past they have been

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plagued by the notion that only those with knowledge and power are capable of thinking a new way forward, thus aligning their thinking with that of the state (either in its current or forthcoming form). Given the lack of success of the social sciences in thinking human emancipation so far, we should consider alternatives which are open to popular perspectives. The article argues for an expansion of the social sciences to include the idea that 'people think' in Africa, and that therefore reason is not exclusively the prerogative of academics and politicians. Marx once observed that 'the state has need ... of a very stern education by the people'. This remark is even truer today than it was in his time.

Resumé

Après sa libération du colonialisme, l'Afrique à qui l'on avait promis initialement une émancipation de tous les peuples du continent de la pauvreté et de l'oppression, devait atteindre une certaine liberté. Pourtant, n'importe qui peut constater que tel n'est pas le cas. Uhuru est toujours insaisissable ; la liberté semble inaccessible. Les conceptions nationalistes, socialistes et néo-libérales de l'émancipation humaine ont tous échoué à fournir un minimum de liberté à la majorité des Africains qui vivent dans des conditions qui s'empirent tous les jours comme se sont aggravées la crise du capitalisme et la démocratie libérale. Chacun de ces trois points de vue de la liberté a été élaboré et théorisé comme universel par les sciences sociales. Ce sont ces conceptions qui orientent encore nos pensées. Le fait que la liberté n'a pas été vraiment atteinte signifie que notre intelligence a été jusqu'à présent insuffisante. Cet article soutient que les sciences sociales ont joué un rôle dans notre incapacité à penser librement et ont par conséquent besoin d'une restructuration fondamentale. Dominées par leurs limites, sinon leur incapacité à comprendre l'émancipation d'une manière adéquate aux problèmes du XXIe siècle en Afrique, cela a sans doute été leur incapacité à prendre ce que dit le peuple exclu suffisamment au sérieux. Dans le passé, ils ont été envahis par l'idée que seuls ceux qui ont la connaissance et le pouvoir sont capables de penser autrement, alignant ainsi leur pensée avec celle de l'Etat (soit dans sa forme actuelle soit dans celle à venir). Étant donné l'échec des sciences sociales à la pensée de l'émancipation humaine jusqu'ici, nous devrions envisager des alternatives qui sont de s'ouvrir aux perspectives populaires. L'article plaide pour une extension des sciences sociales afin d'inclure l'idée que « les individus pensent » en Afrique, et que par conséquent la raison n'est pas exclusivement l'apanage des universitaires et des politiciens. Marx a une fois observé que « l'État a besoin ... d'une éducation très sévère par le peuple ». Cette remarque est d'autant plus vraie aujourd'hui qu'elle l'était en son temps.

Introduction

It should be apparent to anyone that the emancipation from authoritarianism in Africa promised by the neo-liberal extolling of the market in the late 1980s has failed. Of course, this was quite predictable; yet, until the mass upsurges in Tunisia and Egypt along with ramifications elsewhere, African intellectuals seemed to believe, however reluctantly, that Fukuyama had been right and that, indeed, we had witnessed at that time the end of history. The fact that these events have returned, since early 2011, to a more recognisable antagonism between authoritarianism and parliamentarianism under the overall aegis of the globalised not-so-new world order, has only confirmed the views of cynics. Make no mistake, the world has changed and is changing. There is a deep yearning both by intellectuals and other people in general for a rethinking of the idea of human emancipation. While there is some renewed interest in the Marxist vision of emancipation, the fear lingers – justifiably so – that while Marxism may have been incredibly successful at enabling a range of popular victories against oppression, it may be inherently prone to authoritarian solutions. Similar points are often made in relation to the nationalist conception of emancipation as it is apparent that even the promises of freedom through the nation have in practice failed to liberate the majority of Africans.

The freedom which Africa was to attain with liberation from colonialism had originally promised to emancipate all the people of the continent from poverty and oppression. Yet anyone can observe this has not happened. Uhuru is still elusive; freedom seems unattainable at least for the majority. Nationalist, socialist and neo-liberal conceptions of human emancipation have all failed to provide a minimum of freedom for the majority of Africans who are living under conditions which worsen daily as the crisis of capitalism deteriorates. All three of these views of freedom were elaborated on and theorised as universal by the social sciences. Yet it is these failed conceptions which still orientate intellectual thought in the social sciences. The fact that freedom has not been achieved evidently means that our thinking has so far been deficient. Either we think that these notions of freedom were 'misapplied', 'betrayed' and fundamentally flawed, or we begin to think differently, namely: that these modes of politics made sense at the time but are now in many respects redundant, at least in some fundamental respects.

This article argues for the latter view. It suggests that the social sciences have played their part in our inability to think freedom and are consequently in need of fundamental restructuring; to continue in

the manner we have been thinking and doing for the past fifty years is no longer tenable. Central to their limitations if not their failure to comprehend emancipation in a manner adequate to the problems of the twenty-first century, has arguably been their inability to take what excluded people say seriously enough. In the recent past they have been plagued by the notion that only those with knowledge and power think, thus aligning their thinking with that of the state (ether in its current or forthcoming form). Given the lack of success of the social sciences in thinking human emancipation so far, we should consider alternatives which are open to popular perspectives. This article argues then for an expansion of the social sciences to include the idea that 'people think' in Africa, and that therefore reason is not exclusively the prerogative of academics and politicians. Marx (1875:329) once observed that 'the state has need ... of very stern education by the people'. This remark is even truer today than it was in his time.

From Thinking Freedom to Thinking Political Identities

The end of 'the end of history' was finally announced on a world scale in February 2011. That announcement took place in North Africa and subsequently in the Middle-East. Popular upsurges of extraordinary vitality occurred which brought back into stark relief what most seemed to have forgotten, namely, that people, particularly those from the Global South, are perfectly capable of making history. The fact that this process was initiated on the African continent before it began to reverberate elsewhere is worthy of note. In this case, what they insisted on was an assertion of their dignity as human beings and not so much their identities. The mass upsurge here was not of religious inspiration but quite secular, contrary to the thinking of the dominant perspective in the social sciences which had been stressing the decline of secular politics in that part of the world since the 1980s. In fact its closest predecessor had arguably been the mass movement in South Africa of the mid-1980s and not the revolution of the Ayattollahs in Iran in the 1970s.[2] This series of events through their insistence on 'popular power' as the driver of the process have been very much located in a mode of political thought where both religious organizations and established political parties were initially taken totally by surprise. In this sense these events have been illustrative of a new political sequence where struggles for freedom are taking place outside the parameters established during the twentieth century and according to which the party has been the central organiser of political thinking. Of course religion – whether fundamentalist or not

– offers no universal conception of freedom. Only believers are said to benefit; it is only within secularism, therefore, that a truly universal of freedom and equality may be found. As inaugurated by the South African experience in the 1980s, it appears that now, in the twenty-first century, a different mode of thinking emancipatory politics could be seeing the light of day: one founded within the living conditions of people themselves. Whatever the outcome of the mass popular upsurge in North Africa (and counter-revolution in Egypt notwithstanding), it is apparent that popular agency is back on the political and intellectual agendas of the African continent.

A central recurring concern of intellectual thought in Africa since the 1950s has been the necessity precisely to conceptualise political agency and the contribution of Africans to history along with their struggles to achieve emancipation. This is not surprising given hundreds of years of slavery and colonialism during which African agency was not only denied, but seemingly eliminated to the extent that Africa was said by Enlightenment philosophers such as Hegel to have no history worth speaking of.[3] This intellectual concern to reassert African agency has been active since the early days of nationalist thought right up to the near present and has informed the study of history on the continent in particular. In its initial phase it emphasized Africans' contribution to world civilizations and to the formation of states, as state formation constituted the subjective horizon of nationalist historians. But the independence movements, born out of pan-Africanism, were also concerned to imagine an emancipatory politics beyond the simple fact of statehood. Yet despite a widespread popular political subjectivity which initially fused the people (and not the state) with the nation, it was the state, its history and its subjectivities which came to lay at the core of intellectual endeavour in the early days of nationalism and independence, and I will argue has remained there, though in a modified form and despite contestation, ever since. It was this state-focussed subjectivity which made possible the fusion between the state and the nation (the nation-state) in consciousness as soon as independence was achieved. In fact, for nationalist leaders, independence was seen as the first step to achieving full emancipation, and control of the state was seen as essential to do so. Freedom was thus a process which was generally conceived as achievable only via the state with the result that the presence of popular democratic politics was said to be unnecessary for development, or 'unaffordable' in Africa (Shivji 1985).

Gradually – among those intellectuals who remained faithful to some idea of emancipation – the emphasis shifted from a sole concern with the state and the elites which staffed it as the makers of history, to the masses and the class struggle as its driving force. After all, it was people and not just intellectual leaders who had played the dominant role in the struggle for independence, even though it may have resulted from a negotiated process. Today, this latter view has been in crisis for some time and has been replaced by an emphasis on parliamentary democracy as the high point of emancipation along with the study of political identities. The latter, despite having been instrumental in resisting authoritarian post-colonial states, are today often seen – particularly in their religious or ethnic forms – as possible threats to democracy as well as retrogressive in their politics, rather than as the bearers of a historical telos; in fact it is not clear whether it is democracy or identity that is the source of the current political crisis on the continent (see, e.g., Sen 2006). In any case, we no longer see identity politics as in any way liberating or 'progressive'. The thinking of African agency, which has always been bound up with a notion of subjecthood and emancipation is in crisis, given the fact that the overwhelming majority of Africans have remained in poverty and continue to suffer extreme forms of oppression and deprivation. Rather than attempting to contribute to the subjectivation of Africans, intellectuality seems to have reached a dead end. At the same time, the West today simply erects barriers to such subjecthood, either physical in the form of walls against African immigration, for example, or less tangible in the form of the reiteration of the well-worn ideology according to which Africans are incapable of any progressive thought as Africa is an incurable 'basket case'. Africans, it seems, are still visualised as incapable of making history.

While the modern colonial system had enforced its 'civilizing mission' supposedly designed to turn Africans into subjects, it had the contrary effect of denying Africans agency both politically and in thought; modernity was thus tied to colonialism so that Africans could never contribute to it.[4] Partha Chatterjee has recognised the effects of this well:

> … because of the way in which the history of our modernity has been intertwined with the history of colonialism, we have never quite been able to believe that there exists a universal domain of free discourse, unfettered by differences of race or nationality
>
> … from the beginning we had a shrewd guess that … we would forever remain consumers of universal modernity; never would [we] be taken

> seriously as its producers … Ours is the modernity of the once colonized (Chatterjee 1997:14, 20).

The statist development process which followed upon independence itself, mutated from an emancipatory political conception to a technical neo-colonial one of 'modernization' so that it too ultimately became a 'development mission' asserted and imposed by neo-colonial forms of domination (Neocosmos 2010b). External forms of intervention – whatever their intentions – rather than turning Africans into subjects of their own history have over the years frustrated their agency, and have only enabled it insofar as Africans have resisted and opposed such interventions. In the long run they have systematically transformed most Africans into victims whose main feature has been passivity, not agency. This process continues today as an effect of humanitarianism and human rights discourses (Wa Mutua 2002; Neocosmos 2006a; Mamdani 2009), but it is often prevalent among some African academics themselves (e.g., Ndlhovu-Gatsheni 2013) who, insisting on viewing African history as exclusively one of (neo-) colonial domination, and consequently on seeing Africans as victims and not agents of history, have difficulty in coming to terms with the fact that it was ordinary people who resisted colonialism and made history. Arguably, it is only the most excluded of the continent – the 'Damned of the Earth' in Fanon's terms – who can fundamentally transform it for they have the most to lose by its continuation in new forms. A recovery of African political agency then must begin from a fidelity to past events of African popular resistance and to those historical singularities of emancipation by Africans, however shortlived, which proposed alternatives in practice. In this way the silencing and occlusion of African historical events (Depelchin 2005) will be consequently overthrown and victimhood can be replaced by agency, at least in intellectual thought. For this to happen, I will argue, political subjectivity and agency must be thought in their own terms and not as simple reflections of their objective social location whatever this may be, including a reflection of the historical marginalisation and oppression of Africans.

It was the idea of the nation that lay at the core of independence and post-independence political subjectivities; in times of struggle it was understood as a pure affirmation, but with the advent of state formation it was to be proposed as a social category. The sequence of the National Liberation Struggle (NLS) Mode of politics could be said to have lasted approximately from 1945, the date of the Pan African Congress held in Manchester, up to say 1975;1973 being the year of the assassination

of Amilcar Cabral and Salvador Allende (Hallward 2005). During this period a particular subjectivity developed through which liberation and freedom were thought of in Africa in a specific manner. Today an anti-imperialist nationalism has disappeared from public discourse with the sole exception of Islamic fundamentalism and its disastrous ethnic nihilism. This is not unconnected with the collapse of the liberatory popular nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s into state authoritarian nationalism. Yet to maintain that nationalism in Africa has failed – or more subtly perhaps that it has deployed disastrous state politics which coerce particular interests, as does Chipkin (2007), for example – in current conditions when imperial domination and its attendant ideologies are still prevalent, and when these have altered their political form to stress a 'democratizing mission' and 'humanitarianism', is simply to make it impossible to think new forms of nationalism, new forms of (non-identitarian) pan-Africanism, and consequently, to think new forms of emancipatory politics on the continent. It means either a resignation to the propaganda of liberal democracy and to the idea of the 'end of history' along with the final admission that 'capitalist-parliamentarianism' with its massive levels of poverty and oppression and its constant need for war is the best of all possible worlds with no possibility of change in sight, or a simple retreat into dogmatism which can only reduce nationalism to its statist variety. In actual fact, we need to constantly bear in mind that: 'we will never understand what constrains us and tries to make us despair, if we do not constantly return to the fact that ours is not a world of democracy but a world of imperial conservatism using democratic phraseology' (Badiou 2006a:137). For those of us who live in Africa and in the countries of what has become known as the 'Global South' there is no path to emancipation which does not confront the power of empire in whatever form it may take, which is only another way of saying that nationalism is not an obsolete emancipatory conception, far from it. The point is to distinguish it analytically and politically from the state itself.

But to affirm this is not sufficient. It is also important to analyse the character of the past sequence for which national liberation was the defining category in order to bring out the singularity of its politics and to understand its limits and decline in terms of its own categories; to make sense of why it became saturated and therefore why the idea of freedom-in-the-nation lost its original emancipatory content. This requires more than is possible to do here but what I wish to suggest is that one reason for the saturation of an emancipatory nationalist politics in Africa was the fact that these politics were not able to sustain an affirmative

conception of the nation and that the latter gradually came to refer – under the hegemony of state subjectivities – to a social category in the thought of politics as it unfolded over time. From a universal notion of national emancipation concerning humanity as a whole, we gradually get to a notion of the nation founded on indigeneity according to political criteria decided by the state. It is through a discussion of the nation in Fanon's work that this transformation of politics can be established at its clearest as he was, with the possible exception of Amilcar Cabral, the most accurate observer and theorist of this sequence on the African continent from within its own subjectivity (Neocosmos 2011a).

The manner in which African political agency in the making of history came to be thought has followed, since the 1950s, a number of important intellectual trajectories. The first such perspective was arguably that of the *Negritude* cultural movement which in its manner of asserting Africans' humanity, was constituted in reaction to the oppression of Africans in its 'assimilationist' form by French colonialism. Unsurprisingly, these ideas resonated with the situation of African Americans as the main threat to their existence was also one of assimilation. *Negritude* consisted largely of an insistence on recovering the 'whole complex of civilized values… which characterize… the Negro-African World' (Senghor 1961:83) and in postmodernist parlance it proposed an 'essentialist' mirror image of the colonial one which had stressed the emptiness or non-existence of African-ness. It did this, for example, in the idea of an 'African Personality'. While this movement was of great importance intellectually and culturally, and totally understandable in a context where assimilation was the main political threat to an independent human and political existence, it reverted to a psychological essence of 'the African' and an essence of 'African culture' (defined of course by intellectual elites) which was unable to focus on the agency of the people of the continent. It was rightly noted by Fanon that it brought together the totally different experiences of Africans in Africa and Africans in the Diaspora under the same umbrella. It thus assumed, despite their variegated experiences, that the main feature they had in common was oppression by Whites (Fanon 1990:173-74). Much as Dependency Theory which was to appear much later in the sixties and seventies, it ended up seeing the core of African history as one of Western domination to which Africans only reacted. Yet out of the African and Afro-American encounter also grew the idea of pan-Africanism which had a much more radical history at least initially when it gave birth to popular African nationalisms before it too was engulfed by the statist politics which persist to this day.

As a popular pan-Africanist subjectivity rapidly disappeared within a context in which state forms of politics asserted their hegemony, political subjectivities became much more state-focused with the result that pan-Africanism collapsed into a notion embodied in a multi-state institution. The Africanist school of history along with the modernisation school which after independence was hegemonic in all of the social sciences, asserted the centrality of the state in thought. The only Africans with agency were said to be great leaders of great kingdoms and civilizations. Yet by the 1970s, the influence of events in the Third World as a whole in which popular struggles had prevailed over repressive states (Cuba, China, Vietnam) as well as changes in intellectual trends in post-1968 France (e.g., the work of Althusser, Poulantzas, Bettleheim, Meillassoux, and others on modes of production and the state) and in the United States (e.g., in the journal *Monthly Review*) had initiated a shift to emphasising the class struggle as the motor of history or in its radical form the view that 'the masses make history'. In other words a sophisticated form of Marxism which stressed the centrality of social relations in the making of history took root in opposition to the vulgar economism of the 'development of the productive forces' inherited from official 'Soviet Marxism' as well as from Western modernisation theory à la W.W. Rostow (e.g., Temu and Swai 1981).

The central concept of what became known as the *Dar-es-Salaam debate* was thus the class struggle and the struggle against neo-colonialism; the two were in fact part of the same process in a neo-colonial country (e.g., Shivji et al 1973; Shivji 1976; Tandon 1982). While this political-economic perspective – which dovetailed nicely with post-colonial notions of development – produced crucially important intellectual work, it tended to remain within a structuralist Marxism and regularly failed to clearly appreciate the fact that in classical Marxism, 'class' had been conceived both as a socio-economic concept and a political category, and that the core issue of political agency concerned the connection between the two. The answer to this question when it was indeed addressed, was still sought in terms of a party – particularly a vanguard party (e.g. Khamisi 1983)[5] – of intellectuals which was to provide mass movements of workers and peasants with a political perspective, to turn them into political classes 'for themselves'. In other words the idea of agency was still largely conceived within the parameters of the dominance of intellectual possessors of knowledge, of Leninism. Agency then was ultimately still thought in statist terms as parties were and are quite simply state organizations, central component parts of what is sometimes

referred to as 'political society'; their function after all is the achievement of state power. It followed, as Mahmood Mamdani was to point out soon afterwards, that:

> From such a perspective, it was difficult even to glimpse the possibility of working people in Africa becoming a creative force capable of making history. Rather, history was seen as something to be made outside of this force, in lieu of this force and ultimately to be imposed on it (Mamdani 1994:255).

Political thinking was thus still not taking place beyond the subjective parameters provided by the state, and simultaneously political agency was being thought as some kind of complex reflection of the objectively social, as social relations were seen as determinant of consciousness 'in the last instance' to use Althusser's well-known formulation. After all it has been a standard view not only held by Lenin, that political parties 'represent' classes in the political arena.

The late 1980s and 1990s in Africa, substituted 'civil society' for 'the state' (political society) at the centre of intellectual discourse. This subjective transition occurred as an effect of two related processes. On the one hand we witnessed increased resistance 'from below' by popular movements of various types (such as nationality, ethnic, religious, gender and youth identity movements yet predominantly urban-based) to an increasingly authoritarian state in several African countries such as Nigeria, Uganda, Congo-Zaire and South Africa *inter alia*. Identity movements seemed to constitute the foundation for an emancipatory politics as they provided part of the resistance to state oppression during this period (Ake 2003). On the other hand, there was a worldwide transformation 'from above' as the old bipolar world of the 'Cold War' collapsed and the new neo-liberal 'Washington consensus' put forward the watchword of 'liberalization': 'de-regulation' of the African economies and 'multi-partyism' in African politics. The entrance of the name 'civil society' into the debate within neo-liberal discourse, seemed to presage an alternative to state authoritarianism and the possibility of the defence and extension of human rights and democracy; an optimistic mood developed as a bright future was predicted. We had now finally arrived at the neo-liberal Nirvana of the end of history, so much so that this period was sometimes referred to as the 'second liberation' of the continent. Intellectual work now shifted to a sustained critique of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) imposed by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) on African states on the one hand and to extensive studies of political identities and social movements on the other.

Yet neither of the two contested the existence of the capitalist system as such and the idea of emancipation did not feature in their vocabulary.[6]

The neo-liberal critique of the state which found political expression in the new 'Washington Consensus' was dismissive of the African state as corrupt, illegitimate and unrepresentative of the general will. The latter was supposedly represented by civil society. This was sometimes empirically false as often it was the state which had opposed ethnic chauvinism and supported communitarianism as, for example, in Nigeria. But in this way the old authoritarian and secular nationalist state was weakened and more easily transformed into a Western-compliant authoritarian state in a democratic shell. Civil society organisations (social movements and NGOs) soon came to work broadly within state political subjectivities; in any case they had to in order to survive. Thus, it soon transpired that the central referent in an attempt to conceptualise African emancipation could not simply be the state-civil society dichotomy. Civil society is a standard domain of neo-liberal capitalism and its politics, the existence of which only varies in intensity according to these organised interests' ability to operate. As resistance within civil society is founded in thought upon the existence of differences – the organised interests of the division of labour and hierarchy – it is central to modern social organisation, a fact emphasised incidentally by all the founders of Western sociology.

African critical intellectuals were rightly suspicious of the term 'civil society' especially as it seemed to imply a Manichean dualism within neo-liberal discourse, the dark side of which was said to be the state. The post-colonial state, it was maintained, had been, despite its authoritarianism, a nationalist state which at least had defended national sovereignty in some important ways as well as provided social subsidies for the needy, features which were now rapidly receding into the mists of time as Western domination increased within a newly globalised World. Neo-liberal conceptions of democracy were also contested and it was hoped that the form of democracy – the missing term of political economy – could be debated as its meaning was being subjected to popular contestation (Mamdani 1987; Anyang' Nyong'o 1987; Chole and Ibrahim 1995; Ake 2003; Neocosmos 1998).[7] This was not to happen, at least not at any real depth, as both movements and intellectuals finally all accepted the baptismal nomination of the new state form as the 'democratic state'. The old political elites, predictably with Western support, embraced the name and were able in most cases to survive the transition to democracy with their power intact. The enthusiasm for a genuine change in which the popular masses would be able to finally be the agents of their own

history gradually faded as mass poverty and political despondency increased. The disappearance of 'meta-narratives', we were told, was all for the better as they were 'essentialist'; the postmodern condition, now written without the hyphen, was fluid, classless and characterised by clashes of identity. The study of identity politics became the order of the day as religious and ethnic identities in particular were said to be core features of the new globalized world as 'belonging' provided the only way of accessing scarcer resources: material, cultural and political (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000).

Any Idea of emancipatory politics receded into the distance to be seemingly replaced by atheoretical empiricism in academia and a rapid rise of fundamentalisms – contrary to the predictions of modernisation theory – in politics. It soon became clear that the terms 'progress' or 'progressive' were no longer part of scientific or political vocabulary, while it soon became impossible to find anyone who did not swear to being a democrat. In such conditions the term 'democracy' itself could only become suspect for it no longer implied a better world for the majority – there was no *demos* – but formed the core name of a state and imperial consensus in which vast inequalities and continued oppressive relations were tolerated as largely inevitable. In fact, democracy now characterised the politics of the new form of empire (e.g., Hardt and Negri 2001) as, together with humanitarianism, it became imposed on the World through the exercise of military power if necessary. While the 'civilising mission' of empire had ended in the 1960s, we were now witnessing a new 'democratizing mission' (Wamba-dia-Wamba 2007) through reference to which Western power was being re-deployed in the rest of the world (ex-Yugoslavia, Haiti, Iraq, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Libya, etc.) as the West faced its newly perceived enemy of 'Islamic Fundamentalism'. In no case has it been thought necessary to think the importance of a *demos* or popular social foundation for the formation of a democratic state; formal attributes – elections, multi-partyism and the ubiquitous notion of 'good governance' – were considered sufficient to qualify for entry into the enchanted world of state democracy and globalised neo-liberalism.

During this period, the most important studies of popular political subjectivity concerned social movements and were, in the best work, given a political inflection. Social movements were seen as the expression of popular political agency, 'the subjective factor in African development' (Mamdani, Mkandawire and Wamba-dia-Wamba 1993:112), and regularly counterposed to NGOs often visualised as the bearers of a

neo-colonial culture of clientelism. Yet in all this work, political agency was understood as a reflection of the objectively social, of the specific dimensions of the social division of labour. There was never any attempt to conceive subjectivity in terms of itself, understandably perhaps because of the assumption that this meant a collapse into (social) psychology (and hence into idealism), the only discipline to be understood as attempting an account of the subjective – as after all it is psychology which is said to regulate consciousness.[8]

The justly famous volume on African social movements edited by Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba (1995) was quickly followed by various studies by Mamdani (1996, 2001, 2009) in which the colonial state and the production of political identities were theorised in a manner which rightly detached them from political economy, but which nevertheless focused exclusively on their institutionalisation as an exclusive effect of state politics, while simultaneously assuming a clearly demarcated political realm in African peasant societies governed by tradition. Groups were said to acquire their political identities largely because they were interpellated by the state in an identitarian (or communitarian) manner; we were not told if there was any resistance to such state interpellation by alternative non-identity politics. Little or no space then was devoted to analysing the political contradictions within tradition or popular culture, some sides of which may have exhibited a popular non-statist perspective; thus the impression was given in this body of work that little or no agency had been shown by people in their process of identity formation (Neocosmos 2003). Yet as many studies have indeed convincingly suggested, tradition is always more or less contested from within, invented, reinvented and 'imagined', as it is itself the outcome of different political subjectivities which affect power relations, themselves constantly in flux (e.g., Ranger, 1985b, 1993; Vail, 1989). Moreover, a clear-cut domain or sphere of the political is rarely in existence within tradition, as power relations are intimately imbricated within cultural, economic and other relations of domination in African society. Mamdani's work was concerned with thinking the political but not agency and subjectivity, in other words not with thinking politics as such (Mamdani 1996, 2001, 2009).[9]

The predominant effect of this crisis in thought and of the perceived inadequacies of classism has been the uncritical adoption of neoliberal notions such as those of 'civil society', 'human rights', 'modernity' and 'identity' into radical leftist discourse. Of course, this has been facilitated by what has become known as the 'language turn' in social

thought worldwide. The idea of 'political identities' has been perhaps the dominant intellectual notion here. But discourses and identities are simply reflections of the structure of interests; for Foucault, they are themselves in a sense the structure. Studies of political identities have become overwhelmingly dominant in the social sciences and humanities today in the Global South in general and in Africa in particular within all disciplines. Thinkers as disparate as Ali Mazrui, Achille Mbembe, Mahmood Mamdani, Valentin Mudimbe, Kwame Appiah and Paul Zeleza (not to mention a myriad of feminist writers) have all, in their different ways, thought African society, state and politics in terms of identities: personal, social and political.[10] One of the difficulties they have tried to confront has been termed the 'essentialism' of identities which refers all thought to an unchanging kernel or essence of the identity in question which evidently de-historicizes and naturalizes it. Attempts have been made to overcome this difficulty with reference to the relational side of identity but unfortunately these do not overcome the problem, for relations presuppose the existence of differences and only stress their interconnections even though these may be given a central effectivity; neither does the notion of 'hybridity' or the recognition of a complex multiplicity of identities.[11]

Africans, of course, have been overwhelmingly analysed – by outsiders as well as by themselves – in terms of their social location in Africa and in terms of the latter's continental place: in 'human evolution', in (colonial) history, in the world economy, in its collective culture and identity and even in its 'personality' (*inter alia* its 'darkness' or its 'blackness').[12] The study of identities has simply become pan-disciplinary in Africa today. Displacement – the politics of excess beyond social location – has rarely, if ever, provided the foundation for a history of Africans, and yet it is surely displacement which is the truly universal phenomenon of politics and hence of history. The once common statement that it is people who make history has largely been forgotten; it is time to revive it and to insist that people think. In this context, the consequences for thinking emancipatory politics of recent events in North Africa and the Middle East need to be urgently drawn.

In Africa then the study of political identities largely distinguished itself from an apolitical postmodernism, but remained caught within the parameters of state-centredness as it was the state which was evidently seen as the prime creator of such identities through a process of institutionalisation, exclusion, cooption or whatever. Concurrently, it also gradually became apparent in most African countries that democracy as a

form of state was more oligarchic than democratic, as states (and powerful elites) ignored or bypassed their own democratic rules systematically, and that longstanding popular-national grievances such as access to land (e.g., Zimbabwe, South Africa) or employment and housing (e.g., South Africa) were not adequately addressed by the state or were addressed only in the interests of the few.[13] These failures have brought forth a contradiction between democratic and national rights, with the result that the issue of freedom remains on the agenda, as the excluded themselves categorically state when they are allowed to express themselves such as in the case of *Abahlali base Mjondolo* who mourn the absence of freedom on 'Unfreedom day'.[14]

Yet this demand to partake in the benefits of democracy and to access the benefits of freedom much trumpeted in the case of South Africa, for example, now often takes place in a situation of political disorientation where the usual ideological signposts are no longer of help as the standard dichotomies – left-right, state-market[15], nationalist-socialist – have become largely meaningless, while the newly-arisen contradiction between nationalism and democracy, characteristic of many countries, remains often subterranean, largely unrecognized and hence under-discussed. As a result of the absence of an emancipatory discourse in the political arena, we are today confronted with a political crisis as the masses turn on themselves in a frenzy of ethnic, religious or xenophobic violence (e.g. Kenya 2007, South Africa 2008, Nigeria 2009/2010, to mention the most evident episodes). We are simultaneously confronted with an intellectual crisis, as those entrusted with the task of asking critical questions and providing an alternative *Idea* to the vacuity of the democratic consensus, seem content to proliferate identity studies and to appeal to statist solutions wringing their hands in intellectual despair.

By the 1980s Mamdani, Mkandawire and Wamba-dia-Wamba (1993:112) were noting in their co-authored brief but important critique of the limits of (Marxist) political economy, that 'if democratic practice and democratic theory is to be popular it must not only come to terms with the class principle... It must also come to terms with the rights of political minorities in Africa' whether those of ethnicities, women or youth. But the authors were correct in an empirical sense only. They overlooked the fact that the working-class in the Marxist tradition was not only conceived as a socio-economic category with particularistic interests beloved of sociologists; they forgot that it had also been theorized politically as a universal subject of history, that in its political form, the proletariat was seen by the classics of Marxism as the only social force capable of

emancipating *humanity as a whole*. The political struggles of the workers were thus not only deemed to be self-liberating but also understood to provide the foundation for the liberation of the whole people – the 'uprooting' of the class system as such – precisely because, as Jacques Rancière (1995) has put it, the proletariat was in nineteenth century Europe 'the part of no part', the collectivity which, because of its exclusion from politics, could only emancipate itself by destroying the whole capitalist system and hence emancipating humanity in the process.[16]

None of the other identities subsequently added onto that of the working-class by (largely postmodernist) social analysis (e.g., women's movements, ethnic and religious movements, youth movements, environmentalism, etc) have ever been said to fulfil in themselves the same universal function. However oppressed the groups they represented may have been, and however radical their struggles, these have not generally been said to have gone beyond the right to be included in the existing capitalist-parliamentary system, the existing framework of power relations from which they had hitherto been excluded. If these identities or movements ever acquired an anti-capitalist character it has largely been due to their incorporating more universalistic ideologies such as nationalism or socialism for example, external to their particular identity politics during periods of mass emancipatory upsurge such as in urban South Africa in the 1980s.

Thus the adding of 'new identities' and 'new' social movements to 'old' class identities and movements could not replace the classist politics of the Marxist tradition with any alternative emancipatory vision; it amounted to a purely additive empiricist observation bereft of no more theory than the assertion of the inclusion of all into an existing democratic state to be 'radicalised' by the left (e.g., Laclau and Mouffe 1985). At best we were provided with the liberal idea according to which respect for or tolerance of the 'Other' within a 'multicultural society' (the South African version of which became known as the 'Rainbow Nation') could pretend to be the norm. Unfortunately, such 'respect for the Other' it soon became noticeable, meant only tolerance of those others who agreed with one's own idea of tolerance, not of 'intolerant cultures' or of those deemed to be 'outsiders' (Badiou 2001). Such an incoherent idea could only provide the foundation for a hypocritical unprincipled politics (Žižek 1999, 2008). Yet the roots of this idea are arguably to be found in the deeply ingrained de-politicising effects of social analysis, a fact which we have great reticence in admitting or even recognising today as we take such effects for granted.

The fundamental problem of identity studies from the perspective of emancipation is that political identities are necessarily derived from social location; they 'represent' such social location or place in what is termed 'the political'. As a result, identities can only reproduce such places subjectively along with their accompanying hierarchy, thereby leaving a universal notion of emancipation (equality, freedom, justice, dignity) unthought and indeed unthinkable outside market-capitalist and state-democratic norms. Simultaneously, the absence of a thought of politics beyond identity, the inability to think a politics of excess, has also had other problematic effects. Central to these has been precisely the inability to break free from state modes of thought, from 'seeing like a state' as James Scott (1998) puts it. It is important to understand that irrespective of which (class or other) interests control it, regardless of the contradictions within it and independently of the form it may take (authoritarian, democratic, colonial, postcolonial, etc.), the state is and remains a set of institutions which create, manage and reproduce differences and hierarchies. It regulates not only the various interests founded on a social division of labour but also manages differences so that any given situation is reproduced. The state can be little more than a machine for creating identities as the latter are simply the subjective representations of interests.

State politics then concern the representation of interests (by parties, interest groups, social movements, ethnicities, NGOs) and the management of such interests thus restricting them to controllable limits. State politics can therefore not be concerned with excess over identities, or change beyond what exists. For state politics, all historical change can only be thought as being natural and objective (economic progress, development, modernisation, etc.) and obviously as linear and teleological. For emancipatory politics, change from the current situation can only be primarily subjective as it has to overcome place on the understanding that there is no end to history or for that matter to difference. In the absence of concepts to enable a thinking of politics, we are invariably drawn into the politics of the state and the tyranny of the objective so that political choices become impossible given that politics becomes guided if not determined by the objective course of history.

What this argument implies also is that there can be no subject of history. There is of course a subject of politics which is always collective, but it is the result of a process of conscious political self-creation or affirmation – a process of subjectivising. Therefore there can be no way of filling a spontaneous immanent Hegelian process of 'in itself-for itself' with other newly invented supposed subjects of history along the lines of

the 'multitudes' proposed by Hardt and Negri (2001, 2004) for example. In fact, such immanence denies the necessity to think a political process whereby people can think for themselves and collectively become a political subject; invariably this comes back to thinking politics in terms of representation by parties or movements and to asserting that real change is impossible for people cannot think independently of representation.

Another important consequence of the above argument is that we can no longer think politics as existing exclusively within a clearly demarcated domain, that of 'the political', i.e. that of the state and its appendages. The political or the civic or the 'house of power' (to use Max Weber's suggestive phrase[17]) is, of course, said to be the domain within which conflicts of interest are deployed, represented and managed. Politics cannot be thought of as concerning power, for to do so is to restrict them to the state. Even more interesting perhaps for the arguments which follow is that the discourses and practices which are to be labelled 'political' cannot be so labelled simply because they explicitly deal with identifiable objects of state politics (states, nations, trade unions, movements, citizens, NGOs, etc.). There are two points of note here. The first is that a clearly demarcated domain of the political cannot always be assumed to exist as in the obvious case of 'traditional society' in Africa; a second is that the various idioms and discourses deployed by people in affirming their politics, in presenting themselves on the 'stage of history' are not always evidently 'political' in the sense that they may invoke 'traditional', 'religious' or other forms of language which do not count as 'politics' for the liberal (or Marxist) episteme. In other words, the idea of the political, emanating as it does from liberal roots, has a clear neo-colonial content to it. Moreover, of course, the form of the state today in Africa, as elsewhere, is one where the liberal distinction between the public and the private has not been apparent for some time now. The national or public interest today has largely disappeared, smothered by the (over)weight of the private (Neocosmos 2011b).

Does the fact that we can no longer seriously maintain today that there is a subject of history of whatever kind (the working-class, the people, the masses, the nation, the multitudes), mean that all emancipatory political thought must be simply discarded? Does the extinction of the idea of an emancipatory working-class politics (in other words of 'classism') worldwide mean the disappearance of emancipatory thought today? Is the view that people make history dead? These questions clearly seem to be answered in the affirmative in recent thinking regarding the solutions proposed to political crises on the African continent by, for example,

Mahmood Mamdani and Achille Mbembe, two of Africa's best known radical public intellectuals whose works emanate from quite distinct intellectual and theoretical traditions, but who, in the past, had been very much concerned with the thinking of history from the perspective of a popular political subject. In both cases, the idea of popularly-founded solutions, which had been central to African radical thought in the second half of the twentieth century, has been abandoned. The solutions proposed to us today are invariably state-focused with no emancipatory content whatsoever. For Mamdani (2009) it seems to be a question of democratising the state itself or relying on the AU, for Mbembe (2010) it is a matter of appealing to the West. While Fanon (1990:159), for example, had stressed again and again that the people he refers to as 'honest intellectuals' can only come to the conclusion that 'everything depends on [the masses]' and that 'the magic hands [of the demiurge] are finally only the hands of the people', radical intellectuals today have discarded the central tenet of any emancipatory politics which is to 'have confidence in the masses', in whatever way this may be understood, and replaced it by a deeply seated 'demophobia'[18].

People Think

An emancipatory political subjectivity or consciousness can only exist 'in excess' of social relations and of the social division of labour; otherwise any change from the extant cannot possibly be the object of thought; such a politics cannot therefore be understood as a 'reflection' or 'expression' of existing social groupings, their divisions and hierarchies. Without this 'excessive' character which 'interrupts' the reproduction of the extant, politics can only be sought in the social itself and end up being simply conflated with 'the political', with the state and its political community. Badiou (2005d:2) himself enjoins us to begin to understand that a 'political process is not an expression, a singular expression, of the objective reality but it is in some sense separated from this reality. The political process is not a process of expression, but a process of separation'. Yet this process is more accurately described as an exception, as separation can be equated with an intervention from outside the situation (such as divine intervention, colonial power or economic growth for example):

> It is very important to distinguish separation from ... an exception. An exception remains internal to the situation (made of legal, regular and structural data). It is an immanent point of transcendence, a point which, from within a general immanence, functions as if it were exterior to the situation. (Badiou 2012-2013, 16 January 2013, my translation).

It is this process of exception which I have called 'excessive' here. Emancipatory politics can ultimately only exist 'in excess' both of state and of (civil) society, the domain of the organized form of that social division of labour. In fact, such a notion of 'excess' is arguably present in Marx's conception of the political consciousness of 'communist proletarians' referred to in the *Communist Manifesto* as, in his words, 'they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement' (Marx and Engels, 1848/1972:62). In other words, whereas Marx maintained that it was indeed 'social being' that determined 'social consciousness', this process was not mechanically or universally applicable; some were able to embody an 'excess' in consciousness over their social being in order to think beyond it. Such people were communists who could imagine another world and understand the contradictions of capitalism which gave rise to it.

The overwhelming consequence of the current phase of neo-colonialism known as globalisation in the sphere of politics has been the fetishism of democracy, understood in its hegemonic liberal Western state form. Yet recent popular upsurges in North Africa *inter alia* have shown that the popular demand for democratisation cannot simply be equated with Westernisation. In post-Apartheid South Africa the democratic fetish is so overwhelming today that it has become extremely difficult to question the equation of such state democracy with freedom itself. Yet one courageous popular organisation in particular – Abahlali base Mjondolo – has done so in practice, taking a principled stand not to participate in elections and not to celebrate a non-existing freedom for the poor. In fact, in that country it has been popular organisations and intellectuals emanating from grassroots struggles, not the university variety, who have been at the forefront of a questioning of democracy; academics have so far been overwhelmingly mesmerised by the trappings of state ideology.

It is sometimes quite demoralising to see the extent to which some intellectuals are simply cut off from those sites in which ordinary people – particularly today those living in informal shack settlements, the most 'lumpen' according to Mbembe – are themselves attempting to find solutions because, after all, they are the first to suffer the consequences of the crises which intellectuals are analysing from their positions of relative comfort. The work of the people of Abahlali base Mjondolo in South Africa – for example, the shack-dwellers movement based in Durban – who are intellectuals in their own right, has gone in some ways much further in assessing the crisis of the African continent than many professional

academics. What seems to be underlying the thinking of intellectuals today in Africa is fundamentally a 'fear of the masses', what Rancière (2005) refers to as 'demophobia', a fear which blocks any attempt at understanding the existing world through the evacuation of politics from thought, and which consequently makes it impossible to begin to think an alternative politics in the present. On the other hand, the 'masses' themselves are quite capable of thought. As Abahlali affirmed in 2008:

> There is only one human race. Our struggle and every real struggle is to put the human being at the centre of society, starting with the worst off (sic). An action can be illegal. A person cannot be illegal. A person is a person where ever they may find themselves... We hear that the political analysts are saying that the poor must be educated about xenophobia. Always the solution is to 'educate the poor'. When we get cholera we must be educated about washing our hands when in fact we need clean water. When we get burnt we must be educated about fire when in fact we need electricity. This is just a way of blaming the poor for our suffering. We want land and housing in the cities, we want to go to university, we want water and electricity – we don't want to be educated to be good at surviving poverty on our own... It is time to ask serious questions about why it is that money and rich people can move freely around the world while everywhere the poor must confront razor wire, corrupt and violent police, queues and relocation or deportation. In South Africa some of us are moved out of the cities to rural human dumping grounds called relocation sites while others are moved all the way out of the country. Some of us are taken to transit camps and some of us are taken to Lindela[19]. The destinations might be different but it is the same kind of oppression. Let us all educate ourselves on these questions so that we can all take action. (http://abahlali.org/node/3582)

Here is a statement from poor people from the slums which is clear in its politics of equality; the universal Idea of equality is evidently their central concern and the statement is not concerned with 'interest' or 'identity' both of which are clearly exceeded. It is clear then, as Lazarus (2013:115, *my translation*) insists that 'the subjective power of people is a thought and not a simple reflection of their social or material conditions'. The importance of making politics thinkable then must be to make appropriate concepts available in order to understand the thought of politics of people and to begin to think emancipatory political subjectivities along with them.

In order to begin to overturn this demophobia and to simultaneously develop critical thinking which also questions past failures in attempts at emancipation I propose to begin from a simple affirmation that 'people

think'. What I mean is quite simply that people (anyone) inhabiting particular circumstances do not simply 'react' to their social environment through expressing their social location subjectively. In other words collective political agency, which is what concerns me here, and the various political subjectivities (or forms of consciousness) which it deploys is not simply reducible to the social categories within which people live. After all, rationality is an attribute of all without exception. It is possible for people located within social categories to think beyond the confines of these categories and places which are themselves situated within a specific division of labour, hierarchy and social structure. In other words, 'consciousness' does always 'reflect' or 'express' social location; it may transcend it, move beyond it, or even undermine it or 'puncture a hole' in it. That thought or consciousness which is not simply reflective of place can be called 'excessive'. It is the ability which everyone has to reason. In Ranajit Guha's work, for example, peasant rebellions in colonial India are shown to illustrate the rationality of peasants whose consciousness does not simply reflect their social location. In Jacques Rancière's work, workers in France in the 1840s are shown to write philosophy. In C.L.R. James's important work, *The Black Jacobins* (and even more strongly in Carolyn Fick's work), slaves in San Domingo/ Haiti show their collective capacity to strategise and reason.[20] All these examples show that the excluded can indeed move 'out of place' and act in a manner that is seemingly outside their limited interests and identities. Just because people are workers, it does not mean that they will claim higher wages through a union. Just because people are poor, it does not mean that they have to be led by others who know what is best for them. It was arguably such a collective process of excess which characterised the 1980s as people from all walks of life came together beyond the places allocated to them by the Apartheid state, in order to construct an alternative in practice. It is this process which is sometimes referred to as 'politicization'.

It is possible to understand a process of subjectivation as a process in itself, influenced both by location as well as by 'excess'. Political subjectivities are not simply deducible from the social, although they are always related to the social in one way or another. An 'excessive subjectivity' is always 'exceeding' some local context from which it develops a universal subjectivity beyond interest, such as equality. It is often affirmed by mass popular struggle, as Fanon had noted of national consciousness in Algeria in the 1950s. The crucial point is to emphasise the fact that the complex relations between the socially objective and

the subjective are not to be reduced to an 'expressive' relation. It may be 'expressive' or 'excessive' or both; this is particularly common in periods of mass popular political upsurge such as during the 1980s in South Africa or recently in Egypt.

Political subjectivities based on interest (identity) are clearly the most common as interest governs most of life in society. But the more political subjectivities begin to exceed identity, the more possibility it is for them to take on an emancipatory content, although of course this is never guaranteed. A politics of excess is always founded on universal principles, and appeals to a register which concerns humanity in general, for example the following statement by Toussaint L'Ouverture in 1801:

> It is not a circumstantial freedom given as a concession to us alone which we require, but the adoption of the absolute principle that any man born red, black or white cannot be the property of his fellow man (Toussaint L'Ouverture cit., Aimé Césaire 1981:278, my translation)

Edward Saïd (1993:280) has rightly noted that according to C.L.R. James's account, Toussaint:

> appropriates the principles of the Revolution not as a Black man but as a human, and he does so with a dense historical awareness of how in finding the language of Diderot, Rousseau, and Robespierre one follows predecessors creatively, using the same words, employing inflections that transformed rhetoric into actuality.

We can therefore see how identity is transcended in emancipatory political sequences. On the other hand, all struggles for inclusion within the existing system or for a greater share of resources for a particular group are identity politics. There is no normative statement intended here. These may include struggles for (justifiable) increases in wages as well as (unjustifiable) nationalist demands for xenophobic exclusion. One example, worthwhile mentioning is the recent Marikana moment of worker rebellion in South Africa which arguably was constituted by both expressive politics (e.g., a wage demand) and excessive politics (workers can organise themselves independently of union and party representation).[21]

In addition, the expressive and the excessive mutually condition each other, making subjectivity even more complex to understand. The rapidity with which a political subjectivity of non-racialism in the 1980s was replaced by a politics of xenophobia and exclusion from the early 1990s in South Africa may be illustrative of this. It is also worth noting that it is only through the exceptional subjectivity characterised by excess over place that the 'normal' or 'habitual' can be fully understood. For example, there is no way that slavery could be properly understood

in the absence of the subjectivity of freedom enacted by the slaves of San Domingo/Haiti. At that time, as Trouillot (1995) has pointed out, the existing conceptions of freedom simply could not make sense of those events, a fact which points to some of the limits of Enlightenment thought. When today Abahlali baseMjondolo say that they are not taken seriously as citizens by constituted power in and out of the state, when they say that there is no freedom for the poor and all they experience is 'unfreedom', they should be listened to so that we do not make the same mistakes as the Enlightenment thinkers did and limit freedom to narrow parameters defined by power.

From Thinking Political Identities to Re-Thinking Freedom

Central to my argument has been the idea of a notion of alternative politics of emancipation – of freedom – being necessarily a politics 'at a distance' from the state, at a distance from identity because the latter simply embodies the former. It is on an elaboration and clarification of this notion that I wish to conclude.

From within the Marxist tradition, it was Lenin who addressed the most forcefully the issue of identifying the subjectivity of popular movements and its limits. It is useful to begin from Lenin's formulations in order to transcend them. For Lenin, trade union (and by extension social movement) politics were restricted to representing a particular interest in the division of labour, i.e., an identity as we would say today. A universal politics – one with universal appeal because it addresses all forms of state oppression – could only be developed from within a party. Such an emancipatory politics were to be social democratic politics which confront the oppressive system of capitalism as such and all its ramifications represented by the state. The excessive feature of politics (over identity) for Lenin consists precisely in this excess over the particular interests of the division of labour as expressed by social movements. Hence for him, the party which is national (in the first instance and then international) enables a politics of excess over the particularity of workers' identitarian interests and the 'leadership' of the people as a whole in their struggle for freedom.

Workers are socially located; the proletariat on the other hand is a political subject with a universal subjectivity. Constituting the proletariat as a subject is a political process which can only be undertaken by a party opposed to the whole existing order; therefore such subjectivity could not be 'spontaneous' in Lenin's terms. The party is founded on a sophisticated division of labour and made up of professionals (professional

revolutionaries) not amateur part-time 'craftsmen' of politics. Following Karl Kautsky, politics is thought of as brought from the outside into the workers' movement (Lenin 1902:78-9). 'Trade unionist politics of the working-class is precisely *bourgeois politics* of the working class' (p.83, *emphasis in original*) – today we would say a form of state politics – because of the fact that they are limited by 'spontaneity' which only represents the particularities of the division of labour – i.e. identities in today's parlance. The political subject – i.e., the proletariat which equals workers imbued with social-democratic consciousness – is produced for Lenin only via a party (Lih 2008). The party is the condition for this subjectification, it both represents class interests and also transforms the objective class into a subjective political agent; there is no Hegelian 'class in itself/class for itself' formulation here. Such a party can only be a political vanguard and lead 'the assault on the government *in the name of the entire people*' (Lenin 1902:89, *emphasis added*) if it develops independent positions on all the issues of the day. In this way a clear 'proletarian' class politics can be demarcated from those of all other classes and such politics can provide 'leadership' to the whole people against oppression. The social-democratic organizer then should not be emulating a 'trade-union secretary but the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression...' (p. 80).

What can be retained from this argument is the particularistic character of social movements (and all organisations of civil society, including NGOs etc.) and the identity politics derived therefrom. Movements normally engage in identity politics, there is no excess over interest or place in an identity politics of interest expressing the social division of labour. Emancipatory politics of necessity must transcend identity politics. Parties, of course, are concerned with attaining state power; that excess over identity which they propose does not, however, consist of an excess over state politics and thought, for they too represent interests, in the case of the RSDLP, those of the proletariat according to Lenin. For Lenin then, and to use contemporary language, party politics is expressive of class interests in 'political society' ('the political'), i.e., within the state, social movements, represent interests within 'civil society' where particularisms dominate. The subjective conditions of existence of parties are then state politics – a politics which is concerned precisely with exclusively thinking interests, identities and differences. It follows that parties cannot overcome identities but are fed by them for the state sees itself as the only national universal and sees parties as interest-bearing. At most, the state can only think a national identity, not

an egalitarian universal subjectivity. The notion of an egalitarian state is an oxymoron. State parties (or party-states) do not overcome the problem of excess over interest.

This is precisely what Fanon notes immediately after independence in Africa when he observes the subjective change from pan-Africanism to national chauvinism. The collapse of nationalism into a statist project is accounted for by Fanon with reference primarily to the collapse of liberatory pan-Africanism – 'African unity, that vague formula, yet one to which the men and women of Africa were passionately attached' (Fanon 1990:128) – into a vulgar xenophobic chauvinism after independence, thus: 'we observe a permanent see-saw between African unity which fades quicker and quicker into the mists of oblivion and a heartbreaking return to chauvinism in its most bitter and detestable form' (p.126). The reason for this process is to be found, for Fanon primarily (but not exclusively), in the politics of economic interest expressed by the national bourgeoisie who wish to move into the posts and the businesses vacated by the departing Europeans. As a result, they assert a form of nationalism based on race and indigeneity in order to exclude; their concern is with access to resources, and a claim to indigeneity is, from their perspective, the only legitimate way of privately accessing such resources ('indigenization'). Fanon notes that 'the racial prejudice of the young national bourgeoisie is a racism of defence, based on fear' (p.131). In any case, whether the concern is accumulation or whether it is asserting a 'narrow' racially-based nationalism (p.131), 'the sole slogan of the bourgeoisie is "Replace the foreigner!"' (p.127). As a result:

> The working class of the towns, the masses of the unemployed, the small artisans and craftsmen for their part line up behind this nationalist attitude; but in all justice let it be said, they only follow in the steps of their bourgeoisie. If the national bourgeoisie goes into competition with the Europeans, the artisans and craftsmen start a fight against non-national Africans… the foreigners are called to leave; their shops are burned, their street stalls are wrecked… (1990:125).

The nation now refers to something else than a purely popular subjective affirmation; it refers to a social category founded on indigeneity. Who is and who is not an Algerian, a Ghanaian, an Ivorian, now becomes defined in terms of a state politics founded on emphasising indigeneity: birth, descent, history, race or ethnicity. We should note then that it is not simply a class politics which is at stake here, one representing economic interest, but more broadly a politics associated with ascribing the nation to an objective social category of the indigenous; a politics concerned with maintaining

divisions, hierarchies and boundaries: in sum a state politics. It is thus the state which defines the nation in social terms and which is unable to sustain a purely affirmative politics. The nation is now a representation, no longer a presentation. At the same time, it becomes apparent that this statist way of defining the nation is gradually naturalised in thought, as given by history and communitarian 'belonging' (birth, descent, etc). Yet it should be abundantly clear not only that it is the effect of a state form of politics but that such naturalisation is made possible by its social imbeddedness; for it is impossible to naturalise the purely subjective without first locating it in the social, without objectifying it.

In sum then, if an emancipatory politics is again to become thinkable, we must be prepared to move beyond some of the cherished assumptions of the social sciences. In particular, we need to supplement existing analyses of subjectivity as representing social place with an understanding of a politics of excess – in other words, with a politics which transcends the representation of interests as reflected in identities and as reproduced by state politics. Of course, such excessive politics are exceptional; they are not the habitual state of affairs. But in order to think emancipation we need to think beyond the habitual. Political subjectivities, from an emancipatory perspective, must be understood in their own terms as such excess is not reducible to social categories, but is only the product of reason. In this manner a process of subjectivation can be recognised and studied rather than simply assuming that all political subjectivity is simply reflective of the social. For this reason, among others, the social sciences have, in Rancière's terms, spoken for those who do not speak. For Rancière, it is precisely from the practical exception that one must begin if one wishes to understand political subjectivities, for it is such exceptions which show that people speak for themselves, contrary to much social science which sees itself as speaking for people who do not speak for themselves:

> The normal is when people remain in their place and when it all continues as before. Nevertheless everything of note in the history of humanity functions according to the principle that something happens, that people begin to speak.... If we are speaking of the 'workers' voice', we speak from the point of people who speak. That seems to be a truism. Yet it is contrary to a certain scientific method which requires that when we speak of the voice of the people, we are speaking of those who do not speak ... the point essentially is to speak for those who do not speak. This is as a much a strategy of top politicians as it is of historians or sociologists, to say that the voice which counts is the voice of those who do not speak. (Rancière 2012:194, *my translation*).

Of course, an excessive politics (an excessive subjectivity) is rare and always excessive over something with the result that a politics expressive of interest and an excessive politics always mutually condition each other, one could say in a dialectical way. But if we are to understand that what people fight for is their dignity as human beings and not simply their economic interests, then we must as social scientists begin to listen when people speak and to understand that when they do they do not simply reflect their place, but that they sometimes speak 'out of place' for they are capable of thought. 'To redefine a universe of possibilities is *in fine* to re-insert the possible into the real, to subtract from the idea of necessity' (Rancière 2012:258, *my translation*).

We need, therefore, to make speech visible when it occurs; we need to open up theoretical space. If the excessive is inexistent or minimal, only the expressive of the social is visible and appears as reflecting the phenomena in existence. For this subjectivity, what exists is the only thing which can exist, real change and equality are impossible, only some forms of 'evolution – progress, development, modernization – are possible as the habitual regularisation of social hierarchies by the state remains. With the inclusion of the excess, of the exceptional – when it exists – the extant, the expressive, the habitual becomes visible for what it is: only one possibility among many at the end of a continuum of possibilities which exceed it to various extents. We need to think a Pan-Africanism of peoples, not a 'Pan-Africanism of states' (which is also an oxymoron!), a non-identitarian Pan-Africanism 'at a distance' from the state – i.e., in excess of state thinking. After all, it was this kind of Pan-Africanism which was at the foundation of popular nationalisms on the continent.

Notes

1. This article is culled from my forthcoming book: *Thinking Freedom in Africa: subjective excess, historical sequences and emancipatory politics* to be published by UKZN Press.
2. The only significant theorist to have drawn a parallel between South Africa and North Africa I know of was Mahmood Mamdani in *Pambazuka News*, see Mamdani (2011b).
3. For those who may be tempted to believe that Hegel's views of Africans may no longer be in vogue, I can only refer to the outrageously patronising speech which ex-President Sarkozy of France delivered on the 26 July 2007 in Dakar, Senegal and the reactions which followed, for the details of which see Ndiaye, ed.), 2008. Inter alia, he says (p.80): 'The drama of Africa consists in the fact that African Man did not sufficiently enter history' (i.e. that of humanity).

4 In this context it seems to me that the common reference to 'the colonial subject' is an oxymoron. It is largely an absurdity as the colonial state (and indeed neo-colonialism today), to use an Althusserian expression, did not and could not 'interpellate' the colonised as subjects, but only as non-subjects or partial subjects (sub-humans, children, victims, etc). In the (neo-) colonial context, full subjecthood has only been acquired through opposition to such interpellation, through exceeding this subjectively.

5. Lukas Khamisi was the collective pseudonym for some participants in the Dar-es-Salaam debate.

6. The studies of these issues in Africa are numerous but see in particular those published under the auspices of the *Nordic Africa Institute* in Uppsala, Sweden in the 1990s and by CODESRIA into the twenty-first century up to the present which have been of high academic quality. The fact that these studies rarely questioned capitalism itself but only its neo-liberal form is probably best summed up in Mkandawire's (2001) contention that Africa can indeed develop under capitalism (or Mbeki's - the second South African president – assertion that Africa can and should appropriate modernity, presumably in the manner his own country has with half of its population living in poverty). Insofar as an alternative was proposed in this literature it was one which argued for a state and a form of capitalism more responsive to the national interest and for a form of democracy which should be more inclusive. The problem to be noted here is not whether or not African economies can develop under capitalism, after all the connection between capitalism and Europe has been definitely and permanently broken with the rise of China, India and Brazil as global economic powers; rather, the horizon of thought in these instances is unjustifiably restrictive to say the least because popular nationalism was always associated with the idea of emancipation, and if only one thing is clear it is that capitalism is the core obstacle to human emancipation.

7. Writing in the early 1990s Claude Ake contended that there were 'several democracies vying for preferment in a struggle whose outcome is as yet uncertain' (2003:127); by the mid-1990s, the nature of democracy was no longer the object of contestation as it had become solidified as a form of parliamentary state.

8. The discipline of Anthropology was not considered in this context, being anathema to radical nationalist intellectual discourse given its erstwhile association with colonialism especially in Anglophone Africa.

9. Mamdani's work has concentrated overwhelmingly on the state construction of ethnic identities which he sees as structurally determined; see for example his analysis of the problems of the DRC in *Pambazuka News*, (2011a). More recently, since his return to Uganda, his writing has arguably been less structuralist and more located and sensitive to the need for popular struggles which eschew the taking of state power (Mamdani, 2012).

10. References are too numerous to cite here. It will suffice to note the scholarly work on social movements emanating from the democratic struggles of the 1980s on the continent such as Mamdani, Mkandawire and Wamba-dia-Wamba (1995), Ake (2003), Chole and Ibrahim (1995).

11. Again the list is a long one but one can refer to the works of Appiah, Mbembe, Mudimbe and so on.
12. The idea of 'African personality' has been associated with Senghor. In this regard it is interesting to peruse the collection of nationalist writings edited in the mid-1970s by Mutiso and Rohio, 1975.
13. See the Comaroffs (2006) who mention the controlling function of bureaucracy through the medium of human rights discourse but put this down to 'neo-liberalism' or 'postcoloniality' rather than to democracy as such.
14. Abahlali baseMjondolo are the organisation of shack-dwellers which began in Durban, South Africa. See their website www.abahlali.org
15. It is important to note that in our current world sequence there is no 'relative autonomy' to speak of between class interests and the state. The fact that banks get millions pumped into them even though they are the originators of a world crisis is one example; others are that private accumulation is said to be in the national interest and the boundary between economic interest and state position is often impossible to ascertain within so-called democratic states in Africa and elsewhere.
16. Marx puts this point as follows in his analysis of the Paris Commune: 'The Commune ... was to serve as a lever for the uprooting of the economical foundations upon which rests the existence of classes, and therefore of class rule. With labour emancipated every man becomes a working man, and productive labour ceases to be a class attribute' (Marx 1871:72).
17. See Weber, 1970.
18. See in this context Etienne Balibar's *La crainte des masses* (1996) which tries to deal with the insufficiencies of the Marxist theory of ideology in understanding political subjectivity in life.
19. Lindela is the detention centre outside Johannesburg where migrants to South Africa are kept before repatriation.
20. See Guha, 1992a, 1992b; James, 2001, Fick, 1992, 2000.
21. I discuss this episode in South Africa in chapter 4 of my forthcoming book.

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The Concept of Innovation and the South African Nation

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Abstract

This article follows the birth of the South African nation and how it intersects with the emergence of evolutionary economics as a major academic paradigm. It also recounts virtually all the significant historical phases of South African politics, ideological configuration and industrial development up to the emergence of the knowledge economy. Some of these phases include the segregationist period, the apartheid regime and the current democratic era.

Resumé

Cet article fait suite à la naissance de la nation sud-africaine et montre le croisement avec l'émergence de l'économie évolutive comme un paradigme universitaire majeur. Il raconte également de façon virtuelle presque toutes les phases historiques importantes de la politique sud-africaine, la configuration idéologique et le développement industriel jusqu'à l'émergence de l'économie du savoir. Certaines de ces phases comprennent la période ségrégationniste, le régime de l'apartheid et l'ère démocratique en cours.

When established disciplinary schools of thought gradually begin to lose relevance and finally experience decisive anomalous moments as in the manner of Kuhnian ruptures, the result is a renewed intellectual excitement as new paradigms and new ways of perception are being countenanced. An example of this is when neoclassical economics as an established paradigm in economics reached a certain theoretical-empirical impasse and consequently became more accepting of alternative paradigms.

Mario Scerri's *The Evolution of the South African System of Innovation Since 1916* traces the moment when neoclassical economics lost critical valence through the espousal of the concept of innovation as a way of assessing economic performance. There is a hint of this condition

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in Robert Solow's neoclassical growth theory (1956) but the actual predictive instantiations of growth through technological innovation remains a 'black box' issue. This would be viewing Scerri's work from a strictly economic point of view. However, this would also prove to be a partial reading of it because Scerri's analyses are obviously much broader and deeper than this narrow view suggests. Just as we witness the emergence of innovation-systems approach as a credible intellectual paradigm, other interesting historical periods are meticulously revealed – namely, the segregationist era of South African nation-building, the apartheid regime, the extensive waves of industrialisation that occurred during the Second World War, the gradual and excruciating erosion of apartheid and, finally, the emergence of the idea of an implementable democracy. In addressing these various major historical events and eras, Scerri had to reach beyond the strictures of conventional economics into tropes of historiography, sociology and political economy. As mentioned earlier, this book is an interesting analysis of how the South African nation came to be, the wrong turns its rulers took at certain significant points, the often awful consequences of those ill-conceived decisions, and myriad other details concerning the critical phases of nation-building processes in South Africa.

From the context of Mario Scerri's work, I trace the vicissitudes of the South African national system of innovation beginning from the segregationist period through the apartheid era, the different waves of industrialisation, the professionalisation of research and development activities, the weakening of apartheid by successive outbreaks of internal revolts and rounds of international condemnation, and through the advent of South African democracy. So what is being recounted is not merely a history of national systems of innovation but also the witnessing of an often problematic yet arresting birth of a modern nation.

Before providing a reading of Scerri's work, it would be necessary to provide a sketch, however brief, of the intellectual background of the concept of innovation. First of all, it is important to stress that the innovation-systems approach is precisely that and not a full-blown theory. It is also pertinent to note that it is largely embedded within the neoliberal/ neoclassical paradigm of heterodox economics. Yet it may be argued that the limitations of neoclassical economics lie in its inability to account for rapid technological transformation or processes of innovation.

In addressing the shortcomings of neoclassical economics, Joseph Schumpeter (1942) aved the way for the establishment of evolutionary economics by drawing on perspectives from economic history, statistics,

economic theory and economic sociology (Anderson 1993), and which attempt to explain innovation and technological change. In more ways than one, Schumpeter is more important to the twentieth century preoccupation with innovation as a viable economic concept than perhaps even Karl Marx. This is because rather than just land, labour and capital as the key variables, technological change has become an integral part of economic growth and development. Schumpeter also introduced some key concepts in the study of evolutionary economics such as Walrasian equilibrium which describes a state of stasis within an economy devoid of innovative dynamics.

Other authors such as Richard Nelson and Sidney Winter (1982), and Christopher Freeman (1982, 1987, 1991) Bengt-Ake Lundvall (1992, 2004) and Francois Chesnais (1997) have further explored the concept of innovation as a major variable in explaining economic growth and technological development.

Neoclassical economics encountered a crisis when it could not account for the impressive leaps made by the Japanese post-war economy. Gradually, after the Second World War, economic orthodoxy was considered to be inadequate in explaining the sources and motivations behind economic change. Furthermore, neoclassical economics was inept in accounting for the dynamics underpinning technological development. This paved the way for the study of systems of innovation. Scerri is not concerned with 'the actual inventions or innovations developed or adopted in South Africa since 1916' (Scerri:10). Rather he examines the institutional environment in which innovation occurred in the country. And, needless to add, that environment is quite remarkable.

Scerri defines the new field thus:

> National systems of innovation can be loosely defined as networks of institutions within the borders established by nation states which determine the economy's ability to develop and to absorb innovations. These systems are postulated on the basic assumption that technology and innovation, which are defined to include the rules and practices which govern problem solving within a specific social context, are to a significant extent tacit and hence imperfectly transferable across societal and national boundaries (3).

Scerri agrees that there are several definitions of the concept of innovation. However, through academic explorations of the concept, it has become fairly accepted that tacit knowledge plays an important role in establishing systems of innovation and that most nations have rather idiosyncratic histories of development and economic change. Also,

technological capabilities are usually local in nature and thus not often neatly transferable. Accordingly, Scerri points out that 'the analysis of national systems of innovation is thus an attempt to map out the web of complex institutional relationships that constitute and determine the context within which a nation's "stock" of technological capabilities and the consequent nodes core competences are shaped' (ibid:22). Having proffered conceptual vistas by which the study of innovation can be approached, Scerri explains that it is necessary to establish taxonomic grids that are both historically specific and globally legible. He captures this himself more vividly: 'A taxonomy which has no reference to the evolution of particular systems would be a woefully sterile analytical device while a historical analysis which ignored commonly used definitions and measures would be so specific as to divest itself of a (global) context wherein it can become legible' (ibid:23).

There are many definitions of innovation some of which are quite broad. Innovation refers to both institutional and technological changes which are novel. Furthermore, they may occur within or outside of research and development (R&D) contexts. R&D is definitely important to the concept of innovation for obvious reasons. In this instance, knowledge spillovers and how the impact on innovative practices in a range of different contexts such as 'government institutions and tertiary education institutions, and transnational information flows' (ibid:30) provide a reliable indication of how contemporary stocks of knowledge are constituted. R&D activity also demonstrates how this spectrum of institutions behaves in attempting to amass and utilise emergent stocks of knowledge. For instance, 'a low level of appropriateness might therefore make it worthwhile for the average firm to let others bear the (often high) initial costs of exploratory research and then to imitate the resulting innovation' (ibid.). Institutions themselves are influenced in both profound and subtle ways by innovative processes occurring within and around them. There are often unstated rules and expectations underpinning the more clearly expressed objectives of institutions which go a long way in determining their *modus operandi*. Institutions also exhibit distinctive behavioural patterns as when the Japanese corporation model favours a lifelong hiring policy while the American model follows the practice of 'hire and fire'. The radical Japanese departure from the American model in fact constitutes what Scerri calls a 'techno-economic paradigm shift' (ibid:57). This radical innovation in institutional function is akin to Kuhnian ruptures in the fields of science and knowledge (Kuhn 1970a;1970b).

When innovative developments occur, new power configurations within an institution emerge while older ones may whittle away depending on the play of forces. Or sometimes, old power constellations are merely reinforced. Accordingly, 'a system of innovation may be identified by its topography of diverse "knowledge stocks", a mapping of the concentrations of power, of the distribution of knowledge and of the relationships between the various power/knowledge nodes' (Scerri:37).

Indeed, a sort of Darwinism is evident in the play of power within institutions. However, it ought to be noted that a measure of stability in required for institutions, systems or even state structures to reproduce themselves. This tendency towards reproduction refers to the process of ideological legitimation which goes hand-in-hand with patterns of socialisation. As such, there is a constant tension between the drive to innovate within institutions and the conservative tendency for them to attain the stability required to reproduce themselves. So far, we have been examining how institutions operate in relation to the concept of innovation. However, to apprehend the even broader concept of the national system of innovation, it is necessary to note that this entails a conscious level of integration among the different components of the national policy framework. Scerri indicates that the concept can be problematic: 'The very breadth of the concept of national system of innovation can easily become the source of its most damaging critique. The plethora of determinants which are tossed into this cauldron and the definitional elasticity of technological capabilities can cover just about every aspect of the development paths nations can take. Thus it may be argued that this catch-all term becomes theoretically meaningless and analytically void (ibid:63). This is the same sort situation that placed development economics in a less privileged position in relation to mainstream theory. The innovation systems approach, on its part, has managed to disengage itself from contestations with neoclassical economics regarding its theoretical suitability and instead focused on deepening its own conceptual field. Scerri reveals that, 'the concept of an innovation system has, since the nineties, moved from the fringe of economic theory towards the centre, especially with the introduction of innovation surveys' (ibid:64). This would appear to place it in a better position than development economics.

There is another very important angle to the study of innovation – which is technology. Scerri avers that, 'technological capabilities can be broadly defined as the capacity to innovate and utilise innovations', and there are 'two components of this capacity on the basis of the roots of the word technology- the *techni* and the *logi,* the mastery of the "how" and the "why" of a technology' (ibid:21).

Having explored what the concept of innovation entails let us now consider how it plays out in South Africa beginning from the early twentieth century. In 1918, the Scientific and Technical Committee was merged with the Industries Advisory Board to form the Advisory Board of Industry and Science. This amalgamation, Scerri points out, marks 'the first attempt to establish a *planned* system of innovation' (ibid:110). Germany, during the First World War, had demonstrated what could be achieved if the technological capabilities of a nation are well harnessed to attain dominance in a number of different spheres of activity such as war and economic performance. Germany had also managed to evolve a national system in which human capital could be developed from infancy to the highest levels of academic performance via an elaborate system of training institutions for all grades and for a wide range of national objectives. South Africa, during that period, was impressed with the German achievement and a couple of key South African leaders sought to replicate the German success, at least, in some kind of form. In this regard, a couple of notable South Africans should be mentioned: Jan Smuts and H.J. van der Bijl. Smuts was a scientist and van der Bijl was a technologist and both qualifications would eventually prove to be decisive when science and technology objectives would be combined with an industrial development policy outlook to produce an early instance of a national system of innovation framework.

Jan Smuts was an interesting if rather curious figure. He was a 'Boer war hero' and a veritable 'icon of Afrikanerdom'. He was also a practitioner of geopolitics in addition to being an internationalist. However, he was intolerant of any form of opposition which he duly stamped out. He became the Minister of Mines and supported foreign capitalist interests over his white Afrikaner kin. Scerri captures some of his contradictions; 'Smut, the traitor to his own people in the service of the British Empire, was also the supporter of mining capital against the proletariat – white workers in the twenties and black workers in the forties' (Ibid:101). In spite of all this, Smuts had the strong intention of leading South Africa into an assembly of nations that was at the vanguard of modernity and scientific and technological progress. He was prepared to found the institutions to pursue this aspiration. He was also willing to identify and enlist individuals who supported his vision. Smuts was aware that being at the vanguard of modernity and economic progress did not only entail the acquisition of technological prowess but also necessitated political maturity in the form of democracy. Here, another contradiction in the implementation of policy became evident as South Africa operated a segregationist economy based on racial difference. Smuts was able to pursue his objectives when he became prime minister in 1919.

The following year, H.J. van der Bijl was made Scientific and Technical Advisor to Government. In fact, at this stage, South Africa relied mainly on agriculture and the mining sector which provided few opportunities for technological innovations. In 1923, van der Bijl oversaw the establishment of the Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM), as he believed that one of the surest ways to industrialisation and economic growth was through the availability of cheap and reliable sources of electricity. He is also credited with formulating South Africa's first national system of innovation policy framework.

Van der Bijl did not believe extractable mineral resources constituted the only way to economic advancement and sought to diversify South Africa's development path through a more solid reliance on the gains of science and technology. However, van der Bijl was compelled to function under a segregationist paradigm that offered a severely diminished role to blacks within the political economy of the nation. Van der Bijl who also became Director-General of War Supplies established the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in 1945 with a view to narrowing the industrial gap between South Africa and the industrialised nations. The CSIR's operational mandate included overseeing R&D activities in governmental institutions and parastatal bodies; undertaking basic and applied research in relation to natural resources and industry; facilitating the involvement of the private sector in prioritised research programmes; developing skilled scientific human capital with a variety of instruments involving material support and also paving the way for career advancement; collating and disseminating the latest knowledge on science and technology coming from abroad; and establishing scientific missions in foreign countries to participate in collaborative research projects.

However, the social sciences and agriculture were not included in its sphere of activities. Eventually, the CSIR's capacity to function as an R&D coordinating body atrophied as a result of counterproductive apartheid policies. The institution's ability to coordinate R&D programmes on a national scale was severely undermined and it also lacked the capacity to embark upon long-term strategic planning which is vital for a viable national system of innovation policy framework. During the apartheid regime, the CSIR experienced an emasculation of its functional roles and its institutional power. Scerri writes; 'the control exerted by central government over the CSIR led to an amplification of bureaucratic norms and structures which progressively restrained the public planning and advisory role of the institution and transformed it into an executor of a largely pre-ordained and fragmentary state policy'(ibid:162). The Ministry of Economic Affairs

became the overseeing ministry for the institution and it became like any other civil service department with the same kind of salary structure. This resulted in acute brain drain as the most enterprising scientists left for better conditions in the private sector or abroad. There occurred a pronounced constriction of its institutional voice which further constrained its ability to undertake its original mandate. The progressive whittling away of the CSIR's functions continued with the establishment of the Scientific Advisory Council in 1962. Towards the end of the apartheid regime in 1986, it became apparent that the CSIR had failed to achieve the aims of its mission statement and a drastic re-organisation of the institution was deemed necessary and this occurred in the following year (Basson 1996). Apart from suffering from chronic institutional stasis, the institution was also plagued by crippling operational myopia, unattractive salary scales, pervasive underfunding, poorly conceived research objectives as well as the entanglements of various research programmes thereby occluding proper strategic planning. Even before this severe regression of the CSIR, Margaret Ballinger had noticed discrepancies in its mission statement. First, she observed that there was an absence of a social and economic research component within the CSIR's terms of reference. She also noticed that the development of human capital did not seem to play a central role the CSIR's strategic plan. This lack would have considerable consequences on the nation's absorptive capacity of new technological developments. It would also impact negatively on organisational and managerial profiles and techniques. And finally, the combination of these two negative consequences would affect the nation's ability to compete favourably in global markets. In addition, she also predicted that the country's internal segregated markets were totally counter-productive to the development of a self-sustaining economy and she also criticised the policy of gradualism favoured by the segregationist administration. Needless to add, Ballinger's insightful observations were largely unheeded. The CSIR's role in directing the country's system of innovation consequently diminished due, in part, to its truncated mission statement and also the failure to heed critical observations such as Ballinger's.

The segregationist economy that operated in South Africa during the early stages of the twentieth century employed two crucial legislative instruments to enforce its functioning, namely: the *Native Labour Regulation Act* of 1911 which more or less reduced the status of the black worker to that of a serf and the *Native Lands Act* of 1913 which divested blacks of prime land. In this manner, blacks were viewed as a 'non-human resource' with the contradictory effect of constraining national economic development and also introducing a monopsonistic element to the economy of South Africa.

Before the formal establishment of apartheid in 1948, the government of Smuts and Hofmeyr pursued a policy of gradualism (which Margaret Ballinger criticised) on the question of racial segregation. The African National Congress (ANC) under the leadership of A.B. Xuma had tendered a Bill of Rights in support of universal suffrage to the government in 1943 which the government rejected. Instead the government pushed for a programme of separate development for blacks. But as Ballinger (1969) had powerfully argued, the maintenance of a policy of separate development, on the one hand, and the pursuit of national economic growth, on the other, were a contradiction in terms. Given the global situation at the time and subsequently, it would have been impossible to continue to aspire towards economic pre-eminence which the government wished, while, at the same time, enforcing a policy of racial segregation within the political economy of South Africa. When this was pointed out to the government, gradualism was adopted. In time, as the country's economy diversified from a reliance on the mining sector and agricultural production towards the activities of secondary industries, it became obvious that there was an acute shortage of skills and technological know-how in the human capital base of the population to support a waxing industrialisation drive.

Instead of switching to a policy of de-segregation as underscored by the logic of capital and industrialisation, apartheid was instituted in 1948. Apartheid has been correctly defined as a predatory state in which 'the two groups that have been identified as the *protégés* of the predatory state are whites as a unified racial group and capitalists as a class, excluding the possible participation of black capitalists' (Scerri 2009:72). This particular social and economic configuration has led to the dominance of the race/class contestation in South African economic history as Scerri informs us. Scerri also argues that there was a marked difference between the segregationist period and the introduction of full-fledged apartheid, as the latter embraced, in a more brazen manner, an evidently anti-modern ethos. As such, the national system of innovation that evolved under apartheid was largely defined by its unabashed retrogressive characteristic.

Due to apartheid's contrarian position to the winds of liberation and democratisation engulfing other parts of the world, the immediate problem facing the enforcers of the regime was its long-term sustainability. The apartheid regime was buffeted with surges of internal protests just as the international anti-apartheid movement gained vocal and political strength. Scerri writes:

> the advent of oil crisis in the early seventies, combined with a resurgence of widespread mass protest and the increasing effectiveness of the international anti-apartheid, marked the start of a crisis, economic as well as political, which was to become endemic to the polity. The eighties saw the escalating crisis of faith in the sustainability of apartheid within the ruling establishment itself, with often erratic and invariably doomed attempts to reform some part or other of an apartheid machinery that was increasingly being seen as obsolete (ibid:149).

A major way the apartheid regime attempted to boost its lifespan was by co-opting blacks to form bantustans which were to become self-sustaining homelands based on ethnic affinity. During the seventies and the eighties, quite a number of *bantustans* were created by the apartheid administration. They were Transkei (Xhosa), Bophuthatswana (Tswana), Venda (Venda), Ciskei (Xhosa), Gazankulu (Tsonga/Shangaan), KaNgwane (Swazi), KwaNdebele (Ndebele), KwaZulu (Zulu), Lebowa (Northern Sotho or Pedi) and QwaQwa (Southern Sotho). These so-called homelands which were meant to support the apartheid illusion that separate development was both possible and self-sustaining were in fact bastions of inefficiency and corruption but the regime preferred to ignore these ills. The creation of the *bantustans* is directly related to an elaborate project of ghettoisation of blacks in general. The *Bantu Education Act* of 1953 and the *Extension of University Bill* of 1957 were unambiguous instruments to legitimate the inferiorisation of blacks in which case they could not aspire beyond a certain prescribed ceiling under the apartheid system of racial stratification. In addition, blacks were compelled to follow prescribed 'syllabi, examinations, hiring practices and administrative and financial control along racial demarcation lines' (ibid:174). The incessant inferiorisation of blacks was in turn encoded within the educational system and in discourses affirming white superiority. This, therefore, justified the brutal economic exploitation of blacks. Eventually, the policies of inferiorisation enforced by the apartheid regime ended up subverting it. This was because after a certain point, the country's internal markets could not support economic growth. Also, there was an anomalous skills shortage when there were 'techno-economic paradigm shifts' as a result of the microelectronics revolution.

The apartheid regime in the face of mounting internal and external opposition embarked on a quest to achieve the diversification of the economy through industrialisation. It also sought to become self-sufficient in as many economic spheres as possible. But the drive to attain higher levels of industrialisation was undermined by acute skills

constraints. The oil crisis of the seventies further weakened the South African economy and on the political front, the regime became even more vulnerable as a result of the 1976 Soweto riots. As the isolation of the apartheid regime deepened it also became more militarised and as such, was able to create a military-industrial complex which became a key component of the national system of innovation. The military-industrial complex maintained a paradoxical posture of shoving the country towards modernity while it was mired in an anachronistic political landscape. In addition, 'the weapons sector is not an appropriate vehicle for overall industrial development because of its limited spillover benefits and its drain on the fiscus' (ibid:192). So just as the regime faced severe crises on the political front from both internal and external factors, it also had to contend with an unsupportable economic foundation which ultimately proved deleterious to its hopes for industrial development.

When the centrifugal forces which were beginning to pull the apartheid regime from its core tenets became too much to bear, it commenced on a process to negotiate its exit. As a result, between 1991 and 1994, there was a suspension of strategic economic planning in the nation's agenda. And so, the national system of innovation inherited by the post-apartheid democratic dispensation was largely an unreconstructed model. The primary task for the incoming ANC administration would be to fashion a new framework that would address the generations of skewed development and also the enormous human capital challenges. During that period, there was a contestation between adopting a Keynesian interventionist paradigm and a neoliberal approach to national development. Eventually, a neoliberal route was taken as enshrined in the *Growth, Employment and Redistribution: a Macroeconomic Strategy* (GEAR) White Paper of 1996. Many reasons have been adduced for the ANC administration's choice. First, the collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in a new era of capitalist triumphalism. In addition, the administration apparently did not possess the requisite skills at the time to grapple with the technical and intellectual niceties of its choice. In other words, there were severe limitations in its decision-making processes. When a review of GEAR was conducted in 2001, it was agreed that even though there had been some gains in area of maintaining fiscal discipline, there had been no fundamental transformation of the economic base of the country and the chronic problem of unemployment had worsened along with the attendant challenges of poverty. Accordingly, it was noted that 'the persistent levels of unemployment are largely due to the inherited shortage of human capital, a shortage that has not been significantly addressed,

in combination with an economic structure which has little absorptive capacity for low and unskilled labour' (ibid:217).

In essence, GEAR had failed to meet the country's development objectives. The human capital constraint remained intractable and in 2006 the *Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition* was established. The Thabo Mbeki regime then adopted an interventionist approach to the country's myriad economic difficulties by employing a dual economy scenario. The issues of wealth redistribution and the human capital constraint again came into focus. In terms of macroeconomic strategising, the emphasis has shifted from an attention to natural resources to the knowledge economy. In order to function effectively within the knowledge economy, research and development must address the infrastructure for the acquisition of science and technology and also the spiralling problem of 'the depreciation of knowledge' (ibid:233). At the conceptual level, Scerri identifies a crucial problem currently facing development planners in South Africa;

> The single-minded drive for immediate macroeconomic stability, in terms of inflation, fiscal caution and a manageable public debt, a relatively stable export-promoting exchange rate has displaced the concern with altering the core elements of the inherently unstable innovation system inherited from apartheid. The failure to read history correctly and to distinguish between fashionable, ephemeral economic paradigms and those which were both theoretically sound and empirically validated has seriously flawed the development agenda of the democratic economy. (ibid:234).

Another issue that urgently needs to be addressed is the human capital constraint that faces the country. As mentioned earlier, there has been a shift by nations from a dependence on natural resources to the knowledge economy. In order to participate effectively in the knowledge economy, copious investments have to be made in human capital which also faces rapid rates of obsolescence as knowledge stocks depreciate.

Scerri's analyses while avoiding the dead ends of neoclassical economics, static theory and other methodologies of conventional economic theory, manage to locate other important variables necessary for explanations of growth and development such as culture, history and politics within a field of discursive interconnectedness and therefore serve as more powerful as well as convincing explanatory model. He has managed to weave together two separate and yet intimately intertwined narratives; the saga of twentieth and twenty-first century South Africa and its systems of innovation on the one hand, and the evolution of the concept of innovation within a context of paradigmatic rupture on the

other. These two distinctive narrative strands grant Scerri's work an understandable relevance beyond its original disciplinary location.

Scerri is not really interested in sprouting litanies of de-contextualised statistics as many economists are wont to do. Instead he truly wants to render a story, a narrative about the possibilities for a new economic concept couched in the tumultuous yet remarkable history of the South African nation. Of the two intersecting strands of the narrative, the innovation systems approach has arguably emerged the stronger. Scerri's account throws considerable light on significant historic developments, projects of modernity, the uses and abuses of institutions, the progressive and regressive movements of human capital, South African economic history beginning from the pre-apartheid era, through apartheid itself to its post-apartheid dispensation. Finally, we have the paradigmatic discontinuities in economic theory starting from neoclassical economics through development economics and the ascendancy of innovation systems approach. The exploration of these trajectories demonstrates why the emergence of innovation systems approach was not only desirable but also inevitable.

In the story Scerri sets out to narrate, interesting characters turn up, the plot unfolds with the rhythmic cadences and structure of an epic littered with multiple incidents of theoretical *volte face* and a dénouement that is judicious enough to avoid easy answers. Indeed, Scerri's work contains all the elements of a graphic journey in which previously repressed subjects eventually become citizens and in which a predatory state renounces its brutalising past for the unlimited euphoria and anodyne sensations of de-racialised post-apartheid rainbowism, thereby perhaps, once again, unwisely exposing itself to the bitter disappointments of history.

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