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Mouvement patriotique et construction de « l'autochtone » en Côte d'Ivoire

Karel Arnaut*

Résumé

Cet article étudie les aspects de la spatialité dans le discours et les formes d'organisation des Jeunes Patriotes en Côte d'Ivoire. Le but est de comprendre la manière dont les identités se construisent dans la communication et l'infrastructure de l'autochtonie. Il s'agit d'un article programmatique dans le cadre duquel la conception d'un schéma analytique est plus importante que l'analyse détaillée de la rhétorique et de l'organisation des Jeunes Patriotes de ces six dernières années en Côte d'Ivoire. Au centre de ce schéma analytique se trouve le concept « d'échelle » tel que développé cette dernière décennie en géographie politique et sociale. Le concept d'échelle nous permet de démontrer la flexibilité de l'autochtonie en tant qu'idéologie et de « l'autochtone » et « l'allogène » en tant qu'identités politiques. Cette souplesse est généralement considérée comme constitutive du succès de l'autochtonie comme concept post-ethnique et post-national en Afrique et ailleurs.

Abstract

This paper is a survey on space-related aspects in the speeches and ways of organisation within the movement known as 'Jeunes Patriotes en Côte d'Ivoire' (the young patriots in Côte d'Ivoire). It aims at helping to understand the way identities are built through the autochthony's communication and infrastructure. It is a programmatic paper in which the conception of an analytic sketch is more important than the detailed analysis of the rhetoric and organisation during the last six years. At the centre of that analytical sketch, there is the concept of ''scaling'', as developed during the last decade in political and social geography. The concept of 'scaling' helps us show the flexibility of autochthony as an ideology, and that of ''the autochthon'' and "the allocthone" as political identities. In general, that flexibility is seen as the basis for the success of autochthony as post-ethnic and post-national concepts in Africa and elsewhere.

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Introduction

La littérature traitant de l'autochtonie en Côte d'Ivoire a abordé de nombreuses dimensions de ce phénomène.[1] Cependant, on pourrait détecter un léger parti pris en faveur des aspects socio-économiques, idéologiques et politiques (voir Marie 2002 ; Chauveau et Bobo 2003 ; Banégas 2006, 2007 ; Marshall-Fratani 2006 ; Arnaut 2004c) et une relative négligence des dimensions religieuses, médiatiques, intellectuelles et universitaires – mais voir Dozon (2001), Théroux-Bénoni et Bahi (à paraître), Arnaut and Blommaert (à paraitre) et Arnaut (2009, à paraître). Dans cette littérature, la question de la construction identitaire reçoit l'attention qui lui est due. Si Arnaut (2004b) et Banégas (2007) insistent sur la nécessité de faire attention à l'aspect générationnel et à l'affirmation de la « jeunesse », Marshall-Fratani (2006) se concentre particulièrement sur les processus de construction identitaire, d'incertitude et de repli sur soi liés à la violence et au discours de violence qui caractérisent le conflit en cours en Côte d'Ivoire. Dans une large mesure, Marshall-Fratani (2006) développe et affine l'idée selon laquelle les identités autochtones-allochtones seraient extrêmement flexibles (Bayart ; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2001 ; Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005). C'est également le postulat de départ du présent article. Par ailleurs, nous suggérons de porter une attention ethnographique aux dynamiques complexes du soi et de l'altérité (Baumann 2004 ; Appadurai 2006) en termes de (ré-) articulations à long terme (Hall 1990 ; Li 2000). Si la plupart du temps, les dimensions temporelles de la construction identitaire sont mises en évidence, il est sans doute ironique que dans le cas des mouvements autochtonistes, les opérations spatiales présentes dans la construction identitaire suscitent moins d'intérêt (mais voir Geschiere and Gugler 1998 ; Marshall-Fratani 2006). C'est à cette question que cet article souhaite apporter une contribution.

La plupart des auteurs s'accordent pour dire que dans leurs formes récentes, « autochtones » et « allogènes » doivent être envisagés comme des identités post-ethniques voire post-nationales (Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005 ; Arnaut 2004a). Dans le cas de la Côte d'Ivoire, l'année 2000 est une année charnière. Dans le contexte de la rédaction d'une nouvelle constitution, les débats sur les conditions d'éligibilité des candidats à la présidence se sont largement répandus dans la population. Le débat selon lequel les deux parents (mère « et » père) ou seulement un des deux parents (mère « ou » père) des candidats aux élections présidentielles devaient avoir la nationalité ivoirienne s'est traduit dans la rhétorique populaire qui entendait distinguer les vrais Ivoiriens (les *« et »*) des Ivoiriens douteux (les *« ou »*) ou des faux Ivoiriens (les *« ni »*). Par la suite, après l'insurrection de septembre 2002, la polarisation lancée dans le milieu des années 1990 et formalisée par les débats

constitutionnels de 2000, était tout à coup territorialisée dans la division entre le nord aux mains des rebelles et le sud aux mains du gouvernement qui se mit à son tour à tracer clairement une opposition entre les « Nordistes » et les « Sudistes ».

En 2000 déjà, Dozon avait noté la montée du caractère post-ethnique et post-national de ces nouvelles formes d'identification en disant que depuis l'introduction de l'idéologie autochtoniste d'*Ivoirité* au milieu des années 1990, « l'akanisation » de l'identité nationale ivoirienne s'était graduellement transformée en « sudisation ».[2] Le présent article défend l'idée selon laquelle cette territorialisation de l'identité mérite d'être creusée à moins de supposer d'emblée que les « Nordistes » et les « Sudistes » sont des étiquettes identitaires monolithiques, ce qu'ils ne sont bien évidemment pas.

En tenant compte des opérations spatiales dans les constructions identitaires, nous distinguons deux dimensions importantes. La première se réfère à des espaces géographiques – comme par exemple « nord » et « sud » – en rapport desquels les identités sont construites (puisque l'identité en autochtonie est ancrée dans des espaces particuliers). La seconde dimension de spatialité dans la construction identitaire fait référence aux espaces concrets d'assemblée et de médiation – comme par exemple « La Sorbonne » – dans lesquels de nouvelles identités sont formulées et balancées dans l'espace public. Par ailleurs, cet article défend l'idée que les deux dimensions de spatialité dans la construction identitaire bénéficient largement du concept analytique « d'échelle ». L'échelle permet la déconstruction de configurations spatiales à la fois physiques, sociales et discursives, et particulièrement dans des opérations complexes qui sont le mieux décrites comme « glocales » de nature.

Le focus empirique de notre analyse de la spatialité dans la construction identitaire est constitué par les groupes de Jeunes Patriotes.[3] Pris dans leur ensemble, ces groupes, allant des habituelles organisations de la société civile à des milices armées, constituent l'incarnation du discours d'autochtonie en Côte d'Ivoire. Cet article est en grande partie consacré à la première dimension et lance la reconstruction historique du discours identitaire lié à la spatialité en Côte d'Ivoire. Pour ce qui est de la deuxième dimension, nous nous contenterons de passer rapidement en revue les soi-disant « espaces de libre expression », qui composent l'infrastructure médiatique dans laquelle le discours autochtoniste « prend place ». Avant d'entamer cette analyse, examinons de plus près le potentiel analytique du concept d'échelle.

Faire de la place à la « glocalisation »

Une quantité considérable d'ouvrages a été publiée en sciences sociales au sujet de ce qui divise, unit et relie le local et le global (Amin 1997).

Parallèlement, en géographie sociale, politique et culturelle une ligne de recherche s'est développée qui utilise l'échelle comme un instrument analytique important – Uitermark (2002) parle de « littérature de re-classement selon une échelle graduée » (*re-scaling literature*). Ces vingt dernières années, le concept de l'échelle a été repensé dans le contexte d'un revirement vers le social en géographie. L'échelle étend l'idée que l'espace est constitué de manière sociale, à la « reconnaissance bien plus forte que le social est nécessairement constitué dans l'espace » (Massey 1992:80). Alors que dans la géographie, l'échelle était traditionnellement considérée en termes de taille et de niveau, dans la géographie politique elle est vue plutôt en termes de relation. Ainsi dit, le « local » n'est pas appréhendé comme un espace autonome avec des relations extérieures aux espaces à des échelles plus élevées (régionale, nationale, ou globale) mais en tant qu'entretenant des liens cumulatifs qui sont « en fait des relations « internes » qui constituent ensemble « le local » » (Howitt 2000:6).

Pour beaucoup d'auteurs qui ont contribué à cette ligne de recherche, l'aspiration était d'arriver à une compréhension plus solide de la mondialisation comme organisation de la circulation des capitaux et du travail dans laquelle l'espace est continuellement restructuré (Swyngedouw 1992:429). Ces restructurations entraînent des luttes continuelles pour créer des lieux (Massey 1999:21-22). Cela implique des « redéfinitions d'échelles [qui] modifient et expriment des changements dans la géométrie du pouvoir social en renforçant le pouvoir de certains et en dépouillant d'autres de leurs pouvoirs » (Swyngedouw 1997:169). C'est, en définitive, ce que le terme « glocalisation » essaie de saisir: la désagrégation progressive postfordiste de l'État-nation et sa restructuration contestée « tant aux niveaux supranationaux ou globaux qu'à l'échelle individuelle, des configurations locales, urbaines, ou régionales » (Nielsen et Simonsen 2003:914). Le terme « glocalisation » sert ainsi à exprimer l'intégration mutuelle du local et du global (et tous les niveaux intermédiaires) – une chose à laquelle la littérature fait souvent référence en définissant les échelles comme « emboîtées », c'est-à-dire de manière relationnelle, dialectique et « simultanée » (Howitt 2000:8).

En dehors du terme « glocalisation » qui est maintenant d'utilisation courante, la théorisation de l'espace, du lieu et de l'échelle en géographie, commence à peine à faire son entrée dans l'anthropologie (Crehan 1997 ; Corsín Jimenez 2003 ; Arnaut 2005). Évidemment, cela n'a pas empêché les anthropologues de réfléchir sur les interconnections globales-locales et même de définir leurs propres modèles d'analyse des échelles. Outre la littérature sur l'autochtonie, les idées d'Appadurai (1996, 1999, 2006) ont été largement relayées. Celles-ci partagent, avec la littérature de l'échelle mentionnée plus haut, la conviction que « l'organisation capitaliste et de la discipline du travail »

ont consisté en une série d'opérations de longue haleine impliquant les personnes et l'espace (migration, expropriation, colonisation forcée, stéréotype concernant certains types de travaux, etc.) (Alonso 1994:382). Alors que la mondialisation radicalise ces processus, l'on observe comment les identités politiques anciennes et nouvelles émergent, en tentant de fixer ces « mobilisations ». L'on pourrait soutenir que les mouvements d'autochtonie sont des efforts pour fixer les espaces et les identités l'un sur l'autre.

Ainsi, un certain nombre d'articles sur les mouvements d'autochtonie en Afrique les situent dans une oscillation entre mondialisation et localisation, impliquant un flux global et une fermeture culturelle voire ethno-nationaliste ou nativiste (Geschiere and Meyer 1999 ; Bayart et al 2001). La manière dont se fait l'interconnexion entre ces deux notions est plus largement établie par Appadurai (1996) qui comprend les interactions entre le local et le global en termes de cascades afin de saisir « l'inspiration globale » ainsi que « la véritable intimité » des constructions d'identité, des antagonismes ethniques, et de la violence qui parfois jaillit d'elles. Appadurai voit largement circuler « des identités à grande échelle » (*large scale identities*) s'insinuant dans les discours locaux et les antagonismes sociaux et menant par la suite à ce qu'il appelle des « implosions ». Bien que le terme « cascade » suggère fortement le caractère directionnel (du haut vers le bas), Appadurai prend soin de décrire ceci comme un processus interactif :

> Les sentiments locaux sont le produit des interactions à long terme des cascades locales et globales d'événements qui créent des structures du sentiment (*structures of feeling*), qui sont sociales et historiques et font partie de l'environnement dans lequel, progressivement, il devient possible de voir un voisin comme un monstre, un boutiquier comme un traître étranger, et un commerçant local comme un impitoyable exploiteur (1996:153).

Plus récemment, Appadurai déclarait ceci (2006:1000) : « les régions, les nations et les villes sont en mesure de produire des répliques fractales complexes de combats plus vastes » de telle manière que par exemple « les tensions entre l'Inde et le Pakistan prennent des formes mutantes à niveaux et échelles divers : le global, le national, le régional et l'urbain ». L'histoire de l'identité politique de l'autochtone ivoirien peut être relatée dans la perspective du modèle de cascade mais le concept d'« échelle » avec lequel Appadurai flirte ici mérite selon nous un développement et une application plus systématiques. Dans la partie suivante, nous observerons comment les catégories et les identités qui proviennent des arènes idéologiques globales (théorie de la dépendance, multiculturalisme, etc.), se reflètent dans des antagonismes nationaux (régionaux, sociaux et « ethniques »). Successivement et de manière cumulative, ils entraînent la construction de « l'allogène » et

une série de types d'étrangers associés qui sont confrontés à l'autre encore plus vaguement défini comme « autochtone » ivoirien. Dans la partie qui suit, nous réinterprétons ce phénomène à l'aide d'un concept d' « échelle ».

L'invention et la réinvention de l'autochtone ivoirien

Les années 1980. L'économie des plantations de café et de cacao de la Côte d'Ivoire est née sous la colonisation et s'est développée après l'indépendance en 1960. L'admiration extérieure pour le pays – souvent exprimée par l'épithète « miracle » (*miracle ivoirien*) – fait référence principalement à son économie extravertie basée sur la migration qui a fonctionné comme source d'emploi et/ou de richesse relative pour les élites nationales, pour les ressortissants venant d'une grande partie de l'Afrique occidentale, ainsi que pour les Européens, les Américains et d'autres investisseurs internationaux. Pendant les années 1960 et 1970, la Côte d'Ivoire était connue comme un pays non seulement de réussite économique mais également de paix sociale et de stabilité politique. Les premières fissures dans le miroir apparurent dans les années 1980 quand en même temps qu'une crise profonde de l'économie, le consensus politique fut ouvertement rompu par l'apparition d'un parti d'opposition de gauche – le *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI) de l'actuel Président Gbagbo –, et que la paix sociale fut fortement perturbée par l'éruption régulière de protestation de la société civile contre le régime du Président Houphouët-Boigny (1960-1993) et le régime de parti unique du PDCI (*Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire*).

Le parti socialiste FPI (et d'autres partis de gauche) est né d'un mouvement d'opposition anti-Houphouët qui existait depuis les années 1950. Les options idéologiques de ce mouvement étaient divergentes – mettant les nationalistes à côté des communistes – mais dans le cas du FPI, il est important de comprendre que cette opposition politique s'est articulée à partir des zones périphériques telles que la région Bété dans le sud-ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire. Depuis les années 1950, la région Bété était devenue la nouvelle frontière de l'économie des plantations plus que jamais expansibles. En même temps que des flux massifs de personnes « allogènes » (nationaux et non nationaux) devenaient soit les nouveaux propriétaires des terres, soit s'installaient en tant que travailleurs immigrés, on assista à l'apparition d'un ethno-régionalisme Bété parmi ses élites. En s'appuyant sur les idées des partisans de la théorie de la dépendance tels que André Gunder Frank et, principalement, Samir Amin (1967), les idéologues de gauche firent la distinction entre l'impérialisme des capitalistes en France et au-delà, et celui des élites politiques et économiques ivoiriennes qu'ils voyaient comme des proches collaborateurs des capitalistes lointains. À cet égard, le fait que les rapports entre les deux catégories d'ennemis politiques soient souvent formulés dans des métaphores

« culturelles/religieuses » est important. Ainsi, les capitalistes opérant localement sont présentés comme « masquant » ou protégeant les intérêts des impérialistes lointains.[4] Désignés comme des « vampires » ou des « sorciers » – « identités prédatrices » (Appadurai 2006) par excellence, – les exploiteurs proches sont présentés comme des personnes suçant le sang/la vie (c'est-à-dire les ressources économiques et culturelles) des nationaux, ressources qu'ils évacuent ensuite vers des centres globaux d'exploitation capitaliste lointains et inaccessibles (Amondji 1984 ; Gbagbo 1983).

Ainsi, en combinant les schémas idéologiques internationaux aux expériences régionales et sociales, et aux constructions « culturelles/religieuses », les gauchistes ivoiriens des années 1980 articulèrent leur opposition sur un antagonisme entre une vague catégorie de « nationaux » exploités, dépossédés, subalternes ou périphériques (souvent marqués de l'étiquette de « peuple ivoirien ») et une double catégorie d'étrangers : (a) les élites nationales et locales visibles et proches et (b) les capitalistes transnationaux en grande partie lointains et invisibles y inclus les néo-colonialistes français. Dans ce schéma, les travailleurs migrants les plus pauvres étaient perçus de manière ambiguë comme des victimes et des instruments du capitalisme exploiteur (Arnaut 2004a).

Les années 1990. Renforcée par les développements internationaux vers la démocratisation, l'opposition de gauche réussit en 1990 à obliger le PDCI et Houphouët-Boigny à abroger la règle du parti unique. Avec l'introduction du multipartisme, les millions de travailleurs migrants devinrent une force électorale puissante et dès l'abord, leurs élites définirent leur circonscription électorale en termes régionaux tels que « du Nord » avec toutes ses connotations d'émigration et de dépopulation, de pauvreté et autres, par opposition au Sud comme lieu d'immigration, de richesse économique, et de pouvoir politique. Alors que les revendications pour l'affirmation du Nord étaient au début formulées par des fractions dans l'ancien parti au pouvoir, après la mort de Houphouët-Boigny en 1993, elles entraînèrent la dissolution du PDCI et menèrent à la formation d'un nouveau parti politique, le RDR (*Rassemblement Des Républicains*) en 1994. Dans la bataille qui s'en suivit entre d'une part, le nouveau RDR dirigé par, notamment, Alassane Ouattara, et, d'autre part, le « vieux » PDCI dirigé désormais par le Président Henri Konan Bédié, ce dernier se repositionna comme plus « nationaliste » contre le RDR libéral (conservateur) et «internationaliste » basé sur les immigrés.

Pour exprimer leur propre nationalisme et rejeter l'internationalisme du RDR, les porte-parole et les idéologues du PDCI eurent souvent recours à des idées et des métaphores développées par l'opposition anti-Houphouëtiste d'avant 1990.[5] Les anciennes idées qui furent notamment récupérées

concernaient (a) la culture nationale et (b) la double identité/localité des impérialistes (locaux et globaux). En commençant par le dernier aspect, le président du RDR et ancien Directeur du FMI, Alassane Ouattara, fut traité comme un représentant de ses électeurs immigrés, et accusé d'être un non-Ivoirien (Burkinabè) se faisant passer pour un Ivoirien – on parle de « vagabondage de nationalité » – mais qui était en fait un émissaire (« le cheval de Troie ») des centres de pouvoir des capitalistes transnationaux (tels que le FMI). Deuxièmement, le nationalisme du PDCI s'exprima dans une rhétorique culturaliste d'un genre nouveau. Pour cela, les idéologues du PDCI récupérèrent les idées de gauche existantes au sujet de la culture indigène nationale (par opposition à la Francophonie, à l'Occident) et les insérèrent dans le discours du multiculturalisme naissant des années 90, quoique d'un genre quelque peu essentialiste et fondamentaliste (voir Stolcke 1995). A l'aide de ces deux courants d'idées, se tissa le concept d'une culture nationale plurielle mais pourtant unifiée nommée *Ivoirité*, dans lequel le terme « autochtone » fut mis en avant.[6] C'est ainsi que nous voyons, dans un livre qui développe les idées naissantes portant sur l'Ivoirité, l'éminent anthropologue ivoirien Niangoran-Bouah (1996) dénombrer « les tribus autochtones de Côte d'Ivoire ». Un des aspects délicats de cette liste fut que la plupart des peuples autochtones provenaient du sud du pays. Ainsi le nord du pays était assimilé aux migrants et aux « allogènes » qui y vivaient (voir Arnaut 2009 à paraître).

Dans le discours culturaliste de *l'Ivoirité*, le profil culturel d'une circonscription électorale du Nord se matérialisait le long des lignes ethniques telle que le « Dioula » et des lignes religieuses comme « l'Islam » et, de manière plus importante, était qualifié de périphérique à la culture nationale. Enfin, avec en toile de fond ce nationalisme culturel du PDCI, la nouvelle législation anti-migratoire (limitant la participation politique et les droits économiques des allogènes) fut votée. Les tensions qui résultèrent de ces développements entraînèrent un coup d'Etat vers la fin de l'année 1999 et l'éviction du Président Bédié.

Les années 2000. L'épisode le plus récent dans la politique d'identité ivoirienne commence par l'accession au pouvoir du socialiste Laurent Gbagbo en octobre 2000 mais prend une tournure radicale avec l'insurrection militaire contre son régime le 19 septembre 2002. D'une manière générale, avec l'arrivée au pouvoir des socialistes, les anciennes catégories anti-impérialistes des « exploiteurs étrangers » contre les « nationaux exploités » refont surface, ainsi que l'idée que les exploiteurs locaux cachent les impérialistes lointains. Dans ce schéma récupéré, les nouvelles distinctions inspirées de *l'Ivoirité* – (Dioula, musulmans) sont intégrées. Le résultat de tout ceci est clairement formulé par Charles Groguhet, chef à l'époque de la milice patriote le *Groupement des Patriotes pour la Paix* (GPP), une organisation-membre de

l'Alliance des Jeunes Patriotes.[7] Dans un discours, prononcé le jour de la commémoration du premier anniversaire de la rébellion de septembre 2002, Groguhet déclare ceci :

> « On est fatigué des Rassemblements des Dioula Renégats, RDR, on est fatigué du Rassemblement Des Rebelles, nous sommes fatigués des intégristes musulmans, nous sommes fatigués et les Ivoiriens sont fatigués des valets locaux de l'impérialisme et du néocolonialisme [*applaudissements*] et les Ivoiriens sont fatigués du néocolonialisme et de l'impérialisme. Oui, nous sommes fatigués en tant que peuple » (Groguhet 19/09/2003) .

Dans la citation ci-dessus, l'auteur dresse une liste des « Autres » qui permet l'identification de l'ennemi par opposition au « nous » collectif censé représenter l'identité singulière de l'Ivoirien « en tant que peuple ». Comme nous l'avons dit, la liste des ennemis des Ivoiriens de Groguhet combine les ennemis « historiques » de l'opposition de gauche, c'est-à-dire les impérialistes et les néo-colonialistes, ainsi que leurs « valets locaux » et les « étrangers » de la période de *l'Ivoirité* des années 1990 (les Dioula, les musulmans et le RDR). En conclusion, à travers des jeux de mots sur « rebelles » et « républicains », le RDR est profondément associé à l'insurrection de septembre 2002.

Comparée aux caractérisations des « ennemis étrangers » par d'autres membres du mouvement patriotique, la liste de Groguhet est plutôt conservatrice car elle récupère simplement des catégorisations existantes. D'autres, tels que le Ministre Bohoun Bouabré (Washington Press Club, 30/09/2002), actualisèrent cette liste en identifiant les rebelles à des terroristes musulmans probablement reliés à ou au moins inspirés par ceux qui furent responsables des événements du 11 septembre aux États-Unis. Une autre de ces mises à jour est celle du Président de l'Assemblée Nationale, Mamadou Koulibaly (2003). Koulibaly considère également que les rebelles sont des terroristes mais il ajoute que ceux-ci obéissent aux ordres des autorités politiques françaises qu'il accuse de « gangstérisme d'État ». S'adressant à un auditoire un peu plus jeune, les dirigeants des autres organisations de l'Alliance des Jeunes Patriotes, tels que Charles Blé Goudé usent de la rhétorique panafricaine pour situer la bataille du peuple ivoirien dans un contexte d'éveil de tous les Africains contre le néo-colonialisme actuel ou se servent du discours anti-globaliste pour plaider en faveur de la protection des ressources naturelles nationales et contre la privatisation, afin d'illustrer des points plus généraux sur la souveraineté nationale en danger (Blé Goudé janvier 2003).

En somme, je soutiens que ces identifications divergentes et continuellement changeantes des « ennemis étrangers » qui coexistent dans

le mouvement patriotique, peuvent illustrer le point de vue d'Appadurai au sujet « des interactions à long terme des cascades locales et globales » par lesquelles des antagonismes infranationaux (régionaux, ethniques) sont articulés en termes idéologiques « globaux ». Cependant, la juxtaposition des identités allogènes ne nous permet pas de parler d'une implosion radicale dans un antagonisme linéaire. Les cascades, pour ainsi dire, sont (toujours) visibles. Dans l'ensemble, je pense qu'il est difficile d'analyser une telle situation à l'aide des instruments analytiques d'Appadurai et je suggère que nous utilisions les concepts d'échelles développés en géographie politique.

Re-scaling l'allogène – la liste de Groguhet

La mondialisation, selon Brenner (1997:159) peut être mieux conceptualisée en tant que « reconfiguration et reterritorialisation des échelles de l'espace superposées, et non comme une implosion monodirectionnelle des forces globales dans des espaces sous-globaux ». Ce point est retenu par plusieurs auteurs pour soutenir une vision constructionniste des échelles *qui n'est surtout pas* « un cadre hiérarchique prédéterminé pour ordonner le monde » (Marston 2000:220). Cela a deux conséquences importantes pour le concept analytique de l'échelle. Comme cela a été dit, les échelles sont vues comme « emboîtées », c'est à dire superposées et à la fois simultanées, emboîtées les unes dans les autres de manière dialectique plutôt que condensées (dans le sens de « implosées ») ou hiérarchiques (dans le sens qu'elles apparaissent en série et de manière isolée) (Howitt 2000). En outre, les échelles sont vues comme socialement construites et politiquement motivées « du dessous » et comme offrant « des possibilités à des groupes sociaux de créer leur propre politique d'échelle afin de résister aux constructions d'échelles fondées sur le capital (*capital-centered*) » (Marston 2000:232).

Que les patriotes ivoiriens soient effectivement en train d'infirmer ou de confirmer la construction de ces échelles économiques, est une question que je ne traiterai pas dans cet article. Ce que, selon moi, les réflexions ci-dessus sur l'échelle et la politique des échelles nous aident à faire, c'est de mieux comprendre la liste de Groguhet comme exemple de « cascades à partir du bas ». La liste de Groguhet n'est pas une tentative de fusion des « ennemis étrangers » mais de classement de l'allogène selon une échelle graduée (*scaling*) : il s'agit de différencier d'une manière progressive et même directionnelle des catégories de personnes qui sont situées dans des sphères liées de différentes échelles. En commençant par les Dioula, Groguhet vise aussi bien le niveau ethnique sous-national (Dioula, rebelles), le niveau politique national (RDR) que la région ouest-africaine (Burkina Faso et Mali) où l'on trouve d'autres Dioula ou des personnes parlant Dioula (Bambara) et d'où provient la grande majorité de travailleurs migrants dans le sud ivoirien. Cette

même région, souvent appelée « Le Grand Nord », est mentionnée comme lieu « d'origine » des rebelles (certains d'entre eux sont revenus d'exil du Burkina Faso et du Mali pour diriger ou soutenir l'insurrection de septembre). En re-catégorisant « l'ennemi étranger » en tant que fondamentalistes musulmans, Groguhet passe à des échelles plus globales – un passage qui est répété dans le bond final qui va « des valets locaux » de l'impérialisme à l'impérialisme lui-même.

Considérée comme une tentative de classer « l'ennemi étranger » selon une échelle graduée, la liste de Groguhet ne présente ni une fusion ni une simple différentiation mais plutôt, une série d'identités emboîtées dans laquelle un niveau plus local dissimule un niveau plus global. Pour cela, Groguhet s'appuie sur un modèle d'échelle local (national) qui provient des années 80 tel que la théorie du « masque – écran » des socialistes et qui a été reformulé dans les années 90 dans le contexte de l'Ivoirité en ce qui concerne Alassane Ouattara comme faux national et partisan du capitalisme global. Après l'insurrection de septembre, ce schéma de l'étranger local masquant l'étranger lointain a été encore réarticulé et intégré dans des théories du complot plus complètes sur les étrangers locaux et globaux reliés (« emboîtés »). Cette théorie du complot plus complète, et en particulier celle (assez encyclopédique) de Groguhet, combine la familiarité à la portée globale et offre à son auditoire une compréhension rhétorique d'un monde hostile plus large qui commence par les voisins dioula et s'étend aux bases lointaines du pouvoir du capitalisme global.

Une telle différentiation des espaces emboîtés de l'altérité, ainsi que l'ambition d'avoir prise sur eux, peut être un élément important des mouvements d'autochtonie, comme il ressort de quelques réflexions récentes sur l'autochtonie (voir Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005). Le point de départ de ces réflexions est que l'autochtonie est un phénomène post-national qui se réclame souvent de l'État-nation mais c'est une nation-état en crise, en passe de devenir plus local et global en même temps (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:254). Dans la même veine, Mbembe (2001:278, 283) soutient que les conflits d'autochtonie éclatent souvent autour des zones infra-territoriales ou extraterritoriales. En survolant les réclamations des mouvements d'autochtonie, Abdulmaliq Simone (2001:25) conclut qu'elles ne visent pas tellement « à mettre le territoire sous le seul contrôle d'une force particulière, mais à permettre aux acteurs locaux de sentir que leurs opérations dans les espaces localisés sont également des conduits vers ou des extensions d'un monde beaucoup plus grand ». Avec l'identification des ennemis locaux en tant qu'acteurs régionaux et globaux, l'effort des patriotes ivoiriens pour mettre politiquement sur la touche, d'expulser physiquement, ou même

d'exterminer leurs co-résidents « dioulas », devient une opération avec des conséquences régionales et globales.

En résumé, insérer le concept d'échelle dans le modèle de cascade d'Appadurai, nous permet de le dépouiller de son orientation monodirectionnelle et hiérarchique et de faire de la place à des efforts locaux/nationaux pour récupérer de manière rhétorique le global en le réordonnant de manière discursive dans les échelles de l'altérité.

En conclusion de cet article, nous aborderons brièvement dans la partie qui suit les espaces physiques concrets dans lesquels se produisent les constructions et opérations discursives que nous avons décrites plus haut. Nous parlons ici des soi-disant *espaces de libre expression* qui se sont multipliés ces 6 à 8 dernières années à Abidjan et dans de nombreuses villes secondaires dans le sud de la Côte d'Ivoire, comme par exemple *La Sorbonne* (à Abidjan).

« Les sorbonnes » : des espaces aux multiples strates

Sans pouvoir approfondir cette question dans cet article, il est important d'accorder de l'attention à l'espace où se produisent des constructions identitaires-spatiales que nous avons décrites plus haute. Nous n'avons pas choisi le discours de Groguhet au hasard. Il a été prononcé notamment à *La Sorbonne,* un de ces parlements populaires qui sont décrits par de nombreux auteurs comme les *loci* centraux du discours et de l'action de l'autochtonie en Côte d'Ivoire aujourd'hui (Banégas 2007 ; Atchoua 2008). Un phénomène tel que *La Sorbonne* est intéressant en raison de sa position multiple et donc son caractère multi-échelle dans l'espace public. En ce qui concerne la position, *La Sorbonne* est à la fois un espace de rencontre populaire facile d'accès et un lieu prestigieux d'éducation et d'expertise. En termes d'échelle, *La Sorbonne* a le côté direct d'une rencontre à petite échelle et un impact tant au niveau national qu'international tant dans les médias que dans la sphère politique (Bahi 2001, 2004 ; Silué N'Tchabétien 2006).

Le positionnement multiple et la petite échelle des « espaces de libre expression » en général et de *La Sorbonne* en particulier peuvent être replacés dans la longue tradition des « espaces » où l'opposition de gauche, que nous avons décrite plus haut, a développé ses idées et recruté, formé et mobilisé ses membres. Les espaces en question étaient des organisations culturelles voire même des institutions scientifiques qui au-delà d'un rôle artistique ou académique public jouaient également un rôle politique et idéologique caché. L'exemple type d'une telle organisation est le *Groupe de Recherche sur la Tradition Orale* (GRTO), créé en 1969 par le Professeur Barthélémy Kotchy sous le nom de *Groupe des Jeunes Chercheurs,* et qui fut rebaptisé en 1972 GRTO sous le commandement de Bernard Zadi Zaourou. Comme je l'ai

décrit ailleurs (Arnaut 2009 à paraître), au cours des années 1970 et 1980, le GRTO fonctionnait à la fois comme institution scientifique et comme centre de formation universitaire qui accueillait également une des nombreuses « cellules » où les professeurs organisaient l'opposition politique et où nombreux étudiants recevaient une éducation idéologique. En termes de niveaux d'échelle, il est clair que le GRTO cherche un point d'ancrage tant au niveau de la base de la culture souvent traditionnelle et rurale qu'au niveau de l'environnement académique local des étudiants. D'un autre côté, le GRTO est lié en tant que « cellule » aux cellules de l'opposition de gauche dans tout le pays et à l'étranger, comme par exemple en France. Ces contacts « politiques » se confondent souvent avec les contacts académiques dans le pays et à l'étranger.

Dans des lieux tels que les *espaces de libre expression*, et certainement à *La Sorbonne*, nous retrouvons également cette structure « laminale » et multiple. Les organisations appelées « sénat », « parlement », « congrès », etc. se définissent comme des espaces de congrégation, de cohabitation physique et d'auto-expression spontanée tout en étalant en même temps un certain profil « scholastique ». Ils se présentent comme des forums d'éducation et des exégèses menées par des soi-disant analystes politiques qui s'octroient souvent le titre de « professeurs ». Ces derniers se livrent à des interprétations séduisantes de l'actualité et affirment pouvoir expliquer les mouvements stratégiques derrière les derniers développements des décisions politiques et militaires (Yao Gnabeli 2005:38 ; Bahi 2003 ; Banégas 2007). Bahi (2001:159), par exemple, explique que « les animateurs des « sorbonne(s) » appelés « professeurs » au Plateau, ou « parlementaires » à Yopougon, bénéficient d'un certain prestige […]. Ce prestige s'explique par la réputation d'intellectuels, « d'éclaireurs du peuple » qu'ils se taillent dans cette culture de rue ».

L'utilisation du terme « Sorbonne(s) » dans cette citation fait référence au fait que le modèle original des centaines d'espaces politiques populaires sont à l'origine de « La Sorbonne » d'Abidjan (Bahi 2004:59). Cette dernière s'est développée au début des années 1980 dans le centre administratif d'Abidjan (le Plateau) où elle a fonctionné à l'image du *Speakers' Corner* londonien. L'opposition à Houphouët-Boigny y a trouvé une « hétérotopie » où ventiler son mécontentement parmi les prophètes, les spécialistes religieux, les guérisseurs herboristes et autres experts et *illuminati* dont la présence est à l'origine du nom de « *Sorbonne* » – d'après l'université parisienne (Bahi 2003:2-3). Depuis 2000, et plus particulièrement après 2002, *La Sorbonne* d'Abidjan a servi de prototype à de nombreux autres sites d'édification des masses qui sont apparus à Abidjan et ailleurs et qui ont formé les points nodaux des congrégations et de la tutelle des loyalistes, à savoir la *mouvance présidentielle* (Silué s.d. ; Banégas 2007 ; Atchoua 2008).[8]

Une analyse approfondie de diverses échelles de ces diverses « Sorbonnes » n'est pas le sujet de cet article mais j'espère que cette analyse succincte de la stratification convaincra d'autres chercheurs de l'opportunité d'approfondir la question. Pour finir, nous constatons que les *forums* de l'ère Gbagbo ne servent pas seulement de lieux de destination où la propagande politique ou les messages présidentiels accèdent au public de base à travers des processus linéaires, s'écoulant goutte à goutte vers le bas. Le cas des *sorbonnes* d'Abidjan indique la politique nationale et internationale qui fait l'objet d'une réappropriation dans les espaces à une plus petite échelle en la retransformant sous forme de sagesse populaire (« libre expression ») ou de vérité scientifique (« analyse politique ») avant de la « renvoyer » vers les médias nationaux et internationaux.

Quelques remarques en conclusion

Le cas présenté dans cet article est celui du discours de Groguhet à *La Sorbonne* présenté comme un exemple de politique d'identité et d'utilisation des médias par un acteur important d'un mouvement d'autochtonie. L'introduction des « échelles » comme outil analytique nous permet de percevoir l'autochtonie plus clairement en tant que processus de « glocalisation » de l'État-nation en crise – processus qui comporte la « remontée dans l'échelle » (*upscaling*) vers le global ainsi que la « descente dans l'échelle » (*downscaling*) vers l'individuel et le local.

Le point de départ d'une vue générale de l'autochtonie basée sur l'échelle est qu'à la fin des divers processus de classement (*scaling*), le corps local est relié aux forces, individus et institutions les plus globaux. J'ai essayé de montrer comment, dans le registre des politiques d'identité, ceci se produit par le re-classement (*re-scaling*) de l'allogène. Une telle politique de l'échelle offre aux « autochtones » une compréhension rhétorique d'un réseau mondial d'ennemis qui relie leurs voisins « dioula » à des bases de pouvoirs internationales ou, selon les mots d'Abdulmaliq Simone (2001:25), qui « permet aux acteurs locaux de sentir que leurs opérations dans les espaces localisés sont également des conduits vers ou des extensions d'un monde beaucoup plus grand ». La liste de Groguhet a consisté à articuler cette « compréhension » de manière négative mais nous devons savoir que de même qu'elle catalogue une série « d'autres » ennemis glocaux, elle indique des « individus » glocaux alternatifs avec lesquels le peuple ivoirien *peut* positivement s'allier. Ceci devient clair quand nous survolons la géopolitique du régime de Gbagbo.

Au cours de ces dernières années, nous avons pu observer une « multilatéralisation » des relations étrangères à l'écart des « ennemis étrangers » énumérés par Groguhet et vers de nouveaux alliés. Au niveau

régional ouest africain, le régime de Gbagbo a remplacé ou complété ses liens historiques – qui datent du temps de la colonisation – avec le Burkina Faso et le Mali – représentés par les « Dioula », les musulmans, et les « rebelles » dans la liste de Groguhet – en forgeant des liens plus forts avec, entre d'autres, le Libéria et la Guinée. L'éloignement de la France « néo-coloniale » est mis en parallèle avec les efforts de rapprochement avec, par exemple, le Royaume-Uni au sujet duquel un patriote m'expliqua qu'à la différence de la France, le Royaume-Uni avait donné à ses anciennes colonies la liberté de choisir la direction dans laquelle elles voulaient se développer. La multilatéralisation comprend les efforts du régime de Gbagbo pour renforcer les liens économiques avec la Chine et l'Inde, qui sont présentés comme des puissances du monde sans passé impérialiste. Enfin, les attaques rhétoriques contre les « fondamentalistes musulmans » et « les rebelles/terroristes » caractérisent, dans l'option politique du Président Gbagbo, la recherche de meilleurs rapports avec les États-Unis, ou plutôt avec l'administration Bush et son entourage de fondamentalistes chrétiens, ainsi qu'avec Israël. Pendant une causerie informelle à *La Sorbonne*, un patriote compara la Côte d'Ivoire à Israël et expliqua que comme les Ivoiriens, les Israéliens étaient entourés (et menacés) par les musulmans.

Ce petit inventaire des exploits géopolitiques du régime de Gbagbo et leur rationalisation dans la bataille des patriotes contre les « ennemis étrangers », illustre, je pense, la manière dont la répartition interne de la population ivoirienne coïncide avec les efforts de repositionnement géopolitique du pays. Dans la déclaration au sujet de Israël, nous voyons comment les patriotes articulent conjointement la répartition des « Ivoiriens » – l'exclusion des musulmans (c'est-à-dire, des immigrés, des « Dioula », des militants du RDR, etc.) – et rationalisent le repositionnement géopolitique de la Côte d'Ivoire dans son rapprochement avec Israël. En d'autres termes, l'autochtonie ivoirienne forme la base du repositionnement géopolitique de la Côte d'Ivoire dans la répartition de sa propre population en autochtones et allogènes. Cela, cependant, n'est pas un jeu abstrait des catégories dictées comme ci-dessus, mais une pratique biopolitique concrète d'auto-division. L'on peut effectivement « rencontrer » l'autochtone (mais l'on peut tout aussi bien « battre » l'allogène !).

Pour trouver les contreparties de l'allogène «re-classé » (*scaled*), il suffit de descendre simplement dans les lieux de co-présence tels que *La Sorbonne* où la liste de Groguhet a été proclamée. Là, la construction politique du « peuple » est rabaissée dans l'échelle au niveau du corps résistant, de la « libre » expression de l'individu. Dans des lieux comme *La Sorbonne*, le repositionnement géostratégique de la « nouvelle Côte d'Ivoire » est simultanément basés sur les corps visibles et réels localisés à une distance où ils peuvent se voir et s'entendre l'un l'autre, et regroupés sur des lieux

oppositionnels qui, comme nous l'avons vu, disposent d'une longue histoire depuis l'indépendance de la Côte d'Ivoire.

Mais la *Sorbonne* est une « glocalité » s'il en est : par son nom, ses « professeurs », et son « instruction », elle tend vers l'universalité ; par son emplacement, la co-présence des corps résistants et sa libre expression, elle se réclame de la localité absolue. Ainsi, *La Sorbonne* intègre distance et la proximité. C'est ce qui dote le mouvement d'autochtonie ivoirien en apparence autocentrique et fortement lié au territoire d'une dimension transnationale et confère au mouvement patriotique une nouvelle forme d'activisme civique transnational. Malheureusement, dans ce processus, ces mouvements ne localisent pas seulement le « transnational » mais ils réterritorialisent également le « civique ».

Notes

1. Une première version de ce texte a été présentée à l'atelier « Les médias et le global » convoqué par Dorle Dracklé et Ulf Hannerz à la 8e Conférence EASA à Vienne en 2004. Puisque la version originale de ce texte n'a été actualisée que de manière minimale, et parce que la situation en Côte d'Ivoire n'a pas cessé de changer, ce texte montre des signes évidents de vieillesse. Deux des phénomènes récents les plus significatifs qui n'ont pas été traités dans ce texte sont « les grins » (voir Silué N'Tchabétien 2006 ; Théroux-Bénoni and Bahi *à paraitre* ; Atchoua 2008) et les changements de contenu des messages véhiculés par les parlements populaires depuis l'accord de paix de mars 2007. Puisque cet article veut être avant tout programmatique dans sa nature, une mise à jour complète n'a pas semblé nécessaire. Je voudrais remercier Silué N'Tchabétien Oumar, Koné Téhéna, Atchoua N'Guessan Julien, Kouyaté Souleymane et surtout Rockia et Abdoulaye Coulibaly, Gadou Dakouri et Aghi Bahi, ainsi que Lori-Anne Théroux-Bénoni pour leurs encouragements et leur aide. Je tiens également à remercier le VLIR-UOS. Dans le cadre de l'initiative du Sud « Public Spaces and Conflict in Côte d'Ivoire » j'ai pu conduire cet article à bon terme. Pour finir, je remercie Nathalie Delaleeuwe et Nadia Danguy pour leur aide à la traduction ainsi que le comité de lecture d'*Afrique et Développement* pour leurs précieux conseils.
2. Dozon (2000:59) écrit : « Autrement dit, loin de disparaître, l'ivoirité s'est aujourd'hui déplacée du pôle akan ou baoulé à un vaste ensemble régional sudiste. ».
3. En se faisant habituellement appeler « patriotes », le mouvement pro-Gbagbo semble avoir gagné la bataille pour le terme « patriote » dans laquelle également les militaires insurgés et certaines organisations de la société civile contre Gbagbo sont/étaient impliqués. Le premier et le plus grand groupe rebelle est *le Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire* (MPCI) qui, avec deux autres groupes plus petits, forme maintenant la coalition *des Forces Nouvelles*. Un groupe de médiateurs qui essaye de relancer le débat politique et d'ouvrir

l'impasse entre les « patriotes » pro-Gbagbo et les « patriotes » rebelles s'appelle lui-même *la Coalition Patriotique pour la Renaissance et contre l'Impunité* (CPRI).

4. En 1984, Gbagbo (sous le pseudonyme de N'Zembele) écrit au sujet de Houphouët-Boigny qu'il « sert d'écran entre les Ivoiriens et les vrais exploiteurs qui habitent la plupart du temps en France » (N'Zembele 1984:77). Dans le domaine politique, Amondji (1984:230) observe comment « derrière le masque de F. Houphouët, les agents de l'impérialisme régissent directement et dans les petits détails ».
5. C'était en grande partie dû au fait qu'un nombre d'anciens anti-Houphouëtistes, comme Bernard Zadi Zaourou, Niangoranh Porquet, Jean-Marie Adiaffi et Niangoran-Bouah, avaient choisi en 1993 le camp de Bédié (voir Arnaut 2009 à paraitre).
6. Comme je l'explique ailleurs (Arnaut 2009 à paraître), l'écrivain et dramaturge Niangoranh Porquet donne de la consistance au terme « Ivoirité » dans un poème épique de 1994 qui décrit le combat entre les autochtones d'un côté et la bourgeoisie qui opère pour le compte des capitalistes étrangers de l'autre. Les « étrangers locaux » sont décrites par Niangoranh Porquet alternativement comme des « faux nationaux », « les mercenaires incurables, […], les réfugiés (*apatrides*), […] les menteurs, [et] les renégats » (Niangoranh Porquet 1994:48) ou encore – dans une langue imaginaire qui évoque celle de Groguhet – « les domestiques de l'impérialisme [et] les esclaves du néo-colonialisme » (ibid.:29).
7. Charles Groguhet est décédé le 13 juin 2008. Depuis la fin de 2003, il avait été remplacé à la tête du GPP par Touré Moussa Zéguen.
8. Yao Gnabeli (2005:39) illustre comment ces « Sorbonnes » tiennent à leur caractère scholastique en recourant à des métaphores telles que « université » où les « sorbonnards » se décrivent de la manière suivante : « les orateurs des sorbonnes des quartiers d'Abidjan emploient ici un langage destine à convaincre du « sérieux » avec lequel ils transmettent leurs connaissances : préparations des « cours » à l'avance, recherches, lectures complémentaires, etc. à l'image des universitaires. »

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Politics Does Matter: The Nigerian State and Oil (Resource) Curse

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Abstract

Conventional explanations of the resource curse, or the paradox of abundance, correlate resource abundance and bad economic policies, underdevelopment, poverty and conflict. Such a conclusion has become debatable and has encouraged analysts to develop conditional explanations that emphasize the role of the political rather than economic factors in the mechanisms underpinning the resource curse. Using the Inter-governmental Fiscal Relations system in Nigeria as an example, this paper argues that, while the policy choices of politicians determines how resource rents are utilized, the extent to which political institutions promote the use of rational and meritocratic criteria in allocating public sector resources and ensure accountability is what matters. This is of crucial importance in determining whether resource abundance will lead to resource curse.

Résumé

Les explications conventionnelles de la malédiction de la richesse ou du paradoxe de l'abondance font la liaison entre l'abondance de la ressource et la mauvaise politique économique, le sous-développement, la pauvreté et les conflits. Cette conclusion est trés discutée et a encouragé les observateurs à donner des explications conditionnelles qui pointent sur le rôle des facteurs politiques, plutôt qu'économiques, constituant les mécanismes de base de la malédiction de la richesse. En se basant sur le Système des relations fiscales inter-gouvernementales du Nigeria comme modèle, ce document soutient que même si les choix politiques des politiciens déterminent la façon dont les rentes émanant de la ressource sont utilisées, ce qui importe le plus, c'est de savoir dans quelle mesure les institutions politiques encouragent l'utilisation de critères rationnels basés sur le mérite dans le cadre de l'allocation des ressources publiques et assurer la transparence dans l'utilisation de ces ressources. Ceci est d'une importance capitale pour savoir si c'est l'abondance de la ressource qui entraîne la malédiction de la richesse.

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Introduction

For most Nigerians, especially those living in the Niger-Delta, Nigeria's oil wealth is actually 'oil of poverty' (ANEEJ 2004) or a curse, because it has produced only poverty, underdevelopment and conflicts since its commercial exploitation began in the late 1950s. Such a conclusion is not aberrant as 'it is now almost conventional wisdom that (natural) resources are a curse for developing countries' (Robinson et al. 2005:2) with abundance of natural resources causing poor growth and raising the incidence, intensity and duration of conflicts.

The negative conclusions about the developmental role of resources is a far cry from earlier post World War hopes and the promise that resource endowment would 'lift' many countries out of poverty; as 'not only would resource exploitation generate fiscal revenues and jobs, but also the necessary investment capital for an economic take-off. Windfall resource revenues, in other words, should prove a bonanza' (Rosser 2006).

But 'for every Venezuela and Nigeria, there is a Norway or a Botswana' (Robinson et al. 2005:7). Research on 'paradox of plenty' has prompted, in recent times, a renewed interest in political factors as key explanatory variables, or as key components of the resource curse mechanism in developing countries. For example, it has been argued that 'poor economic growth is itself a political product, the consequence of what politicians do with resource rents' (Englebert 2000; Ron 2005:447) and of presence or absence of 'political institutions which promote the accountability of politicians' (Robinson 2005:6).

Thus, if resource booms create underdevelopment, it cannot be because 'they induce inefficiency in the rate at which they are extracted, but because politicians make policy mistakes (which) are in fact rational political strategies, in response to the incentives induced by resource rents' (Robinson et al. 2005:6).

As argued by Rosser,

> Put differently, scholars have been asking the wrong question: rather than asking why natural resource wealth has fostered various political pathologies and in turn promoted poor development performance, they should have been asking what political and social factors enable some resource abundant countries to utilize their natural resources to promote development and prevent other resource abundant countries from doing the same (Rosser 2006:10).

It is such a reasoning that guides this paper, which attempts to re-interpret the 'paradox of abundance' thesis through a focus on the actors and institutions of the Inter-governmental Fiscal Relations (IGFR) system of the Nigerian state, the world's fifth largest producer of crude oil.

IGFR deals with all 'fiscal transactions and coordination arrangements among the various tiers of government in a federation' (Musgrave and Musgrave 1989; Ekpo 2004:2). Its role is that of balancing fiscal responsibilities with revenue collection processes at the different levels of government within a federation and so is the mechanism by which it is expected that proper accountability in the use of resource rents will be achieved. A study of its functioning since the Nigerian independence provides an ideal context to examine the mechanisms linking natural resource endowments and their prices to development.

The paper is in three parts. The first reviews the theoretical debate on 'Resource Curse' or the 'Paradox of Abundance'; parts two and three present the various dimensions of a conditional explanation of resource curse based on the IGFR system in Nigeria, while the conclusion presents an assessment of two contending explanations about resource curse.

The central argument of the paper is that one of the reasons for Nigeria's underdevelopment can be imputed to the malfunctioning of the IGFR system. Therefore, an investigation of the functioning of the IGFR system in Nigeria will show that the 'oil curse' paradox needs to be understood as a political process.

Resource Curse: Theoretical Debates

Recent literature suggests that resource abundance can be conceived as a 'paradox of plenty' (Basedau 2005:8) because it does not produce the expected outcomes but creates problems such as poverty, economic decline and conflicts.

Natural resources, it is argued, generate a 'paradox of plenty because they create dependence and damage other tradable sectors and sources of economic growth and development such as human capital and the manufacturing sector' (Basedau 2005:10), stimulate unwise economic policies such as import substitution policy which prevent efficient and effective investments of rents and make the economy vulnerable to external shocks caused by declining terms of trade as natural resources exhibit lower income elasticities of demand than manufactured products.

Furthermore, their exploitation can lead to civil wars by making central governments weaker because, as Fearon and Laitin (2003:87) suggest; 'Oil exports may be relevant, not so much because they finance rebel groups but… because they mark relative state weakness at a given level of income. Similarly, they can lead to separatist conflicts by giving resource-rich regions an economic incentive to become independent (Le Billon 2001; Collier and Hoeffler 2002; Ross 2003) and encourage looting as a mean of funding insurgencies, as insurgents often raise start-up funds by looting and selling natural resources (Ross 2005:5). Therefore, 'resource wealth leads to a

myopia among policy makers and weakens state accountability to the citizenry' (Weinstein 2005:599).

Backed as it is by empirical evidence, namely aggregate evidence linking resource rents to coups, incidence of armed conflict and the incidence and duration of conflicts (Dunning 2005:451), the 'paradox of plenty' thesis has to contend with the fact that:

> While the studies . . . provide evidence that natural resource abundance – or at least an abundance of particular types of natural resources – and various development outcomes are correlated with one another, they do not prove that the former causes the latter. Those arguing in favour of the notion of a resource curse have merely inferred causality from the evidence of correlation. However, the direction of causation may in fact run the other way (Rosser 2006:12).

Thus 'tasked with explaining the large variations in outcomes among natural resource exporters' (Dunning 2005:451), scholars have sought to address the issue of variation in the development profile of resource abundant states by focusing on conditional explanations that give prominence to political factors, such as the state's strength, and the capacity and role of actors (particularly politicians) and institutions in the management of resource rents.

Fearon, for example, argues that much of the resource-war association is explained by oil exports which trigger conflict through political – not economic – mechanisms as it creates weak extractive apparatuses. The low political capabilities of rentier states then create opportunity for rebellion (Fearon 2005:487). For Dunning, the paradox of resource abundance is dependent on attempts by rulers of resource rich countries, in search of regime stability, to either undermine or encourage local attempts at economic diversification and growth (Dunning 2005:452–453). Snyder and Bhavnani, on the other hand, suggest that a commodity's physical characteristics, together with the manner in which it is extracted helps determine state capacity in resource rich countries (Snyder and Bhavnani 2005:564–566).

For Robinson et al. (2005), resource curse is the result of policy *mistakes* that are in fact rational political strategies developed by politician-entrepreneurs as they respond to the incentives induced by resource rents and absence or malfunctioning of political institutions. These promote the accountability of politicians generally, develop state institutions away from patrimonial practices towards the use of rational and meritocratic criteria in allocating public sector resources. In summation, conditional analysis that favour political factors primarily in the form of political actors and state institutions provide the best picture of the mechanism linking natural resource endowments and their prices to development.

Institutions Matter: IGFR and the Politics of Resource Curse in Nigeria

Nigeria is a federation; a political arrangement that has been adopted to strike a balance between unity and diversity, since it allows 'the component units of a political organization to participate in sharing powers and functions in a cooperative manner in the face of the combined forces of ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity' (Aiyede 2004; Tamuno 1998). In economic terms, a federation is a system of government where revenue and expenditure functions are divided among the various tiers of government.

A federal institutional arrangement involves the decentralization of the fiscal system or Fiscal Federalism (Okigbo 1965). It means that finance is the engine of the federal system with its proper functioning being a direct result of a stable system of revenue allocation between the various levels of government. IGFR refers to the fiscal transactions and coordination arrangements among the various tiers of government within a federation (Musgrave and Musgrave 1989). Its primary concern, balancing fiscal responsibilities with revenue collection processes at the different levels of government within a federation, makes IGFR the key political institution involved in ensuring accountability in the use of resource rents within the Nigerian federation.

The presence of political institutions to maintain accountability does not translate into efficient utilization of resource rents or the absence of a resource curse, even though Robinson et al. rightly suggest *that countries with institutions that promote accountability and state competence will tend to benefit from resource booms since these institutions ameliorate the perverse political incentives that such booms create* and *countries without such institutions however may suffer from a resource curse* (Robinson 2005:7).

According to Sachs and Warner (1999), what matters is the 'Institutional Quality Index', 'the quality of the institutions', the extent to which such institutions promote the use of rational and meritocratic criteria in allocating public sector resources. The index ranks Botswana, Chile, Malaysia and Thailand ahead of Algeria, Ecuador, Mexico, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela and Zambia in terms of institutional quality. Botswana, Chile, Malaysia and Thailand all happen to be resource rich countries that have succeeded in avoiding the paradox of plenty, whereas Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela and Zambia all suffer from the resource curse.

A major imbalance in the assignment of tax raising powers between its units (which translates into greater concentration of tax raising powers in the hands of the federal government and the dependence of the lower governments on federal government funding, leading to frustration and tensions in inter-governmental relations between the units of the federation)

is the key expression of the low institutional quality index of Nigeria's IGFR system (Anyawu 1995; Alm and Boex 2002; Bird and Smar 2001; Ehtishan and Singh 2003; Ekpo 2004; Mbanefoh 1986, 1989).

The problems of the IGFR system in Nigeria result from the inefficiency of four important sub-components: The Executive (federal, state and local government), the Legislature (federal, state and local government), the Judiciary (state and federal) and the various ad-hoc and permanent fiscal commissions. Only the Executive component is in charge of policy-making, while the other three perform oversight roles to varying degrees. Section 162(1) of the 1999 constitution indeed

> 'provides for a common pool of financial revenue the federation Account into which is paid all monies to be distributed among the federal, states and local governments councils in each state on *such terms as may be fixed by the National Assembly'* (FRN 1999) (*author's emphasis*).

Section 162(2) highlights that:

> The President upon receipt of advice from the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), shall table before the National Assembly proposals for revenue allocation from the Federation Account and in determining the formula, the National Assembly shall take into account, the allocation principles, especially those of population, equality of states, internal revenue generation, land mass, terrain, as well as population density. Provided that the principles of derivation shall be constantly reflected in any approved formula as being not less than 13 per cent of the revenue accruing to the Federation Account directly from any other resource (FRN 1999).

Due to a number of reasons which will be discussed, the Legislature, the Judiciary and the Fiscal Commissions have not been able to conduct effective checks on the Executive and the decisions made as to how to distribute resource rents. In other words, they have not been able to prevent the perverse policy choices (increase in size of public service, neo-patrimonial corrupt practices) made by politicians who have constituted the building blocks of resource curse.

At the core of the IGFR system is the budget. It represents 'the key instrument for maintaining accountability in government finances or use of resource rents. It sets spending limits and revenue patterns for all sectors of government and therefore affects income distribution and social activities and impacts on overall levels of economic activity' (Aiyede and Isumonah 2002:3).

The Executive is in charge of preparing the budget, while the Legislature authorizes the Executive to raise and spend money, and exercises oversight over the activities of the Executive. In situations where the legislature cannot

maintain its oversight function, the budget becomes a tool for mismanaging resource rents by the executive.

The process of budget-making in Nigeria has, since independence, been a chaotic one. Under civilian rule, it has experienced 'hold-ups' due to differences in specific powers of the legislature over the budget. The maximalist view argues that the powers of legislature oversight should not be restricted in any way, while the minimalist view, favoured by the executive, argues for a minimal role of the legislature in the budgeting process (IPU 1986). The result has been a totally inefficient budgeting process with delays occurring in the preparation and passing of budgets and with different groups engaging in political brinkmanship. In such a situation, it is the Executive that has always triumphed because of:

(a) Constitutional provisions such as Section 82 of the constitution, which states that,

> If the appropriation bill in respect of any financial year has not been passed into law by the beginning of the financial year, the president may authorize withdrawals of moneys from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the federation for the purpose of meeting expenditure necessary to carry on the services of the government of the federation for a period of six months or until the coming into operation of the appropriation act; whichever is earlier' (FRN 1999).

(b) Decrees such as Decree 53 of 1991 that have been applied by the Executive to by-pass the Legislature. The case for legislative oversight and accountability of the Executive was worsened by the fact that Nigeria has been governed by military forces since its independence. Military rule worsened the Executive's recklessness because of their institutional characteristics, often opposed to an equal participation among all the usual actors of policy-making. As pointed out by Claude Ake,

> The military and democracy are in dialectical opposition. The military is a taut chain of command; democracy is a benign anarchy of diversity. Democracy presupposes human sociability; the military presupposes its total absence, the inhuman extremity of killing the opposition. The military demands submission, democracy enjoins participation; one is a tool of violence, the other a means of consensus building for peaceful co-existence (Ake 1995).

Thus, though the military regime created a vast IGFR structure, the influence of its norms (command, hierarchy and order) on the federal system of government denied the state's autonomy and voluntary participation in revenue allocation and decision-making processes. The 'give and take' that ought to characterize decision-making in a federal system were stifled, as the military regime ensured that no institution could successfully overlook its role.

Furthermore, the control that was supposed to be provided by the Judiciary was nullified by the regime through a suspension of wide sections of the constitution, the use of decrees and the use of ouster clauses that placed the actions of the military Executive beyond the jurisdiction of the courts.

The other institution able to hold the military Executive to some degree of accountability was the Fiscal Commissions, mandated to study comprehensively and make recommendations regarding the administrative and financial procedure to be adopted by the Executive. It, however, had its recommendations ignored, rejected or modified in order to suit the Executives' requirements.

The federal government indeed rejected the report of the Dina Fiscal Commission of 1968 and enacted the Decree 13 of 1970 that allocated the bulk of federally collected revenue to the federal government (Emenuga 1993:85); Decree No. 9 of 1971 that transferred the rents and royalties of offshore petroleum mines from the states to the federal government, and Decrees No. 6 and 7 of 1975; that established firmly the position of the Executive in the driving seat of IGFR in Nigeria (Oyediran and Olagunju 1984:199–202).

The report of the Aboyade Technical Committee on Revenue Allocation of 1977, which recommended a clear division in tax jurisdiction in order to provide all tiers of government with a tax base, was rejected by the Constituent Assembly, a coalition of politicians, officially because it was too technical but probably because its recommendations were creating an effective control mechanism on the use of resource rents by the Executive (Mbanefoh and Egwaikhide 1998; Ekpo 2004:18–20).

The 1981 Okigbo Commission recommended that the Federation Account be shared among the tiers of government on the basis of 53 per cent for the federal government; 30 per cent for the state government; 10 per cent for the local government and 7 per cent for special funds. It was, however, revised as the federal executive jerked its share upwards by 2 per cent to 55 per cent and reduced the local government's share by 2 per cent. The share of the state's and special funds remained unchanged. The Supreme Court, on 2 October 1981 declared the new formula as unconstitutional and demanded a new formula be elaborated. The modification passed through the National Assembly in 1981, as Revenue Act of 1981, and became operational in 1982 (Mbanefoh G.F 1989; Ekpo 2004:21–22).

The Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) was the first permanent revenue allocation commission established by the military government, through Decree 49 of 1989. It recommended the vertical allocation formula to be: federal government 47 per cent, state government 30 per cent, local government 15 per cent, and special funds 8 per cent. For horizontal allocation it recommended: equality of states 40 per cent, population

30 per cent, internal revenue effort - 20 per cent, social development factor 10 per cent. The military government accepted its recommendations but raised its own share by 3 per cent and reduced the special funds by a similar percentage (Akpan 2004:22-23).

In January 1991, after the federal government promulgated Decree 3 of 1991, which transferred the responsibility for primary education (formerly shared by the three tiers of government) to the local governments, the RMAFC recommended an allocation of 5 per cent of the Federation Account to local governments for funding primary education. The military government decided to take the 5 per cent from the states' share of Federation Account, thus giving rise to a formula of: federal government 50 per cent, state governments 25 per cent, local governments 20 per cent and special funds 5 per cent. Six months later, the military government made another adjustment in the revenue sharing formula, giving the federal government 48.5 per cent, the state government 24 per cent, local government 20 per cent and special funds 7.5 per cent. The new formula lasted till the end of the military rule on 29 May 1999 (Akindele and Olaopa 2002; Ekpo 2004:22-23).

The recommendation of the Revenue Commissions strengthened the Executive's fiscal recklessness through the revenue allocation formulas, especially the horizontal revenue formulas they recommended, because they emphasized revenue sharing (Equality, Population, Land Mass and Terrain, Social Development Factors and Internal Revenue Effort) rather than revenue generation, and stimulated a culture of consumption that encouraged executive fiscal recklessness at all tiers of government (Uche and Uche 2004).

Politics Matter: Politicians and Perverse use of Resource Rents

As a result, the Executive dominated. The IGFR system provides an environment for the initiation of perverse policy choices by the Executive, which in turn produced the resource curse. In other words, the institutional apparatus created by government left politicians free in their decisions on how to spend resource rents and allowed them to saddle the system with policy choices that could be perceived as 'anti-developmental' but were commonly portrayed as rational and efficient.

The key to politicians' view of 'rational efficient use of resource rents' lies in understanding the politicians' worldview. The major objective of the politician is the acquisition of political power defined as 'the ability to systematically influence state decision-making processes' (Lacam 1988). Political power thus involves 'the conquest of and conservation of one or several . . . centres of decision-making' (Lacam 1988:25). In conquering and conserving control over decision-making, the politician is confronted with a number of constraints in the form of regulatory rules-electoral laws

political finance laws (Ndubisi 2004) and contextual variables-cost of financing electoral campaigns (Garraud 1999; Briquet 1999), all of which can hinder his quest for and conservation of political power. Politics consequently appears as a matter of risk management, the successful politician being one who successfully overcomes, personally or thanks to the assistance of external agent(s), the constraints that threaten his political career.

A key to overcome the constraints of the acquisition of political power is patronage 'the way in which the politician distributes public jobs or special favours in exchange for electoral support' (Robinson 2005:4). The politician relies on his access to the state to accumulate economic resources, usually through corrupt practices. Some of these resources are then invested in economic enterprises while some are distributed to his clients as symbolic capital. This creates political supports that legitimise the access of the Executive to the state and its resources.

The redistribution 'art' is central to the legitimizing and accumulation of political capital that permits the continued access to state resources. The elite is known for excelling in the art of redistribution. Political mobilization in Africa is therefore an exercise in the art of redistribution, dominated by the elite (Daloz 1999, 2002, 2003; Ugochukwu 2004; Olarinmoye 2004; Joshi 2002). While the politician considers patronage as an efficient application of resource rents (it enables him to achieve re-election and hold on to political power) from a developmental perspective, patronage is perverse because it involves diversion of scarce resources towards satisfying private interests.

Patronage encourages the politician to divert resource rents in order to finance import-substitution policies associated with projects that are economically dubious but attractive to politicians. The diversion of scarce resources to private ends, and the failure to establish vital inter-sectoral transfers necessary for broad-based economic development, increase the overt reliance of the state on a single source of revenue. This renders it vulnerable to external shocks caused by the possible declining terms of trade in natural resources that exhibit lower income elasticities of demand than manufactured products.

The legitimacy of the politicians, and by extension of the state, is very shaky as the electoral support upon which it is based is dependent on a continued flow of resources from the state. In case the flow of resources is threatened, the political system breaks down. As patronage is a selective activity benefiting specific groups, those excluded are pushed to use violence to demand for and access their own share of the rents. In the case of the Nigerian Niger-Delta conflict, those excluded come from the resource-producing region. The exclusionary use of resource rents can therefore encourage separatist conflicts. The funding of such conflicts can be made

through looting, as insurgents seek to raise start-up funds by looting and selling natural resources.

Conclusion

Conventional explanations of resource curse or paradox of abundance correlate resource abundance and bad economic policies, underdevelopment, poverty and conflict because 'resource wealth leads to a myopia among policy makers and weakens state accountability to the citizenry' (Weinstein 2005:599). Such a conclusion, in the light of the presence alongside "cursed states" of successful resource abundant states has become debatable and has encouraged analysts to develop conditional explanations that emphasize the role of the political rather than economic factors in the mechanism of resource curse.

Specifically, this paper suggests that two key political factors best help to explain the resource curse in Nigeria: the political actors (politicians), their ethos/worldview and how they influence the decisions and policies made concerning the use of resource rents and political institutions that promote the accountability of politicians, and the use of rational and meritocratic criteria in allocating public sector resources.

While policies determine how resource rents are utilized, it is 'institutional quality', the extent to which such institutions promote the use of rational and meritocratic criteria in allocating public sector resources and ensure accountability that matters and is of crucial importance in determining whether resource abundance will lead to resource curse.

This argument is particularly relevant in the context of the Nigerian case developed in the paper, which shows how the IGFR failed to institute quality oversight over the activities of politicians. It also illustrates how such politicians, motivated by the desire to conquer and conserve one or several centres of decision-making, in the absence of checks and balances within IGFR system, have been deploying resource rents to serve patronage purposes.

The deployment of resource rents for patronage purposes constitutes a perverse policy choice from a developmental point of view. The Nigerian case shows that a conditional explanation of resource curse, which emphasizes political factors, does not imply that economic factors are not as important, but argues that the economic decisions of states are political products. Hence, a better understanding of the resource curse emerges from a study of the institutions and politicians entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing oil rents.

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Exploring Local Conceptions of Poverty, Wealth and Well-Being: Field Evidence from Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This article presents the conceptions of poverty by the poor in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe. It seeks to broaden the discussion of poverty around the definition of the poor from the perspective of the poor. A cause-effect framework for poverty analysis is proposed, as well as the introduction of the notion of 'enclavity' within a family in poverty discourse. These are the two primary contributions of this paper. The research suggests that, due to deepening poverty, people create enclaves around husband/wife relationships as a new form of resilience/collectivity. While the poor suffer from a lack of assets, ethics and networks breakdown as a result of poverty. The results suggest, as elsewhere, that poverty is multifaceted, thus driving to some confluence of conception.

Résumé

L'article présente les conceptions que les populations démunies de la Province Ouest de Mashonaland ont de la pauvreté. Il cherche à élargir les points de vue sur la pauvreté en s'appuyant sur la définition qu'en donne les personnes démunies, à partir de leurs propres perspectives. Un cadre de cause à effet pour l'analyse de la pauvreté est proposé ainsi que l'introduction de la notion de 'enclavité' au sein d'une famille en pleine discussion sur la pauvreté. Ce sont là deux contributions majeures du présent document. La recherche propose qu'en raison de la pauvreté qui s'intensifie, les gens se créent des enclaves de protection autour des relations mari/femme comme nouvelle forme de survie/collectivité dans un contexte où les démunis souffrent du manque de biens, de la morale, mais aussi souffrent des réseaux qui s'effritent pour cause de pauvreté. Les résultats de l'étude montrent que, comme énoncé autre part, la pauvreté a plusieurs facettes. Ce qui entraîne une certaine confluence de conceptions.

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Introduction

Poverty research needs to address the rich-poor conceptual schism because of the differences in meaning that different people attach to these conceptions, especially the rich and the poor. The thesis of this paper is that there is a rich-poor schism that needs to be investigated, especially from the perspective of the poor, in order to be able to do justice to the description and analysis of how people experience poverty. This paper is nested in the tradition that resonates with the others who make a subjective link to poverty. It is crucial to understand these conceptions as a basis to find the points of departure for rural development work as advocated by Chambers, principally if it is coming from the people who experience poverty. Yet, these conceptions are rarely used to describe the poor through their own eyes for purposes of understanding their situations and finding entry points for capacitating them to climb out of poverty.

At both the local and global scale, the situation of the poor seems to be worsening. This is despite the innumerable declarations to eradicate poverty, most notably as enshrined in the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015. These form a blueprint agreed to by all countries and leading development institutions of the world. Milanovic (2003:3) dismisses as simplistic the argument that:

> The only thing that a country needs to do is to open its borders, reduce tariff rates, attract foreign capital, and in a few generations if not less, the poor will become rich, the illiterate will learn how to read and write, and inequality will vanish as the poor countries catch up with the rich…leading countries and individuals to a state of economic bliss.

Hochschild (2002) and Anderson, Cavanagh and Lee (2000) note that, on a global scale, over the last 30 years the rich countries have grown richer, the poor countries have become – in both absolute and relative terms – poorer. Also, on a local scale, the rich are getting richer while the poor are becoming more desperate and numerous (in Robeyns 2004:1). In order to know how poor people understand and define poverty, the World Bank undertook a global research effort called *Consultations with the Poor*, which culminated in the publication of *Can Anyone Hear Us? Voices from 47 Countries, Voices of the Poor*, which was used to inform the 2000/01 World Development Report on poverty (Narayan 2001; Mowafi n.d). Narayan (2001:39) defines the poor as 'the true poverty experts'. 'While poverty is specific to locations, and indeed to social groups, there is a commonality of the human experience of poverty that cuts across countries, from Nigeria to Egypt, from Malawi to Senegal' (Narayan 2001:40). Understanding these descriptions is an

academic challenge. A sharper understanding of the phenomenon from the poor's point of view is needed, to be able to measure poverty accurately.

Within the context of South Africa, May (1998) contends that the perceptions of the poor themselves are a good way to derive an appropriate conceptualization of poverty.

In the same vein, Kapungwe (2004:505) argues, in the context of Zambia, that, unless people's perceptions and definitions of poverty and how to deal with it are captured and taken into account, any programmes aimed at combating poverty will yield very little, if any, success. Saunders (2004:4) contends that any definition of poverty should embody

> *community perceptions* (emphasis his) of poverty in some way – as reflected in Henderson's reference to community attitudes, or in Townsend's reference to activities, conditions and amenities that are widely approved, or in Mack and Lansley's reliance on social perceptions'.

Desai (1988) also grappled with the questions of defining the poor and asked:

> Do we mean by poverty some absolute state of existence at or below subsistence, visible to the naked eye, or do we mean a state where some members of a community are relatively worse off, or do we mean defining the poor in terms of subjective/ideological/political criteria?

This paper set off to explore firstly, how the poor of Mashonaland West in Zimbabwe define their situation and create a normative framework for cause-effect relationship and, secondly, to contribute to the discourse of defining the poor from the perspective of the poor. If the poor can be defined in whatever terms in their own eyes, it becomes possible to measure or count the poor in those terms. According to Silverman (2000:122) it may also be possible 'to treat the respondents' answers as describing some external reality (e.g. facts, events) or internal experience (e.g. feelings, meanings). Alternatively, it is a way by which people describe their world (Holstein and Gubrium 1995 as cited by Silverman 2000).

This paper seeks to explore the local perceptions of poverty and the role and importance of assets in Mashonaland West Province in Zimbabwe; establish poverty typologies found in this province; and identify conceptions of assets important to people from different socio-economic profiles for use in the development of a poverty index for African economies.

Data and Empirical Methodology

A mix of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) as well as semi-structured interviews was used in compiling the data.

Four focus group discussions were held as follows: Group One comprised 5 men and 8 women; Group Two comprised 12 men; Group Three consisted

of 9 women; Group Four was a mixed group of young people aged 18-24 years old comprising 5 males and 5 females. Mixed groups were used to see whether there is agreement or disagreement on poverty-related issues and engage participants in debate over those issues. All FGDs were recorded on tape. To preserve the anonymity of the participants, all names in this paper are fictitious and conjured.

Face-to-face, in-depth and semi-structured interviews that allowed for probing, were held with five gate-keepers and 30 villagers from the villages of Zimucha, Chakavanda and Washayanyika of Mhondoro Communal Area of Chegutu Rural District in Mashonaland West in Zimbabwe. Mhondoro is situated 40 kilometres from Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. Villagers in the area practise subsistence farming and their staple food is maize. The data collected is essentially qualitative in nature as it relied primarily on FGDs and interview data.

In order to minimise response bias, the people who participated in the focus group discussions were different from those who participated in the in-depth and semi-structured interviews. During data analysis, patterns were identified on a thematic basis and thus inductive qualitative analysis was done on the verbatim transcripts of the interviews and the focus group discussion notes. The key themes were: *Defining a poor person; Defining a rich person, Typologies of the poor, Describing the most essential items; Strategies to exit poverty; Causes of poverty and Coping mechanisms*. The data was collected from 1 December 2006 to 31 January 2007. The description and discussion in this paper does not represent Zimbabwe but represents a single case study in a poor rural setting of Zimbabwe. Access and consent were granted by the local authority, the chief, as well as the participants. Response feedback and feed forward between the researcher and participants were used to validate the findings.

Results

Defining a Poor Person

In defining a poor person, recurring themes were identified. The sub-themes were: lack of farming implements, lack of livestock, scavenging for food, husband and wife enclavity, poor dwellings, a life of many struggles and other necessities of life.

Lack of Farming Implements

In the group discussions, participants portrayed the poor in terms of possessions such as ploughs and related agricultural implements, however rudimentary. Since poverty manifests itself in multi-dimensional realities of multiple deprivations, depictions were made of the poor as people who are hamstrung on many fronts. A 30-year-old woman described it that: 'A poor person is someone who has nothing, who is suffering, he cannot plant crops

because he does not have the necessary draught power, such as cattle, with which to plough the land'. This conceptualization was also reported by others, also concerned with the absence of resources with which to plough.

Lack of Livestock

Participants also defined poverty as not having livestock. They agreed that lack of livestock is a contributor to deepening poverty. Other participants defined ownership of cattle as 'mandatory' and such ownership would make one's life 'better'. A 38-year-old mother of two explained that a poor person is someone who may not have chickens or goats or anything to keep. This view is supported by Bird and Shepherd (2003:604), who found out that:

> Severe poverty was associated with significant lower levels and common ownership of a number of critical productive assets – oxen (key for agricultural field operations), scotch cart (key for market and common property resource access) and even wheel-barrows (for transporting goods, and even people, over long distances by those without scotch carts. Land… was frequently left uncultivated because of deficits in terms of physical (oxen, in particular), financial (cash) or social capital to access labour.

Lack of cattle seemed to be a common problem for most of the participants, which resulted in the poor not being able to plant and harvest any crops from their fields. It can be inferred that cattle do play a central role in the livelihoods of people in this province who eke out a living on subsistence farming, and yet are faced with a multiple of deprivations that seemingly create a vicious circle.

Scavenging for Food

Scavenging for food was often mentioned in the group discussions. It became clear for the discussions that the state of being poor led to desperation. The poor resorted to desperate ways of eking out a living to the extent that scavenging for food in the neighbourhood and subsisting on donations became a part of life for the poor. This is in spite of the fact that the poor do have a desire to farm, and ordinarily want also to be self-reliant, as was attested to in the discussions and interviews.

Husband and Wife Enclavity

Women were identified in male-only focus group discussions as important in the community in which they were described as 'anchors' of the household who fulfil different roles as providers of familial harmony, labour and insurer of food security. The excerpt below illustrates this point:

> You must have a wife – without a wife there is no household (Majoni, male, 49-year-old, councillor).

This view is supported by another respondee who echoed the same sentiment that a wife is a partner in the productive process, who can generate income for use by the family and can play a role of advisor and care giver to the family. The importance of a stable household, in which men and women have clear economic roles, was emphasised.

While males-only focus group discussions mentioned that women are important as providers of income and food to the family, women mentioned the need for a man at the household level for headship. It was clear from the discussion that husband and wife became the locus of familial cohesion in times of desperation. For instance, some women expressed their wish for a male to head the household. One female participant prioritised her needs as follows: husband, savings, cattle, scotch cart, cultivator, harrow, wheelbarrow, goats and chicken in that order. A striking feature is the mention of the need of a husband by female participants and the mention of the need for a female companion by male participants, showing some interdependence and the need for joint livelihoods. In this case, lack of a spouse was associated with vulnerability, and even with theft.

In most group discussions and interviews, the articulation of the need for a spouse can be understood as an indication of a context enabling a new form of practice, if not engendering a new form of resilience. It is perhaps in line with Martha Nussbaum's capability of affiliation as understood as freedom to engage in various social interactions (2000). Having a spouse can provide the promise of accumulation of wealth as he/she can contribute to household welfare in whatever way. If conceived in social safety nets terms, it is meant to ward off vulnerability now and into the future. Such a phenomenon can be understood only when put into context, such as people's own values, value systems, strategies for coping and survival and the challenges before them, perhaps as new forms of collective activity – the creation of enclaves. Spouses are taken as valuable human assets and thus it is possible to infer that poverty encompasses collectivity and resilience. In line with this notion, Dreze and Sen (1989:15) define social security as using social means to prevent deprivation and vulnerability.

In articulating capabilities, Dreze and Sen (1989:13) argue for the broadening of attention from command over food to other influences, including command over other commodities with a bearing on nutrition and health. The argument to add wealth is has merit. People need more than just food and other basic commodities. According to White, Leavy and Masters (2003:381) welfare should be understood as reducing ill being, deprivation or disadvantage, taking whichever term one prefers. Streeten (2000:31) advocates an analysis of self-reliance in culture.

Poor Dwellings

In FGDs, dwellings were also mentioned as an indicator of a person's status in the community. The housing type for poor people was described as poor, typically makeshift and empty with no chairs to sit on. This is illustrated by the comment made by one of the participants:

> A poor person's dwellings can tell the whole story: His house is constructed using mud and metal tins. Both the roof and the hut are not durable and can collapse in a storm (Bindu, female, 32-year-old mother of two).

It was also mentioned in the discussions that some do not even have doors, lack furniture and are virtually empty to the extent that people sit on reed mats. Some poor people were reported to own a single *roundavel* (round hut) where the whole family sleeps – parents and children. It became clear that here were people whose living conditions do not permit privacy. This has serious social implications, as it impacts negatively on the children who can slump into anti-social and delinquent behaviour.

A Life of Many Struggles

Reference was made to a life of perpetual struggle for existence by the poor: a struggle to satisfy basics needs, such as bread; a struggle to keep the children at school; a struggle to remain mentally sound. Thus, poverty becomes a source and cause of both physical and mental stress. The binary deprivations of material and psychological ill being, indicative of psychological deprivation are captured in the following excerpt.

> A poor person struggles to make a living. He struggles to get bread, which in most cases he cannot afford. He has no children. Even if he had children, he may still fail to send them to school due to lack of money for school fees (Morand, male, 70-year-old, married, father of five children).

Other Necessities of Life

The poor also complain about not having the means with which to kick-start their lives such as credit and children for assistance in day-to-day chores. This is also related to the absence of the means to step on to a ladder of asset accumulation. Relativist conceptions of poverty also emerge as this 56-year-old woman had this to say:

> A poor person has no vantage point to talk about. He does not even have a wheelbarrow, sometimes no children to help him. And because of hunger, his suffering seems endless as he continues to languish in poverty (Nyembesi, female).

Bird and Shepherd (2003) argue that large family size makes sense in conditions of dependence on subsistence, labour-intensive agriculture and the absence

of effective social safety nets. By implication, children were regarded as a source of help and a safety net. If children were regarded in those terms, this has serious implications on the health of the women, particularly in the face of the HIV/AIDs pandemic and juxtaposed with the need to reproduce society.

In concluding this section, in most FGDs the major issues raised by the poor concerned their fragile asset bases, the quest for food and the struggle to sustain life on a day-to-day basis. Due to these multiple deprivations, poverty becomes self-perpetuating, pervasive and omnipresent. In summary,

> For a poor person it is difficult to find food to eat on a day-to-day basis. Once a poor person, such a person usually remains a poor (John, male, 55-year-old).

The notion of remaining stuck in poverty also suggests that time spent in poverty undermines a person's exit out of poverty.

Defining a Rich Person

In contrast to the depictions of paucity on all fronts, which characterized the poor, the rich are associated with cattle, availability of agricultural implements, decent housing and good furniture.

> A rich person has cattle, ploughing implements such as harrows, scotch cart and cultivator. He has his own chickens and good housing with all the household necessities such as sofas and household utensils 'midziyo yose yemumba', a kitchen with at least 3-5 pots and a couple of plates on the wall shelf. In the bedroom he must have a bed and wardrobe (Monica, female, 48-year-old, widow).

Conversely, this also suggests that a poor person does not have these assets. According to the participants in FGDs, good culinary practices and cuisine leading to good health, and attractiveness and beauty of their houses, are identifiers of the rich in the province.

> We see a rich person by the beauty inside his house. We see by the things which he owns, which are attractive and nice such as clothing and a brick house. He tills his land, has cattle and eats well. He has no problems, so to speak (Jessica, female, 67-year-old, widow).

Absolute ownership of a house, land and agricultural implements denote riches, if not a high standard of living. The poor make a clear distinction between borrowed and self-owned implements. To be considered rich in the eyes of the poor, one must own these assets and not merely having usufruct rights to the assets. A woman explained:

> Possession of self-owned assets of production means that a person can avoid borrowing.

Thus, ownership ensures continuity of production and the attainment of a high livelihood status in the eyes of observers. However, the views expressed here appear to be very modest views of wealth. It may well suggest that, in fact, the people described would be only a little above the poverty line themselves. This is consistent with the findings of May and Norton (1997:107) that the less poor ploughed with tractors, had cattle and owned livestock.

It was also mentioned that a rich person can also be seen from the attire he and his children wear and the lifestyles they lead. According to the participants, attire reflects a standard of living and social status. However, attire alone cannot be used to gauge a person's poverty status, as some people, especially among the rich, are palpably miserly.

Typologies of the Poor

The overall picture that emerges is encapsulated in the following typology – the poor were defined, on one hand as humble, honest but deprived, and on the other hand as 'scavengers', evil, parasitic, criminal, cheats, dirty and suffering as illustrated in this quote:

> The poor work hard, but they are dirty, parasites, matsotsi (thieves) and lazy (Munemo, male, 34-year-old).

Their homes were defined in terms of their structural vulnerability. How is it possible to restore the dignity of the poor given such demeaning descriptions? While Woodhouse (2004:18) argues that because poverty is what happens to vulnerable members of society, the focus should shift from the 'lack' experienced by the poor, but rather to action targeting social values and behaviour among the non-poor. It can be argued that action should rather focus on both the social values and behaviour of both the poor and non-poor; the poor with respect to their ambitions, expectations and hopes, and the latter with respect to their social responsibilities.

In FGDs words such as 'abundance', 'lots of' and 'many' were commonly used to describe what the rich must have. Participants emphasized that the quality of these assets also matters in distinguishing who is rich and who is not. A poor woman commented:

> A rich person's kitchen must have utensils in abundance (midziyo yakawanda) such as pots, dishes, teapots, plates which must be of high quality. In the lounge and dining rooms, there must be high quality sofas, dining tables, display cabinets, room dividers, TVs and a solar energy unit (Tracy, female, 38-year-old, two children).

The above quote provides some idea of wealth. In most focus group discussions, the participants spoke about the need for asset accumulation as a way to self-sustenance, in as much as it is a way to broaden choice and perhaps to ward off vulnerability. They emphasized that one has to have a start somewhere and build upon it to remain productive and be able to overcome the uncertain and unexpected. This suggests some level of awareness of the potential risks in life and the need to manage those risks at the household level.

What resonates in the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews is that there are many uses of livestock. Participants highlighted that the more livestock and implements one had, in terms of numbers that are of high quality, the better. This attests to the fact that rich people were able to 'strategise' by leveraging their resources to earn more resources. For instance, it was reported in the discussions that they might have between 10-12 cattle deployed differently: some are used as draught power while others are used to collect water from the well/borehole using water bowsers. They have goats, sheep, chickens, turkeys, and even rabbits for meat (personal consumption) and sale. Their granaries are usually fully stocked with food: 'lots of food'. The availability of these resources means that the rich are able to focus solely on farming their fields.

In interviews, participants claimed that rich people can build boreholes and toilets, which poor people cannot do. Even enclosures for their livestock must be well built, such as the cattle pens, pigsties and chicken runs. According to the participants, these are the things that separate the rich from the poor. Rich people were also reported to own shops. Thus, given their vantage point, a 56-year-old woman said:

> rich people own the shops from where we buy goods and services and therefore all the money goes back to them. Their children may be working while others may be resident abroad. Life in general goes on smoothly for them – at least from the outside (Nyembesi, female).

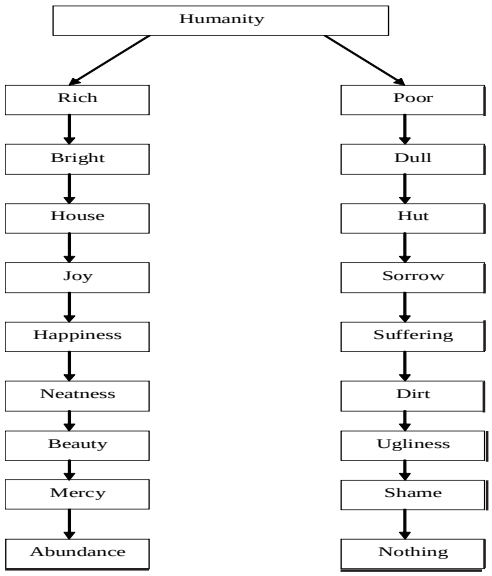
A number of people mentioned this caveat, which seems to suggest that there is an awareness that things might not be as they appear. Inherent in that quote is the notion of multiple sources of income. The rich own the shops and receive remittances from their children locally and from the Diaspora. In the discussions, it seemed the rich were getting richer as others felt that those who do not receive assistance via remittances could not compete for goods and services with those who receive them. It became clear that transfers and remittances do destabilize communities if some receive while others do not.

'Adequacy', 'necessities' of life, income generating projects reflect a portrayal of the rich from the point of view of the poor, however subjective. Participants mentioned that rich people enjoy diversified livelihoods

characterized by 'adequate implements for use at household level and a functioning income-generating project that brings in at least two or three cents every day'.

On one hand, life styles and standards of clothing were cited as indicators of well being associated with the rich. On the other, by inference, a dichotomous scale can be drawn as the testimonies were replete with descriptions of bright/dull; house/hut; joy/sorrow; happiness/suffering; neatness/dirt; beauty/ugliness; mercy/shame; abundance/nothing – to characterize the rich and poor respectively. These adjectives are shown below in the form of a tree diagram (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Tree Diagram of Rich-Poor Schism



While the typologies show some degree of polarization, these definitions tell us that alternative trajectories are possible: middle ground trajectories with allusions to the hopes and ambitions characterized by equity, equality and egalitarianism. Thus, the binary mapping of the rich and poor that emerges from this paper is one part of understanding poverty and its ramifications. Furthermore, perhaps these typologies can help in finding opportunities for prosperity and wealth for all, as the needs of the poor appear legitimate for

them to achieve what I call livelihood justice, based on the utilitarian perspective to ethics, which says that a decision or action should achieve greater good for the majority. In addition, typologies guide in transforming mind sets of all stakeholders to transform, reform and craft new, hopefully viable trajectories of the poor that make their lives worth living and to use Narayan's words 'catalyze positive social change' (2001:47) if necessary.

Describing the Most Essential Items

In interviews and FGDs, participants were asked to spell out the items they considered essential to exit poverty. As mentioned earlier, cattle came out strongly in all the discussions and across all groups. This is illustrated in the following quote:

> You need cattle, a scotch cart, cultivators. Cattle are essential. When the time for ploughing is here, and you do not have cattle, you see others working in their fields as you look and gaze. It is not a good and healthy sight. You see their crops 'mumera' coming up and you do not have such. You feel sorry for yourself. It pains me a lot when you do not have cattle (Monica, 48-year-old, widow).

This excerpt is important in that this person is commenting on what it means to compare one's position as a poor person with that of someone who is not. This brings out the idea of the 'other' – rich.

Participants went as far as equating ownership of cattle with a 'decent and enjoyable life'. Cattle were found to have multiple uses: cattle provide manure, beef, hides and draught power; hence their prominence. Participants argue that it is from ploughing and planting that one gets the food for own consumption and any surplus is then sold on the market to generate and boost household income. Emphasis on cattle suggests animal husbandry is important for the people of this province. Consistently, participants associated capacity to farm with wealth, and conversely incapacity to farm with poverty. Thus, it can be argued that lack of assets such as cattle, as in the case of Mashonaland West, can become a common cause of poverty, without invoking any populism around assets. According to the World Bank (1994:8) in poor rural communities, access to natural resources forms the predominant element of sustaining their day-to-day livelihood and [therefore] access to land for farming and for grazing animals are important.

In FGDs, participants narrated their wish lists which included such items as: projects (chicken and goat rearing);[1] community gardens; water pumps for irrigation because this area is drought-prone; boreholes to water the gardens; spraying machines for weeding; scotch cart to deliver crops to the market; and electricity. Consultees considered lack of these as impediments to development. The idea of communal ownership of assets was raised in

focus group discussions. Of importance to the community was a tractor. This is illustrated in the next quote:

> We need a tractor. If only we could have a tractor, which would be kept at the councillor's house, that would be excellent. You would pay to have your field ploughed/tilled. It will entirely be up to the individual to work their pieces of land productively after they have been tilled [using the tractor] (Jeremiah, male, 55-year-old).

There is emphasis on the importance of an adequate tractor, although this person appears happy with community-owned equipment. There is also that implied notional movement from community to individual. In a way this says, 'we are members of a community but at the same time we are individuals. We must stand on our own and perhaps be self-reliant'.

With regard to the number of cattle one must have to be considered rich, most FGDs mentioned the range 10 to 18 head of cattle. Respondents highlighted that cattle have a variety of uses in a rural setting. For example, cattle provide milk, beef and skins when slaughtered. Cattle can also be used for ritual purposes and payment of lobola. They are used for ploughing. They can be used as a means of transport, for instance, when transporting grains for milling into mealie meal. Cattle can be used for transporting harvested produce from the garden to the granary. They can be used to carry firewood. Participants also mentioned that a rich person must hold farming inputs such as fertilizers and chemicals, and spare parts for all implements so that production does not stop. The number of assets one owns does matter to the poor.

Strategies to Exit Poverty

There was a general consensus in the focus group discussion regarding farming as one of the panaceas to poverty. The group observed that some people within their community have managed to buy tractors, while others had bought cars as a result of farming. It was also highlighted in the discussions that some people have been able to educate their children with proceeds from farming. This may well contrast with other areas where people do not see farming as providing an exit from poverty as this could be typical for this area. Such sentiments were captured in the following words:

> If only we had enough rains coming as they are doing now, our standard of living would definitely improve, better than in other localities or provinces or even countries. Currently people can't do anything because of the poor rains. If only we had adequate rains, more development would take place in which the improvements in the quality of life of the people would be self-evident. Our people are informed and educated (Munemo, male, 34-year-old).

Causes of Poverty

The factors that hinder individuals and families from constructing pathways out of poverty need to be more explicit (Elllis 2003). To that end, this paper attempted to identify some of the factors in Mashonaland West which, according to the participants, included theft, 'the economy' and drought. These factors are examined in this section.

Theft

One of the major problems plaguing the community was theft: theft from fields, theft from granaries as well as cattle rustling. In-depth interviews with participants revealed that theft in general had become a major cause of poverty affecting many households. Elderly people and women-headed households were the major victims and targets of theft. According to the participants, poverty leads to the commission of criminal acts that also included the theft of chickens, goats and even vegetables from the garden.

With regard to theft, it can be surmised, given the foregoing, that poverty causes the breakdown of ethics; be they cultural or otherwise. As the stocks dwindle and collapse, people look for alternatives including unethical alternatives. Escalating crime affected especially the elderly and female-headed households. Testimonies abounded in the discussions of destitution arising from theft. In view of the increase in theft, consideration should be given to measures that help the poor build their asset base, especially focusing on their needs. Such an argument is premised on the fact that, if everyone has what they need, there is no need to steal from one's neighbour, as illustrated by a 55-year-old man who commented:

> To keep cattle is increasingly becoming difficult because of these criminals who steal cattle at night. You cannot sleep at the cattle kraals at night. People are crying in the community because of theft (Jeremiah).

People expressed a dire need for income generating projects implying that the characterization of the poor as hopeless and defeatist is stereotypical, even if coming from the poor themselves. Rather, it is imperative to understand why poverty-generating circumstances create and recreate themselves among the poor, to the extent that certain pockets of the poor may hold such notions of defeatism. This may hinder development as they sit in the 'comfort' of their poverty. Linked to this is the economy, which was mentioned as not helping the cause of the poor.

The 'Economy'

The economy[2] was identified as a cause of poverty. Participants mentioned the ever-increasing prices of basic commodities as causing poverty, because

the poor could not afford to pay for basic needs. Inflation was mentioned as 'enemy' of the people. This is captured in the quotation:

> The economy of the country is not performing well. Inflation is rising everyday and we remain the victims. The rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer (Maduve, female, 38-year-old).

The hyper inflationary environment worked against the poor – measures to restore price stability would be welcome by the poor. A shopkeeper commented:

> I change my prices twice or thrice a day. I close my shop when I see people flocking into my shop for a specific item. This signals a big change in prices. They will be wanting to buy from me for re-sell in their shops. We cannot plan in our economy. Food is no longer affordable to many (Johannes, male, 35-year-old).

Ellis (2003) argues that if markets are working well, and trade and exchange are flourishing, then this increases the cash in circulation in rural areas and gives individuals broader opportunities to construct pathways. The trickle up, rather than down, has prevailed as the rich got richer and the poor poorer. Thus the economy takes on a parasitic character when it is supposed to mediate the influences and counterinfluences that work against societal well-being. This further challenges neo-liberal orthodoxy or any of its variants. Goulet (1979:59–61) also posits that any strategy entails social costs and sacrificed priorities, and relying on the 'trickle down' alone is not enough without altering the underlying bases of resource uses. Participants also reported that, due to increased unemployment resulting from economic decline, remittances from local sources were dwindling, while those from the Diaspora were increasing.

Drought

Nature's vicissitude and unexpected climatic changes can have their toll on the livelihoods of people. The issue of drought resonated in the in-depth interviews as well as in the focus group discussions. Drought was mentioned as one of the major causes of hunger and suffering resulting in a shortage of food. The following excerpts crystallize the sentiments:

> Drought is one of the major causes of our predicament at the moment. For instance, even if you had two milk cows, drought affects their yield because of lack of grazing pastures. Where would these cows graze? Consequently, where would the milk come from? It affects our yields from our livestock, our crop yields in the gardens as well as yields from our main plots where we grow our staple crops. You cannot make progress. Anything and everything else you do is affected. We cannot do anything without water. For that reason water is precious to us. Drought is stifling and in many ways causes a lot of undue suffering (Munemo, male, 34-year-old).

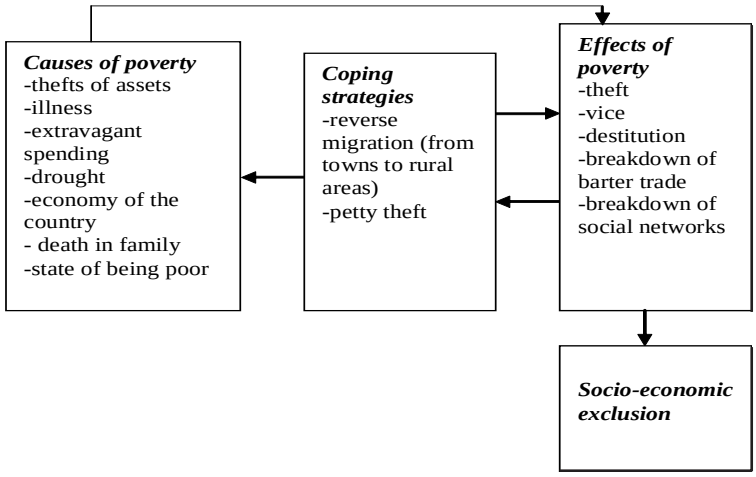
Lack of Farming Inputs

Lack of farming inputs and farming implements have been identified as a cause of poverty. The situation is exacerbated by 'farming failures' emanating from lack of rainwater due to drought and having to pay for hired implements.

In summary, in the focus group discussions, participants cited thefts of assets, illness, extravagant spending, the economy, drought, death in the family, and the state of being poor as causes of poverty. When probed about the effects of poverty, participants highlighted theft, vice and destitution as the significant effects of poverty. Regarding how people in the community coped with poverty, participants mentioned reverse migration from the towns to the rural areas as well as petty theft.

To illustrate this relationship, I develop a model for the analysis of cause-effect-cause of poverty showing how the various proximate determinants are linked to one another (see figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Poverty Cause-Effect Empirical Framework



The elaboration of the causes and effects of poverty from the poor's perspective as shown in Figure 2 provides a glimpse of the issues that need to be considered to avoid the social ills associated with being poor and the possibility of crafting options and pathways to exit poverty given such insights.

Coping Mechanisms

In this research, participants were of the opinion that, in the face of adversity and shocks such as death, drought, hunger and any disaster, NGOs and

government have a role to play. However, some felt that because of the different foci of NGOs and government, not all who needed assistance got it. The organizations that were mentioned mostly were Christian Care, Salvation Army and parastatal Grain Marketing Board as providing help during drought periods. A participant had this to say:

> We do not expect anything from anyone because we do not receive any assistance whatsoever. NGOs have their customary targets such as widows and orphaned children (Farai, male, 45-year-old).

Hopelessness, misery, despondency and helplessness characterized some of the responses from the discussants. From the interview data, it appears that the poor become spiritual in the face of adversity. Poverty emboldens people, as a male adult had this to say:

> Generally we exercise patience. As in the Bible, Job had patience and Samson had the strength, thus we derive our patience and strength from the Bible (Chatiza, male, 52-year-old).

It can also be argued that this excerpt may well represent resignation to their existing situation and reflects fatalism rather than becoming bold. Nevertheless, religion is important in shaping perceptions of poverty.

Borrowing was also mentioned in the focus group discussion as a means by which people coped during harsh times. Faced with hunger, people resorted to borrowing: borrowing of cash, implements and grain. At the same time, people were afraid of borrowing cash from moneylenders who were reportedly ruthless when demanding repayments of the loans.

A widely shared sentiment also emerging from the focus group discussions was that barter trade had collapsed because people had no possessions with which to barter. Furthermore, in focus group discussions, the poor testified that the cost of participating in networks was heavy, as this entailed partying with money by way of contributions, such as tithe, which many could no longer afford. Thus, with deepening poverty, barter and informal networks become increasingly fragile and collapse, as testified in FGDs.

Conclusion

Participants have knowledge of the causes of poverty. The causes of poverty were listed as drought, which decimates livestock and the environment; theft of assets, economy, death in the family and the state of being poor. While drought, theft, death in the family (especially concerning a spouse) appear self-explanatory as their impacts are well documented in literature, the mention of the economy is striking, as it is perceived by the poor as working against them – at least in their eyes. From the evidence, the state of

being poor invokes trans-generational reproduction of poverty and it became clear that shocks minimize the chances of exiting poverty, especially if their impacts are profound and prolonged such as drought. The findings also show that barter trade collapses in poverty, as the poor do not have items with which to barter. It can be posited that bartering works better where there is room for asset accumulation and a functioning economy where money and other assets are changing hands.

In creating a poverty index, it is imperative to place assets at the core of the index. It became evident from this paper that there is a need to properly manage economy-wide shocks such hyperinflation given their negative impact on the livelihoods of the poor. Of critical importance in that same vein, is the dire need to enhance the capacity and capabilities of the poor to accumulate assets as they open up the possibility of reducing their vulnerability. Some affirmative wealth creating investment aimed at the local level – 'ideally the village' – have merit in providing a partial solution to the alleviation of poverty as Madavo (2001) and Shao (2001) advocate.

Due to the range and limits of the conceptions of poverty, as discussed in this article, it is no wonder that there is not one definition of poverty that has withstood scientific rigour, and at the same time reflects the realities of the poor. It is possible to arrive at a confluence of descriptions precisely that poverty is multifaceted and its causes multi-pronged. It is possible to find solace in the words by Short (1996:1) that there is agreement that all of the definitions capture different pieces of the puzzle while no single measure can yield a complete picture. Hence, the debate rages on.

I agree with the view by May and Norton (2007:115) that qualitative analysis offers unique policy insights that are missed by more conventional methodologies. While some may argue that the poor are not the experts of their situation, in endeavouring they were at least given the opportunity to speak. Thus, the poor have spoken and been heard, and it is safe to aptly conclude with the hopeful words by Achebe et al. (1990:9) that 'the domain of the future is without boundaries'.

Notes

1. Projects allow for livelihood diversification (see Ellis 1998 as cited in Bird and Shepherd 2003). Bird and Shepherd argue that the diversification of the household economy is an 'acknowledged key to poverty reduction'.
2. This information on the economy of Zimbabwe is taken from the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to Zimbabwe Report (2007). Agriculture is the mainstay of the Zimbabwe economy in which the majority of the country's population is engaged. The country's economy has been

declining with the real gross domestic product (GDP) shrinking by about 42 per cent between 1998 and 2006. Unemployment and under-employment are rampant. Poverty has become worse in view of the consecutive depressed harvests and a phenomenal rise in the cost of living relative to the Zimbabwe dollar. Successive crop failures, severely constraining people's coping mechanisms, have compounded people's deprivation. In January 2006, the consumer price inflation was measured at 613 per cent; by April 2007, it had reached a new record of 3,714 per cent. Escalating inflation has consequently been reducing purchasing power of incomes almost daily. The monthly salary of a teacher for example is about Z$ 300,000 (about US$ 10) when the cost of transport to work alone can be a significant part of that. http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/10127e/10127e00.htm . 8 June 2008.

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The State, Globalization and the Survival of the Urban Informal Sector in Botswana: The Challenge of Public Policy

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Abstract

An emerging thesis from an ILO study by Xaba, et al. (2002) holds that in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) there is a general decline or stagnation in the growth of formal employment on the one hand, and an increase in informal sector activities on the other hand. Secondly, in some instances, the thesis posits, the informal economy plays a far more significant role in the country's economy than the formal economy. This paper, however, contends that this thesis seems to ignore the fact that there are wide differences in the extent of the expansion and growth of the informal economy in SSA. It is true that in some countries, the informal sector is flourishing and this, as we know, does not necessarily imply economic prosperity for the people because of the low-income generative capacity of the sector. However, in other countries, like Botswana, the structure of urban set up and its planning and environmental laws as well as the dominance of multinational supermarkets have restricted the opportunities found in the other countries, especially outside the Southern African region. Although Botswana is by far better economically situated than many other African countries where the informal sector is flourishing, its high rate of unemployment (relative to its prosperity) is traceable to the absence of opportunities that promote the flourishing culture of informal economy. This paper seeks to draw out the specific inhibitory conditions in Botswana that have to do with the forces of globalization as a

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public policy challenge. The State needs to address the issue of the relationship between the informal sector and the informal sector workers on one hand, and the state and the formal sector on the other.

Résumé

Une nouvelle thèse tirée de l'étude menée pour le compte du Bureau international du travail (BIT) par Xaba et al. (2002) soutient que l'Afrique sub-saharienne (ASS) est en train de connaître une régression généralisée ou une stagnation par rapport au nombre d'emplois créés dans le secteur formel d'une part, et d'autre part une recrudescence dans les activités du secteur informel. Par ailleurs, dans certaines circonstances, la thèse soutient que les activités du secteur informel sont beaucoup plus importantes pour l'économie que les activités du secteur formel. En tout état de cause, ce document soutient que la thèse susvisée semble ignorer qu'il existe de grandes différences sur le degré d'expansion et de croissance du secteur informel de l'économie en Afrique sub-saharienne (ASS). Il est vrai que dans certains pays, le secteur informel est en plein essor, mais comme nous le savons, ceci n'est forcément pas synonyme de prospérité économique pour les populations en raison de la faible capacité du secteur à générer des revenus. Cependant, dans d'autres pays comme le Botswana, et plus particulièrement ceux qui se trouvent hors de l'Afrique australe, la structuration des villes et leurs législations en matière d'urbanisation et de protection de l'environnement, ainsi que la suprématie des supermarchés multinationaux ont limité les opportunités. Même si le Botswana a une position économique beaucoup plus avantageuse que celle d'un bon nombre de pays africains où le secteur informel est florissant, son taux élevé de chômage (comparé à son degré de prospérité) peut s'expliquer par l'absence d'activités qui favorisent la prospère culture de l'économie informelle. Ce document tente de faire ressortir les conditions contraignantes au Botswana liées aux forces de la mondialisation qui constituent un défi de la politique gouvernementale. L'Etat doit examiner la question du secteur informel et ceux qui y opèrent d'une part, et d'autre part, sa relation avec le secteur formel.

Introduction

The State in Botswana has a hospitable attitude and generous policy towards foreign investors. Currently, the State has a generous non-visa policy that allows investors from Europe and America to move into Botswana without much hindrance. Since independence, the State has adopted a capitalist-driven developmental policy strategy that is 'clothed with a human face'. Hence, by a combination of the forces of stable political system, committed political leadership, good investment climate and good economic policies and management, Botswana is today regarded as the fastest growing economy in Africa and one of such in the whole world.

In spite of this, it is recognized, both officially and unofficially, that the growing high rate of unemployment is an unacceptable embarrassment to such a prosperous country. Higher unemployment is, however, found among the less educated and unskilled youth in the society. But a closer look at the structure of the economy reveals that some aspects of the informal sector, which in many countries employs a sizable percentage of this segment of the population, is not vibrant in Botswana, especially in the capital city of Gaborone as well as in the city of Francistown. This has become a major concern given the prevailing high rate of urbanization that has been a major feature of the country in recent years.

There is a general feeling that the growing rate of unemployment is as a result of the influx of immigrants, particularly from the neighbouring countries of Zimbabwe and Zambia among others. Yet, a deeper and more critical look reveals that the formal sector, dominated by foreign entrepreneurs, has over the years systematically appropriated the economic activities that would otherwise have been provided by the informal sector. For example, the establishment and running of private mechanic workshops that usually offer vast employment opportunities to citizens in many other African countries, are not viable in the city of Gaborone and, as such, are practically non-existent. This is mainly because the repair, maintenance and servicing of vehicles are done in modern garages owned mostly by foreign-owned companies. Also, public policy on urban planning and environmental matters is supportive of this state of affairs. This is reflective of the fact that the forces of globalization appear very active due to the hospitable nature of the State towards foreign investment.

This paper examines how this dynamic reflects on the survival of the informal sector since it is generally recognized that this sector is critical in the overall efforts of the State to increase the rate of employment and, by extension, alleviate poverty. In doing this, the next section of the paper looks at globalization and the urban informal sector, while Section three presents an overview of Botswana's economy and the nature of Foreign Direct Investment. Section four focuses on why Botswana can be seen as an exception to what we call the *thesis on the flourishing of the informal sector in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)*. Section five addresses the issue of globalization, gender and the informal sector, while Section six examines the question of whether informal sector workers in Botswana are passive victims of globalization. Lastly, the paper concludes and presents some policy recommendations.

Globalization and the Urban Informal Sector

(a) Understanding Globalization

Globalization is a phenomenon that has economic, political, socio-cultural, technological and educational dimensions, among others. Furthermore, it is a process by which the dynamics of these various dimensions are becoming increasingly homogenized throughout the world.

Globalization, according to Stiglitz (2003), is fundamentally 'the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world, which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge and (to a lesser extent) people across borders'. 'Globalization', he further said 'has been accompanied by the creation of new institutions that have joined with existing ones to work across borders'. Again, it 'is powerfully driven by international corporations, which move not only capital and goods across borders but also technology'. Importantly too, it has 'led to renewed attention to long-established international inter-governmental institutions: the United Nations, the International Labour Organizations (ILO), the World Health Organization', etc. As Stiglitz rightly observed, 'many, perhaps most, of these aspects of globalization have been welcomed everywhere' but 'it is the more narrowly defined *economic* aspects of globalization that have been the subject of controversy, and the international institutions that have written the rules, which mandate or push things like liberalization of capital markets'.

Economically speaking, therefore, globalization is seen as aiming at the 'progressive integration of various parts of the world into a global economy and global finance system' (Rogerson 1997). It involves among other things trade liberalization, greater flow of capital across countries and greater mobility of labour across borders (ILO/JIL 1998). It has also involved the implementation of the IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and other aspects of the *Washington Consensus,* which entails privatization, commercialization, restructuring, retrenchment, etc. As Tikly et al (2003) observed, 'globalization is not a new phenomenon'. Over history, globalization has appeared in one form or the other. Consequently, from the perspective of political economy, globalization is:

> the growing interdependence and interconnectedness of the modern world through increased flows of goods, services, capital, people and information. The process is driven by technological advances and reductions in the costs of international transactions, which spread technology and ideas, raise the share of trade in the world production and increase the mobility of capital. (DFID 2000)

(b) The Crowded Definitions and Features of the Informal Sector

At the risk of being tautologous, the informal sector refers 'to a segment of the economy where the agents of production are not only small in scale but also operate under conditions of "informality"' and the 'extent of informality varies across enterprises' (Sethuraman 1998). Historically speaking, 'the concept of the informal sector was introduced into international usage in 1972 by the ILO in its Kenya Mission Report'.[1] It was described in that report as a way of doing things characterized by (i) easy of entry; (ii) reliance on indigenous resources; (iii) family ownership; (iv) small scale operations; (v) labour intensive and adaptive technology; (vi) skills acquired outside the formal sector; and (vii) unregulated and competitive markets.

Ever since this original conception, there are as many definitions as there are writers on this subject and the differences (if any) can be distinguished from the emphasis placed on this extent of informality. Many definitions place emphasis on size using smallness, one-man (woman) or family ownership as definitional attributes.[2] Secondly, some definitions, while including the small size factor, also emphasize the unofficial and unregistered tie with the tax authorities as defining characteristics.[3] Thirdly, some other definitions have used the fact that activities in this sector are outside any formal regulatory environment and are rarely reflected in official statistics on economic activities in the gross domestic product (GDP).[4] Fourthly, there are definitions that characterize the sector by its petty trading, self-employment, causal and irregular wage work character in personal services or in manufacturing.[5] Yet there are few others that use its underground nature or illegality as well as its operation on the street, rather than in the office or factory, as defining characteristics.[6]

Many contemporary definitions of the informal sector have become an amalgam of these various defining characteristics. But, as a result of the different focus, this sector is often called different names by different people depending on the specific focus of a person on the subject. The Global Development Research Centre (GDRC) (2005) has identified thirty various names that writers give this sector. Some of these names are: the informal economy, underground economy, shadow economy, unofficial economy, hidden sector, invisible sector, irregular sector, black market, causal work, family-enterprise sector, one-person enterprise, parallel economy, petty commodity production, transient sector, unorganized sector, unstructured sector and urban subsistence sector. But even at that, the central features of this sector have remained recognizable because it has come to be characterized by all the various identified defining characteristics.

Consequently, the defining characteristics of the informal sector have been summarized by the GDRC (2005) using four broad indices of

employment, enterprise, habitat and credit (see these characteristics as an Appendix to this paper).

(c) Additional Features of the Urban Informal Sector

The urban informal sector reflects all of these characteristics, but in addition (in comparison with its rural counterpart), involves many activities of the modern economic sector as different from the pure traditional and agricultural sector in the rural areas. There is a wide-range of modern economic activities that urbanization has created in the areas of manufacturing, construction, commerce, service, transportation, information and communications technology, and the hospitality industries. Secondly, and more importantly, the urban informal sector is more highly exposed to the inhibitory regulatory control of the state than their counterparts in rural areas. State town planning and environmental policies and regulations make it more difficult for the urban informal sector to flourish than in the rural areas where competition for open spaces, is not as intense or over-regulated as in the cities. Thirdly, in the pure rural agricultural setting, characterized by lack of electricity and water, for example, there are some informal service activities that cannot be undertaken, but which flourish in the urban areas as a result of the presence of such utilities. However, these days, the presence of these utilities in the rural areas has made this distinction irrelevant since some of such activities are now carried out there. But even at this development, we can still talk in terms of the predominance of these activities in the urban areas than in the rural ones. Due to this predominance, we agree with Sethuraman (1997) that a large majority of the urban poor depend on informal sector economic activities for their livelihood and that there is strong association between incidence of urban poverty and informal employment.

(d) Globalization and the Declining Formal Sector Employment Opportunities in Africa

There is a range of evidence on the impact of globalization on employment, due mainly because of its differential impact across regions of the world and sectors. On balance, however, there is an agreement that globalization has led to increased loss of jobs in the public sector and a decline or stagnation in formal employment opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (see Xaba et al 2002). Also across the world, it has led to loss of jobs in the manufacturing and construction sectors of the private sector. There is also no controversy on the negative impact of globalization on women across sectors in different countries of the world. Consequently, the increased job loss in formal sector employment has led to the 'steady growth of the informal sector in almost all developing countries with the exception of East Asia'

according to the ILO's *World Labour Report* 1997-98 (see ILO 1999; Xaba et al, 2002). But, as Xaba et al (2002) observes, not much is known yet about the exact impact of globalization on the informal economy in terms of new possibilities for its workers to enter the global markets.

In Africa, there has been widespread loss of jobs in the public sector formal employment arising from the implementation of the IMF/World Bank adjustment programmes. As Dia (1993) rightly observed, 'at the end of 1991, there were fifty seven Bank-supported operations-Structural Adjustment Loans (SALs), Technical Assistance Loans (TALs) and Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SAD)-related projects in Africa'. Consequently, 'a wave of public sector retrenchments took place in the 1980s and has continued into the 1990s' (Rogerson 1997). The public sector reforms 'precipitated substantial layoffs, particularly in the lower echelons in several African countries', as Rogerson (1997) further noted (See Table 1).

With the continued implementation of such reforms in the new millennium in countries like Nigeria (which until recently had a former World Bank Vice president as its Minister of Finance), plans for further retrenchment are still on course. For example, the 2005 May Day celebration of workers in Nigeria was spoilt when President Obasanjo announced that his government had concluded plans to retrench over 60,000 of its workers. He however announced that 'those to be affected would be promptly paid their terminal entitlements'.[7]

Table 1: Public Sector Retrenchments in Selected African Countries in the 1980s and 1990s

Country	Period	Numbers retrenched	% of total period public sector employment
Nigeria	1984-1988	156,550	20
Kenya	1992-1997	149,000	30
Zimbabwe	1990/91 -1994/95	123,000	25
Ethiopia	1992-1995	80,000	15
Tanzania	1992/93-1994/95	80,000	30
Uganda	1991-1994	80,000	26
Ghana	1987-1991	49,873	15
Cameroon	1985/86-1991/92	47,639	20
Guinea	1986-1991	40,000	20
Côte d'Ivoire	1983-1990	15,000	15
Togo	1983-1985	5,000	10
Gambia	1985-1986	n.a.	17

Source: As reproduced by Rogerson (1997). However the Primary Source is: ILO-JASPA (1992).

(e) Globalization and the Increased Size of the Informal Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

As globalization leads to increased loss of jobs in the public sector, it is on the other hand leading to steady growth of the informal sector employment especially in the urban areas. It is estimated that 80 per cent of workers operate in the informal and agricultural sectors in the poorest countries, and over 40 per cent in the middle-income countries.[8] In Africa, the size of the informal economy as share of non-agricultural employment was 78 per cent, and 61 per cent to urban employment (Chen 2001; see also Xaba; Horm and Motala 2002). Xaba et al (2002) have provided an overview of the trend in the growth and size of the informal sector in some selected countries in SSA, as presented in Table 2.

An emerging thesis from the study by Xaba et al (2002) is that there is a decline or stagnation in the growth of formal employment on the one hand, and an increase in informal sector activities on the other hand in SSA. Secondly, in some instances, the informal economy plays a far more significant role in the country's economy than the formal economy. Thirdly, the informal economy is making an important contribution to the country's economic growth as reflected in some GDP data. We shall, in this paper, refer to these conclusions as the *thesis on the flourishing of the informal sector in SSA.*

Our paper however, contends that this thesis seems to ignore the fact that there are wide differences in the extent of the expansion and growth of the informal economy in SSA. It is true that, in some countries, the informal sector is flourishing and this, as we know, does not necessarily imply economic prosperity for the people of that country because of the low-income generative capacity of the sector. However, in other countries like Botswana, the structure of urban set up and its planning and environmental laws as well as the dominance of multinational supermarkets have restricted the opportunities found in the other countries, especially outside the Southern African region. Our paper further argues that, although Botswana is better economically by far than many other African countries where the informal sector is flourishing, its high rate of unemployment (relative to its prosperity), particularly among those who would have been productively engaged in the informal sector, is traceable to the absence of the opportunities that promote the flourishing culture of informal economy. Our paper seeks to draw out the specific inhibitory conditions in Botswana that have to do with the forces of globalization.

Table 2: Size of the Informal Sector in SSA

Country	Growth of Informal Economy
Central Africa	
Cameroon	In 1992, 80% of all jobs created were in the informal economy
East Africa	
Tanzania	1990- Informal economy contributed 33% of GDP
Kenya	1995- Informal sector employed 2.2m people, while formal economy employed 1.6m.
Uganda	Informal economy employment exceeds formal employment.
Southern Africa	
Angola	By the 1990's, 26% of all non-farm employment was believed to be in the informal economy.
Mozambique	30-40% of urban households depend on informal economy in the 1990's.
South Africa	In 1996 the urban informal economy employed 1m people and in 1999 it increased to 1.9m.
Swaziland	By the 1990's, informal sector contributed 22% of national employment compared to 10% in the 1980's.
Zambia	43% of urban employment is in the informal economy.
Zimbabwe	In 1996, the informal economy employed 1.56m people as com pared with 1.26m in the formal economy.
West Africa	
Ghana	89% of labour force employed in the informal economy.
Nigeria	Informal economy employs 1/3 of urban labour force.

Source: Xaba J. et al, (2002).

An Overview of Botswana's Economy and the Nature of Foreign Direct

Investment

Botswana is generally and rightly described as an exceptional African success story in development literature (see for example Stiglitz 2003). The World Factbook (2002) describes it as a country that has maintained one of the world's highest growth rates since independence in 1966. Through fiscal discipline and sound management, Botswana transformed itself from one of the poorest countries in the world to a middle-income country with a per capita GDP of $9,500 in 2002. However, it has high rates of unemployment and poverty. Unemployment officially is 21 per cent, but unofficial estimates place it closer to 40 per cent, concludes the World Factbook.

However, 2004 statistics released by the Government's Central Statistics Office revealed that the overall unemployment rate was 24 per cent (21.4 per cent for males and 26.3 per cent for females).[9] Also, the statistics revealed

that the rate of unemployment is highest among young people with those aged between 15-19 years recording 56 per cent, while those aged between 20-24 recorded 49 per cent. A current labour force survey (2005/06) by the same office revealed a reduction in the rate of overall unemployment rate from 24 per cent to 17.6 per cent (with 15.3 per cent for males and 19.9 per cent for females).[10] Both results (2004 & 2006) revealed that the rate of female unemployment was consistently higher than that of male. Presently, graduate unemployment is not yet a major problem, it is however increasingly becoming a source of concern. But the reality is that the majority of those in the age range 15-19 are non-graduates with primary, secondary, vocational and technical school certificates, some of whom are supposed to be engaged in the informal sector temporarily as a stopgap measure. This is in line with a study by Somolekae (1994), which revealed that 53 per cent of small enterprise owners in Botswana were primary school certificate holders, while 39 per cent had no formal education.

According to President Mogae of Botswana, the GDP per capita is now over US$3, 500 while the national budget has grown from under US$3 million in 1966 to US$3 billion in 2004. Furthermore, exports have grown from about US$2 million to US$2 billion in 2002, while imports grew from US$3 million to US$2 billion. Also, the number of people living under the Poverty Datum Line decreased from 47 per cent in 1993/94 to 30.3 per cent in 2002/03. Government provision of health, education, school feeding, etc., has helped to mitigate the effects of poverty (Mogae 2005).

According to the Financial and Economic Review,[11] Botswana has always been substantially open to foreign investment, and its early opening of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was rewarded with large inflows in the 1970s. A record annual inflow of $127 million was registered in 1979. And between 1975 and 2000, flows based on five-year annual averages remained stable as it ranged from $50 in 1981–1985, to around $70 in 1986–1990 and 1996–2000 periods, while it was negative between 1991–1995. South Africa, the review said, accounts for almost 50 per cent of the FDI in Botswana and dominates the mining sector as well as the wholesale and retail trade, construction, property development and financial services. This is followed by Luxembourg (30 per cent), which is in mining, then the United Kingdom (whose contribution is said to be quite considerable) and mainly in banking and service industries, United States (1 per cent), and Asia mainly in textiles manufacturing among the 2 per cent from other countries category.

With regards to FDI's contribution to employment, the Financial and Economic Reviews revealed that FDI has not been an important force in overall employment generation as in its contribution to the growth of production, exports and government revenues. This is because of its

dominance in large-scale mining, which is capital-intensive. Although this sector accounts for one third of GDP and three-quarters of the total stock of FDI, it generates only 3.5 per cent of total employment. However, the finance and business services sector contribute about 7 per cent with a stagnant number of employees since 1994. The manufacturing sector is said to have witnessed an increase since 1994, as its contribution to total employment increased from 9 per cent to 11 per cent. Also according to the Review, FDI was not originally allowed in selected small-scale enterprises in retail trade services and manufacturing in order to protect local entrepreneurs. However, the government has since relaxed the reservation policy in order to promote joint venture enterprises between citizens and foreign investors.

This relaxation is not unconnected with the spirit of globalization, and in no other place is this spirit more active than in the area of relaxing bureaucratic bottlenecks against FDI. Government has, in recent years, relaxed strict measures and adopted positive ones towards FDI. For example, as the Financial and Economic Reviews[12] reveals, the number of procedures for starting a business is now 11, as against OECD average of 6. Again, the ease of enforcing commercial contracts is assured with the number at 26, as compared with a regional average of 35 and OECD average of 19. Also, the number of days this takes is even lower at 154 days, as compared with 434 (regional average) and 229 (OECD average). The result of these generous policy measures is that foreign investors are playing active parts in many sectors of Botswana's economy. But the question now is: in what ways have these affected the growth and survival of the urban informal sector?

Botswana and the Thesis on the Flourishing of Urban Informal Sector in SSA

(a) The Nature of the Urban Informal Sector

The first problem that confronts any researcher on informal sector activity in Botswana is lack of reliable data, either from official quarters or from relevant international agencies like the ILO. The most recent and reliable ILO study on the informal sector in SSA by Xaba et al (2002) has practically nothing on Botswana except the reference that 77 per cent of its informal sector enterprises are home-based. Even at that, the data was based on 1992 survey. The Government's Central Statistics Office (CSO) has also confirmed this fact when it observed that 'the conditions of Botswana's informal sector activities in detail are not known empirically' (Report of Informal Sector Survey-1999/2000). But fortunately, it then carried out the latest survey in 1999.

The CSO (1999/2000) survey confirmed the observation by Xaba et al (2002) that most informal businesses are home-based. It found out that the

main difficulties confronting the operation of these enterprises were unavailability of credit facilities and lack of operational space. It also revealed that 99 per cent of individual owners of informal businesses are citizens. Furthermore, it stated that activities in this sector have increased with urbanization. Finally, it stated that the contribution of this sector to national net output is little less than 2 per cent.

However, two helpful studies which have been carried out on Botswana's urban city of Francistown are by Binsbergen (1993) and Butale (2001). They provide very useful background for our analysis in this paper. Binsbergen (1993) provides a very vivid description of Botswana's typical urban layout. Binsbergen revealed that Francistown's basic spatial organization has remained dominated by the state and capitalism, and their personnel requirements. Of particular interest to us is the interesting description of the relationship between the urban informal petty service providers and the supermarkets in the central business districts on one hand, and between indigenous customers and the supermarkets on the other. According to Binsbergen, many small peddlers of food and groceries in the outlying residential areas do their 'wholesale' purchases at these supermarkets rather than at the wholesale market. Secondly, more and more Africans (indigenous customers) now find their way from the traditional retail outlets to the fancy and occasionally cheaper supermarkets like OK, Spar and Fairways. These two identified relational activities have serious implications on the viability of the informal sector in Botswana. Binsbergen also noted the presence of Zimbabweans as vendors in the street of Francistown, a factor often cited by Botswana nationals as depriving them of making a living in the informal sector. This hostility of locals against such foreign informal sector workers is rooted in what they see as unwarranted competition from immigrants.

Butale's (2001) study revealed that the vast majority of those in the informal sector in Francistown are in retail commercial activities, followed by services with fewer in manufacturing. Secondly, the study revealed that females dominate the informal sector in Francistown. The study explains that women concentrate on service areas that are compatible with their domestic productive role. Although, the study found that majority of the informal sector workers came from the central district of the country, it also revealed that immigrants from neighbouring Zimbabwe constitute a factor, a point that emerged from Binsbergen's study a decade earlier. Some of the major constraints to the growth of the informal sector identified by Butale are lack of premises/working spaces, working capital, inadequate education and training as well as restrictive government rules and regulations. As we will show much later, these constraints were also among the ones listed by Lecholo (2004).

(b) The Absence of a Vibrant Urban Informal Sector and the Battle for Survival

(i) Town Planning and Environmental Policy Constraints

In the main urban cities of Gaborone and Francistown, manufacturing, commercial, construction and services sectors are dominated by the multinational businesses. The city planning structure allows mainly the sale of goods and provision of services in malls and designated areas where, however, the multinational supermarkets dominate. City council laws prohibit all micro-enterprise activities (such as retail trade transactions and service provisions by technicians and artisans) in any other unauthorized places. Generally, malls and supermarkets are present almost all over the cities, towns and big villages in Botswana. Their presence in many of the villages is noteworthy.

The informal sector activities in the services sector comprise petty traders of all types, such as agricultural goods sellers, food vendors, caterers, bakers, traditional herb sellers, etc. People involved in all these micro-enterprise activities must secure a permit to operate legally in the cities. Those who secure licenses are seen in their kiosks neatly placed along designated and authorized locations in the city. There is no doubt that this is a good urban environmental policy and management. The major problem, however, is that the limited spaces, open for this, impose unintended restrictive opportunities for new entrants into the business. At times, unviable locations are allocated and it is the case that sometimes some of those who get the licenses quickly abandon their assigned locations and go to other places they consider more profitable for their business. This development has even attracted the attention of city council officials (see Setsiba 2005 reporting the Mayor of Francistown who acknowledged this fact), hence street hawking has become a major problem in two big cities of Botswana, namely Gaborone and Francistown. Lamenting this problem, the Mayor of the Francistown City Council observed that 'the issue of illegal traders is a great concern' because there has been 'a growing number of the illegal hawkers especially in the city centre, which has led to overcrowding in such places' (Setsiba 2005).

The result of constrained opportunities has been that many of these petty traders operate illegally, leading to occasional conflict between them and the city council bylaw enforcement agents. Many of these hawkers have been arrested several times, with their goods confiscated, around big malls and shops where they target their would-be customers. As Setsiba (2005) reported, between January and April 2005, the council officials in Francistown arrested 85 people who breached the Township Trade and Liquor Act. Also, the big business owners in malls and shops have been complaining to the city authorities about the menace of what they call uncontrolled hawking taking

place in car parks in front of their premises (see also Setsiba 2005). From time to time, the city authorities react by ordering the hawkers out of such premises and other places (see Madiya 2005). Consequently, the seriousness of this problem led the influential Mmegi newspaper to write an editorial calling for an effective solution to the hawking problem.[13] It then contends that 'part of the reason why there is an influx of hawkers in towns and cities, is because hawking is the only business that many ordinary Batswana can venture in'.

Since authorized viable spaces/locations are mainly limited to designated areas, such as the malls and shops, there are enormous constraints for the expansion or flourishing of the urban informal sector. It is sometimes not easy to secure the services of tailors, hairdressers, barbers, shoe and watch repairers and technicians for servicing television sets, radios and refrigerators, because of their locational disadvantage to those who need them. In many cases, it is economically advisable to buy new products rather than look for people to repair and service old items. New clothes are bought as ready made from the supermarkets and little or no market opportunity exists for those that can make new clothes. Yet, this is one service area that employs a lot of people in other regions of Africa where there is the concept of an open market, characterized by easy and free entry by all kinds of petty traders and service providers. In such countries, the City authorities are more flexible in enforcing the use of unauthorized locations or open spaces along the streets for petty trading and service activities. The City Councils in Botswana have started to experiment with the concept of 'open market', but this is still very limited. There are for instance such open markets in the Gaborone city area called *Station* and in the BBS malls open spaces in the city of Gaborone too. However, in this latter location, which operates fully on Saturdays, the Chinese textile traders dominate. The Francistown City Council also designated specific locations for such open markets, but the locations seem to have led to running battles with the petty traders and service providers.

(ii) The Specific problem of Competition with Multinational Supermarkets

The greatest problem facing informal sector petty traders and miscellaneous service providers is the stiff competition they have with the big multinational shops and supermarkets. The wholesalers and supermarkets presently compete with the informal traders in the provision of goods and services. Generally, in the past, the wholesalers were not allowed to sell directly to customers but only to retailers. Currently, things have changed in the spirit of globalization, since many foreign investors in the system are also facing stiff competition among themselves. There are now big trade centres in big cities where retailers (rather than wholesalers alone) provide services. These trade centres also

often give attractive incentives to retain their retail customers through registering them with identification numbers that can earn them discounts.

In the food processing business, for instance, big multinational supermarkets such as OK Foods, Pick'n Pay, Shoprite, Payless, Spar, Score and Choppies among many others found all over the city, are now engaged in food processing and trading, which are general areas for the informal sector. One serious problem arising from this competition is that the prices offered by these multinational supermarkets are lower than those of the informal sector because of better technology, economies of scales among others. In any case, the prevailing shopping culture of everyone including the poorest of the poor is to go to the malls for regular weekly purchases. This in itself reduces the chances of a viable petty trading culture hence the high mortality rate. Some small business entrepreneurs financed by the state-owned Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA) complain sometimes in the mass media that the big multinational supermarkets are both their suppliers and at the same time their competitors as they hold two licenses of operation. According to some of them, it is just a matter of time for their businesses to collapse under such stiff and unfair competitive environment. This will therefore continue to push many of those in the informal sector to the fringes of the market considered less profitable. This should be seen as one of the reasons why many small businesses in this area have folded after a few years of existence, even with start-up capital from CEDA.

Many empirical studies have documented the high mortality rate of these small and micro enterprises in Botswana and in the Southern Africa region generally, where these multinational businesses also dominate (Ntseane 2000; Mead 1994; Daniels 1992; Somolekae 1994). In fact, a study by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1997 revealed that 50 per cent of the newly established small, medium and micro enterprises in all SADC countries go out of business within their third year of operation (see Lecholo 2004). Furthermore, Lecholo contends that as high as 80–85 per cent of these enterprises will disappear within five years of their start-up, due to the enormous constraints they experience. He listed nine formidable problems faced by this sector in Botswana that contribute to their high mortality rate: (i) lack of finance, which includes lack of information on sources of finance, inadequate risk capital, lack of collateral and complicated lending procedures; (ii) lack of entrepreneurial skills; (iii) bias of the education system against self-employment; (iv) lack of business start-up training; (v) shortage of business premises as a result of lack of access to land; (vi) excessive government laws and regulations; (vii) lack of marketing skills; (viii) lack of official data on the informal sector; and lastly, (ix) inherent biases against the informal sector. It is important however to point out that some of these

problems have been addressed by the government, following the establishment of CEDA. This intervention was prompted by the high mortality rate of businesses established by citizens who were financed under the defunct Financial Assistance Programme (FAP), which preceded the foundation of CEDA.

The seriousness of the threats posed by multinational food chains came to the open towards the end of 2004, following the insistence by major supermarkets that poultry products not processed in the halal method would not be sold in their stores. There were a lot of controversies over this in the news. It was interpreted as a method to force the citizens out of the poultry business. One embattled critic reacted angrily:

> I feel that Botswana is being hijacked and Batswana are being bulldozed out of the poultry business by some exotic cultural practices of the minority. This has forced ordinary Batswana poultry farmers to go out of business due to bans by major supermarkets of poultry products that have not been prepared the halal way...One possible explanation is that this is a dubious business strategy aimed at bulldozing the majority of local entrepreneurs out of the poultry business and keeping it within the few business people... (David 2004).

This is against the background that Botswana 'has attained self-sufficiency in the production of poultry meat and eggs', with over 5,000 people employed in the poultry sub-sector in 2002, the majority of whom were women (Gaolathe 2004).

One other area that has reduced the vibrancy of the urban informal sector in Botswana is the absence of a large pool of private motor mechanics, technicians and electricians; another area that provides a lot of employment opportunities in other sub-regions of Africa. More established business entrepreneurs own modern garages with the state-of-the-art equipment and these are more attractive to clients. The few private mechanics in the city are mostly located in the city suburbs. In the process, young technicians from the many vocational schools in the country are robbed of the opportunity of starting their own private mechanic workshops. Normally, the graduates from the technical and vocational schools are 'expected to be more employable and more amenable to self-employment' (Gabathuse 2005). In 2005, added to this is the belief (even by the citizen vehicle owners) that immigrant motor technicians from Zimbabwe and Zambia are very competent in the business. Many of the garage owners go out to hire these immigrants, which in the process displaces citizens. But the problem is not the non-hiring of citizens but the lack of viable opportunities for them to start and compete well with such sophisticated garages in this particular service sector.

Some informal sector mechanics have complained very bitterly in the past about the Gaborone City Council authorities and the police (Motshwane 2005). First, they complained about the lack of spaces for them to operate since they are not allowed to operate in the streets or in their homes. This they further pointed out denies them loans from CEDA to improve their business. Secondly, they complained of discrimination. According to one of them, while the City Council is chasing them from the streets, Zimbabweans are allowed to operate in the same streets. He then alleged that Zimbabweans might be paying the officials bribes to be the only ones allowed to panel beat in the street. Thirdly, the mechanics complained that the police give them a lot of trouble by accusing them of repairing stolen vehicles. This, they maintained, does not promote good business culture.

Another major area where the informal sector experiences difficulty is in construction. Big construction companies have dominated this sector for many years. Informal sector construction workers and artisans are not able to survive, due to stiff competition from the big companies. Like their counterparts in the service of tailoring, etc., as discussed earlier, it is difficult to find and engage artisans for household repairs and so on. Carpenters, plumbers, house wiring electricians, masons, builders, etc., are hardly close-by for hire by the low or average income earners. Some of them have to be contacted by phone in the organizations where they are employed, thereby making it difficult for self-employment to flourish in the urban areas. The locations where some of them cluster in the mornings waiting to be hired, restricts opportunities for easy access and engagement by low and middle income earners who may need their services. Like the auto mechanics, there are pockets of these artisans in the outskirts of the city. Such locations are also problematic for the same reasons.

The same problems exist in the manufacturing sector where the Chinese textiles and those from other Asian countries are gradually taking over the informal market because of their cheaper prizes. Also legal and illegal migrants from neighbouring countries, especially Zimbabwe and Zambia, have flocked to the urban areas thereby causing stiff competition in the informal sector.

Globalization, Gender and the Informal Sector

Over the years, an increasing proportion of female employment in developing countries has occurred in the informal sector of the economy (Sethuraman 1998; Moghadam 1999). As Rogerson (1997) rightly observed, women have consistently emerged as the major proprietors of the micro-enterprise in urban Africa. There is also an agreement in the literature that globalization has differential impact on gender and more particularly complex and contradictory effects on women (Cagatay and Erturk 2004; Chinkin 2000;

Moghadam 1999; Sethuraman 1998). As Chinkin (2000) rightly observed, it is an oversimplification to assume that the consequences of globalization have been exclusively detrimental to women or that they have been the same in all places. In some situations and places, globalization has enhanced employment opportunities for women, where previously they had not existed. And according to Sethuraman (1998), women in some countries seem to have benefitted from globalization in terms of jobs, but many of them seem to be of poor quality because globalization has been accompanied by informalization and feminization of employment (see also Moghadam, 1999).

The informal sector in Botswana provides demonstrative evidence to these theses. For example, one outcome of the government liberalization policy in the telecommunication industry has been enormous employment opportunities for the citizens, particularly women. Multinational companies and the state-owned telecommunication agency have been able to open a wide window of opportunity for the informal sector to flourish. A lot of self-employed women are found selling mobile phone re-charge cards and offering telephone services in what we distinctively refer to as the *Umbrella Shade self-employment.* These women telephone service providers are found in open spaces including the vicinity of the major malls and supermarkets.

This category of retail service providers in the informal sector (as different from, say food vendors) appear to have been overlooked by the city council bylaw enforcement officials, since they are usually found undisturbed in the vicinity of shopping centres. Although, these retail service providers do not constitute environmental nuisance in such vicinities (e.g. littering or 'creating cabbages' as food vendors may do), our investigations reveal that they are tolerated by the big supermarkets because they provide some form of complementary services. First, they indirectly bring in customers to the supermarkets. As females (many of whom are teenagers or in their early twenties), they attract a lot of young men who eventually end up going to the supermarkets for light refreshments, etc. Incidentally, the use of mobile phones has become a culture in Botswana, to the extent that if one does not own a mobile phone, the probability of being denied a home service delivery in many service areas is very high. Secondly, they are tolerated because they are not considered serious competitors and threats by the supermarkets as the offering of telephone call facilities are not provided in the supermarkets even though some of them sell recharge cards.

Perhaps, it is worth stating that generally, in spite of the gloomy picture of the negative impact of globalization on the informal sector in Botswana, the liberalization in the telecommunication industry is an island of positive exception in many SSA countries. For example, the entry of MTN and other

multinational service providers in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria opened a vast window of self-employment opportunities for many young people (especially women) that were unimagined some years ago during the long period of military rule when mobile phones were considered and licensed as a status symbol facility only for the rich. In both Botswana and Nigeria, the criticism has however, been that these employment opportunities generate very low incomes that still keep the people below the poverty line. As Rogerson (1997) reported, 'women earn less than men in the informal economy, because the most profitable and fast-growing small-scale businesses are dominated by male entrepreneurs'. Much as this is generally true, it all depends on the cities where the informal service providers are located as well as the particular locations within the city. Some women in more lucrative locations usually confirm that they are doing well and should therefore be encouraged by the government rather than being harassed by city officials.

Urban Informal Sector Workers as passive Victims of Globalization in Botswana?

It might be useful to explore the mechanisms, which the informal sector workers in Botswana have devised to negotiate their existence and survival despite the restrictions imposed by planning. Part of the social heritage of an average Batswana is an aversion to open confrontation and violence. This historically explains partly the existence of weak civil society in Botswana. But more importantly, it explains the widely held notion of Botswana as a peaceful and stable country.

For many years, urban informal sector workers, who were often harassed by the law enforcement agents, suffered in silence. Although, some of them individually complained from time to time in the mass media, they did not appreciate the need for those of them affected to raise a common voice. There was no effort to organize themselves, either for the purpose of making formal representations to the relevant authorities or to protest such harassments. However, things have changed in the last couple of years, perhaps as a result of rising unemployment particularly within this category of people. First, the informal sector workers have attracted the sympathy of the mass media. One such sympathetic editorial titled 'Stop frustrating young Batswana entrepreneurs', *The Botswana Gazette,*[14] called on the government to provide a wide range of assistance programmes such as subsidized mechanic workshops and small factory shells for them to prosper.

The turning point eventually came in January 2007 when the Gaborone City Council ordered all street vendors to close their shops by the end of 31 January 2007. The City Clerk announced that the Council had never given

the vendors permission to operate in unauthorised areas and it was high time they enforced the law. (see Mooketsi 2007). In a well-organized reaction, these vendors went *en masse* to the City Council to protest against the order. The protest elicited a positive response from the City Clerk who offered them temporary relief by asking them to go back to their trading locations for the time being. Consequently, the crisis generated by the evacuation order raised greater public awareness and consequently attracted sustained attention by the mass media and other relevant stakeholders. Within two weeks, a high-level workshop was organized to explore the possibility of resolving the conflict between desirable town planning and environmental laws, and the survival needs of many vulnerable citizens in the informal sector. Given what has happened so far, we can confidently say that the urban informal sector workers in Botswana are presently not passive victims of globalization. They have woken up from their long slumber to negotiate their existence and survival in an increasingly harsh globalized environment.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Although conditions in many countries in SSA have made it possible for the informal sector to flourish, perhaps as a result of the forces of globalization (through the liberalization of some key sectors of the economy and through trade liberalization), in some other countries like Botswana, the story has not been wholly salutary. Evidence in this study suggests that there are many constraints that are limiting opportunities necessary for the urban informal sector to flourish in key areas where the sector is known to dominate elsewhere. However, there is isolated evidence that the liberalization of the telecommunication industry has led to the engagement of a lot of unskilled labour, particularly women in the sale of mobile phone recharge cards and the offering of telephone services to people in scattered locations of the city.

A policy implication is that the state has to recognize that its interventions so far have tended to ignore the positive connection between resources such as credit, skills acquisition training, etc, and other inputs, such as land or viable business locations, that play a critical role in raising the incomes of operators in this sector (Sethuraman 1997). As Sethuraman further suggests, in respect to other countries where similar policy measures were adopted, physical location and access to proper premises (both closely related to legal recognition), determine the income prospects and opportunities for investment. The failure to recognize these inter-relationships has contributed to the marginalization of this sector in both economic and physical terms. The task for public policy in Botswana therefore is to prevent marginalization of the urban informal sector and at the same time ensure its integration into mainstream development.

Two recent best practices reported by Xaba, et al (2002) in dealing with the peculiar problems of the urban informal sector in Accra, Ghana (*for Street Trading and Hawking*) and in Dúrban, South Africa *(with respect to developing dedicated policies for supporting the informal economy),* are very instructive in this regard (Accra Municipal Assembly 1999; Skinner and Valodia 2001). Both of these practices are in line with the 1995 Bellagio Declaration by the International Alliance of Street Vendors, which calls *inter alia* for measures to make street vending a component of urban development, and to ensure that the often conflicting needs of stakeholders are mutually satisfied, including pedestrians, vendors, health officials and others (Skinner 1999; Xaba et al 2002).

An overview of these two best practices is helpful here for policy purposes (Xaba et al 2002 for details). First is the age-long problem of addressing the menace of street trading and hawking in the city of Accra. In tackling this problem, the Accra Sustainable Programme (ASP) and the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) adopted a participatory decision making approach by holding a consultation forum involving all stakeholders (traders and hawkers, market women and government officials). This meeting led to the setting-up of a working group on street trading and hawking. The group undertook a serious review of the problem (including how other countries like Tanzania and India addressed similar problems) and finally came up with mutually satisfying long-term solutions in its report. Some of the highlights of the report are: (i) creation of seven hawker markets in place of street markets; (ii) relocation of markets with the consensus of the traders; (iii) review of relevant bylaws and assigning greater enforcement role to the traders associations; (iv) auditing of training needs; (v) provision of toilets; and (vi) registration of all traders with the city officials.

In the case of developing dedicated policies for supporting the informal sector by the Durban Metropolitan Local Government of South Africa, a consultative approach involving a wide range of stakeholders was also adopted. A key aspect of this policy development process was an attempt 'to ensure that concerns of more marginalized stakeholders were heard and compromises were negotiated rather than imposed' (see Xaba et al 2002 also for details). As Skinner and Valodia (2001) rightly noted, the hallmark of the policy development exercise was the consultative and innovative intervention approach adopted by the Durban local government which, as Xaba et al (2002) reported, succeeded in mainstreaming the concerns of those working in the informal sector. These two best practices provide a serious policy challenge to the state in Botswana, and given its economic prosperity stories so far, it is hoped that it would appropriately confront this policy challenge.

Appendix

Distinguishing Characteristics of the Informal Sector as Identified by the G.D.R.C (2005) (Available at http://www.gdrc.org/informal/001-define.html).

Employment

Characteristics of the people engaged in the informal sector

1. Absence of official protection and recognition
2. Non coverage by minimum wage legislation and social security system
3. Predominance of own-account and self-employment work
4. Absence of trade union organization
5. Low income and wages
6. Little job security
7. No fringe benefits from institutional sources

Enterprise

Characteristics of the activities in the informal sector

1. Unregulated and competitive markets
2. Small scale operation with individual or family ownership
3. Ease of entry
4. Reliance on locally available resources
5. Family ownership of enterprises
6. Labour intensive and adapted technology
7. Absence of access to institutional credit or other supports and protections

Habitat

Characteristics of the informal sector land and housing

1. Unauthorized use of vacant public or private land
2. Illegal subdivision and/or rental of land
3. Unauthorized construction of structures and buildings
4. Reliance on low cost and locally available scrap construction materials
5. Absence of restrictive standards and regulations
6. Reliance on family labour and artisanal techniques for construction
7. Non-availability of mortgage or any other subsidized finance

Credit

Characteristics of informal credit markets

1. Unregulated and non-subsidized
2. No easy accessibility
3. Availability in very small size and for short terms
4. Low administrative and procedural costs
5. Little or no collateral requirements
6. Flexible interest rates (from very high to no interest at all)
7. Highly flexible transactions and repayments tailored to individual needs

Notes

1. Available at http://www.gdrc.org/informal/001-define.html.
2. A definition offered in this address: http://www.country-data.com/frd/cs/paraguay_glos.html.
3. See http://www.bized.ac.uk/virtual/dc/resource/glos3.htm.
4. http://www.populareconomics.org/globalization/html%20/Glossary.html.
5. http://www.uct.ac.za/depts./ricsa/projects/publicly/poverty/pov_def.htm.
6. http://www.geoinfo.amu.edu.pl/wpk/locsc/pe_glos.html;http://www.geocities.com/brianmyhre/3Def.htm; or http://www.globaleye.org.uk/secondary_summer2002/glossary.
7. Daily Champion, 2005, 'May Day Shocker: More workers to go, says Obasanjo'. Monday 2 May http://www.champion-newspapers.com/news/teasers/article_5.
8. Wickware: http://www.worldbank.org.htm/fpd/urban/urb_age/wickwa~/doc.
9. Monitor, 2004, 'Female Unemployment Rate Higher than Males', Monday 20 December, p.14. See also Dailynews, 2004, 'Survey shows growing income disparities', Monday 20 December p.2.
10. Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2006, 'Preliminary 2005/06 Labour Force Survey Result'. See Mmegi, Friday 15 December 2006.
11. Financial and Economic Review (2005): 'Foreign Direct Investment: The Investment Framework', Friday 29 April, p 6.
12. Financial and Economic Review (2005): 'Snapshots of business environment in Botswana', Friday 29 April, p.4.
13. Mmegi, 2005, 'Hawking problem needs effective solution', Wednesday 27 April, p. 6.
14. The Botswana Gazette, Wednesday 10 August 2005.

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Gaborone is Growing like a Baby: Life Expectancies and Death Expectations in Urban Botswana

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Abstract

This article examines the paradox of Botswana's twin reputations: first, successful national development and second, premature death from the HIV/AIDS epidemic. While locating these reputations in the capital city, Gaborone, the article analyzes reflections of people who are themselves the audience for, and participants in, the country's development. Ethnographic data reveal a dramatic shift in discourse by generational cohort in terms of explaining the apparent contradiction of successful development in the midst of tragedy. The article shows how official discourses of development and death are appropriated by a younger generation in Gaborone, in ways unanticipated in a meta-narrative of modernity. The emotional anguish of an older generation is absent in a younger generation's expectation that development goes hand-in-hand with funerals. The shift in perspective that is instantiated in Gaborone, reflects a profound transformation in the relationship between the production of knowledge and the state's expanding capacity since independence in 1966. This study contributes to the literature on development, modernity, African cities and the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Résumé

L'article examine le paradoxe des réputations jumelles du Botswana: premièrement, le développement national qui réussit, et deuxièmement, la mort précoce qui est due à l'épidémie du VIH/SIDA. En attribuant ces réputations à la capitale du pays, en l'occurrence Gabarone, l'article fait l'analyse des réflexions des gens qui sont eux-mêmes à la fois témoins et acteurs du développement du pays. Les données ethnographiques révèlent un changement d'orientation spectaculaire dans le discours imposé par la cohorte générationnelle, quand il s'agit d'expliquer la contradiction apparente de développement réussit en plein milieu d'une

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tragédie. L'article montre comment la jeune génération à Gaborone s'est appropriée, de façon imprévue, le discours officiel sur le développement et la mort dans une modernité méta-narrative. L'angoisse émotionnelle de la vieille génération n'existe pas dans l'espérance d'une jeune génération selon laquelle le développement va de pair avec les funérailles. Le changement de perspective instancié à Gaborone, reflète la profonde mutation qu'a subit la relation qui existe entre la production du savoir et la capacité d'expansion de l'Etat depuis son indépendance en 1966. Cette étude contribue à la littérature sur le développement, la modernité, les villes africaines et l'épidémie du VIH/SIDA.

Introduction

Over the past forty-five years, Botswana's economic prosperity has taken visible shape in the rapidly changing contours of its capital, Gaborone, a modernist city conceived and built in the 1960s. Botswana's success is represented by the continuous construction of the built environment of the city, which appears to provide tangible and visible evidence that the government's rhetoric of development is closely aligned to successful implementation. However, two government buildings constructed in the twenty-first century are a testament to the contradictions of Botswana's economic growth. The Department of Taxes and Attorney General is a tall, glass-enclosed building with an indoor waterfall; a symbol of prosperity in a country beset by water scarcity and drought. The neighbouring, multi-storey building, which houses the Ministry of Health, attests to the contradiction of urban growth in the midst of devastation due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The building dedicated to health administration dominates the skyline even as HIV/AIDS prevalence escalates to 35.4 per cent, according to the National AIDS Coordinating Agency (2002). This is one of the many ways in which Botswana's development success runs counter to the current discourse of development failure of the twentieth century, in terms of national and international development policies and practices in Africa. Botswana's twin reputations are not lost on its citizens, who are themselves the audience for, and participants in, the country's development. In the words of one Motswana woman, 'We have diamonds, we have parks, but we're known for HIV/AIDS'.

This article addresses the key question: What are expectations of modernity when development goes hand-in-hand with funerals?

Resistance to the development project, which was articulated in the 1960s and 1970s (Addo 1986; Amin 1977; Frank 1967), arguably reached the core of the dominant Euro-American discourse when former chief economist of the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz (2002), confessed to the 'broken promises' of international financial institutions. Despite widespread acknowledgement

that the development project has generally failed developing countries, particularly in Africa (Ake 1995; Escobar 1995; Houngnikpo 2006; Macamo 2005; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997; Rist 2002), there are examples of what are considered success stories, and Botswana is one.

The contrast between Botswana and Zambia illustrates a useful case for comparing so-called development success and failure in Africa, especially in terms of each country's dependence on a single mineral and focus on urbanization. Anthropologist James Ferguson (1999) argues that expectations of modernity in neighbouring Zambia forecast a linear narrative of industrial progress associated with urban expansion. His ethnography describes how narratives of urbanization, 'seemed to be a teleological process, a movement toward a known end point that would be nothing less than a Western-style industrial modernity,' until unanticipated reversals occurred, following a decrease in the market price for copper and failing structural adjustment programs (1999:5). Modernity's failed promise is the subject of his 'ethnography of decline' (1999:17). The Zambian industrial revolution described by him, was predicated on urbanization through mine labour and mining towns that developed in concert with the extraction of copper, a process that began during Zambia's colonial era and continued after the country's independence in 1964.

In Botswana, on the other hand, citizens recognize and applaud the development era in terms of government efforts since independence in 1966. For Batswana, who have only known a developed Botswana, increasing inequality has been part of the expectation and experience of modernity. Unlike Zambia, there has not been an industrial revolution in Botswana in the sense of an industrialized labour force being constituted through a process of urbanization. Industrialized labour, encapsulating manual and unskilled or semi-skilled labour, was historically displaced to South African mines with minor developments in Francistown and increasing growth at Selebi-Phikwe and Sowa. Unlike copper, the processes of production and distribution of diamonds are tightly regulated by a global monopoly, and therefore differently objectified in relation to free-market capitalism. Botswana's diamonds are extracted largely through mechanized mining in secured company/government towns, such as Orapa and Jwaneng. The premier site of the so-called urbanization in Botswana is the capital Gaborone, which could be considered an industrial city only metaphorically, because it is the centre for administration.

Ferguson's analysis of Zambia is compelling. However, when extrapolating from the Zambian experience to the rest of Africa, the analysis of development is less tenable. Ferguson argues, 'It is clear that ideas of development (often remarkably unreconstructed ones at that) hold great sway in many parts of

the world today, perhaps especially in areas (notably, many parts of East and Southeast Asia) that have enjoyed recent rapid economic expansion. … For Africa, at least, as for some other parts of the world, there is a real break with the certainties and expectations that made a development era possible' (1999:247). While this statement may be useful for understanding development in Zambia, it is less relevant for explaining Botswana, a place that finds itself in the midst of a so-called development era, yet offers no certainty in terms of outcomes. Ferguson's uncritical theoretical application of development in this passage obviates his initial purpose of emphasizing the specificity of local incarnations for understanding unwieldy concepts like development. Possibilities for alternative modernities within the continent are elided by comparisons of (broad-brushed) 'Africa's' alternative modernity to elsewhere in the world.

In the context of a generalized failure of African development, academic analyses of Botswana's political economy, democracy, and poverty have been framed within the context of success, even 'exceptionalism' (Good 1992; Gulbrandsen 1994; Nyamnjoh 2003; Samatar 1999; Werbner 2002). It is this context that is explored through ensuing interviews in this article.

I argue that an unintended consequence of successful development has been a fundamental transformation in the relationship between power and knowledge, which is expressed through a generational shift in attitudes towards death. With ethnographic evidence documenting the current narrative of expectation for social change in Gaborone, this article provides a sobering alternative to the narrative of expectation in urban Zambia, prior to its reversal of fortune. In contrast to urban Zambia, research in urban Botswana suggests that expectations of modernity are remarkably different in a city where development and death are closely aligned. What is most arresting about contemporary expectation in Gaborone is the assertion by a younger generation that there is *no* contradiction between national prosperity and the high rate of mortality. It is a striking contrast to an older generation's emotional anguish that the wrong generation is dying; their children are dying. Furthermore, there is an assumption that prosperity – indeed modernity – causes death, especially in the city. As Thuso,[1] a University of Botswana student, remarks: 'For sure Gaborone is growing and yet *people are dying cuz [of] its growth*. As it is growing, people come in with new ideas, new behaviours and new everything. The population increases, we have traffic jams, diseases [are] increasing, and people are dying'. [*sic*] These remarks, and others like them, offer striking insight into experience, perception, and negotiation of the possibilities, limitations and continuing uncertainties for life in an African city.

Methodology: A Sense of Place

This article is based on twenty-three months of ethnographic fieldwork, conducted at intervals from 1999 to 2003, that examines social and spatial transformations in Gaborone.[2] Here I focus my analysis on a series of semi-structured interviews that juxtapose two dominant narratives; one of urban growth and the other of a public health crisis. These narratives are grounded in local specificity and urban experience in Gaborone, a place that symbolizes development that 'global keyword for modernity' (Moore 2000:655).

The critical resources for this article are the narratives of people themselves in representing and discussing this juxtaposition. Interviews began with two statements, variations of which I heard repeatedly during my ethnographic fieldwork: one, 'Gaborone is growing like a baby, you know, babies grow very quickly,' and two, 'The only thing you need to know about Gaborone is that people are dying.' Respondents were then asked for reactions to these statements. The image of Gaborone growing like a baby is suggestive of the city's growth and development. Yet, this life-affirming imagery is circumscribed by people dying, a reference to what I assumed to be the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and I was surprised to discover that it involved a more complex explanation for causality.

Over the course of three months in 2003, two research assistants and I conducted thirty-five interviews. Respondents included a range of young and old, more and less educated men and women who live, work or attend school in Gaborone. Respondents were selected opportunistically; some were well-known to the interviewer, others were unknown prior to the interview. The patterns in responses show little variation, either as a function of the interviewer's identity or as a function of the relationship between interviewer and respondent. The pattern that emerged in interviews, and that is examined in this article, relates to generational cohort.

Importantly for the analysis, people were interviewed in the capital city at a fixed moment in time, during a period characterized by a rapidly changing global economy and an HIV/AIDS epidemic. It is possible that responses may have differed had the question been asked in another area of the country or at a different moment in the history of the city. In fact, the distribution of anti-retroviral medications to citizens was in its initial stages in Botswana at the time of these interviews. Death – an image of stunted development, growth and life – is a context that is critical for analyzing the discourse of development that emerges in the interviews, and for demonstrating a generational shift.

Without reservation, every person interviewed agreed with the two propositions: that Gaborone is growing like a baby and that people are dying.

The following comment typifies an initial response to the contrasting images of life in Gaborone, 'Yeah, I'd say it's true. Gaborone grows every day, people die every day.' The responses analyzed in this article offer remarkable glimpses into perceptions of an epidemic as it participates in creating both an emergent sense of place and also expectations of modernity in Africa today. In the next section, perceptions of development in Botswana will be discussed, followed by perceptions of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and finally an analysis of generational perspectives and patterns.

Gaborone is Growing like a Baby: Locating Development

Botswana has been called an 'African Miracle' (Samatar 1999), a country where democracy is said to flourish, where both national and international laws are respected, and where formal economic opportunities exist. The country's miraculous success is most readily and regularly represented in terms of quantification. The use of enumeration as a state-making practice of power, in relation to the production of knowledge and disciplining of populations, has been widely analyzed in the making of both colonial and modern states (Anderson 1991; Appadurai 1996; Cohn 1996; Pels 1997; Scott 1998). For example, James Scott argues that a 'politics of measurement' was among a series of reforms in nineteenth century France that 'promoted the concept of *national* citizenship' (1998:32). Similarly, but with reference to colonial India, Arjun Appadurai states, 'Numbers gradually became more importantly part of the illusion of bureaucratic control and a key to a colonial imaginary in which countable abstractions, of people and resources at every imaginable level and for every conceivable purpose, created the sense of a controllable indigenous reality' (1996:117). Whether as a colonial subject or as a national citizen, the ordering of society and perception of control involve a simplification that relies on measurement. While Scott analyzes state-making schemes that have failed, Botswana offers an example of state-making practices that have succeeded by many accounts in the successful promotion of development. According to Richard Werbner, development is 'a word that has actually not gone sour' in Botswana (2004:14).

State-making practices in Botswana have relied heavily on an enumerative discourse to tout success through comparisons to developing countries and as a measure of change with respect to a colonial past. The measurements of achievement emphasize the government's development of economic and social infrastructure, including thousands of miles of paved roads and thousands of students with university degrees (Samatar 1999). The government identifies the period from 1965 to 1990 as the moment when the country had the fastest growing economy in the world (Government of

Botswana 2003a). The government's official website proclaims, 'Botswana's economic progress since independence has been one of the few success stories of the African continent. Twenty years ago, the country was one of the 20 poorest countries in the world. Today, it is considered the richest non-oil producing country in Africa' (Government of Botswana 2003b). The international discourse of successful development is similarly exuberant in trumpeting Botswana's political and economic success in stark contrast to many of its neighbours. In 2001, the World Bank reported that Botswana was 'beating the resource curse' that had plagued other mineral dependent nations. A 2003 World Economic Forum survey of twenty-one African countries found Botswana to be the least corrupt (UN-IRIN 2003).

A major context for perceiving the country's success as viewed by its citizens, I would argue, is in terms of the rapid growth of Botswana's capital city. Like Brazil's capital, Brasilia, which was built in the 1950s 'as the acropolis of an enormous expanse of emptiness' (Holston 1989:14), Gaborone was created in the 1960s out of 'the bush' – 'that antithesis of the human world' (Livingston 2005:66). Brasilia and Gaborone both heralded a promise of citizenship at the time of their construction, which was premised on a modernist vision to reconfigure social relations through urban planning. Today, it is the visibility of the city's expanding built environment that is an everyday measurement of development. The visible changes in the built environment and patterns of urban development support the expectation that the city of tomorrow will be more than the city of today. 22-year-old Tiro notes the rapid rate of construction when she says, 'Gaborone is growing very quickly. If you were to come to town at an interval of two months, you will find that there is a new thing that is coming up that when you left was not there. So every day you will find something new that you haven't seen.'

Rose, a woman a decade older than Tiro, draws on memories of the shrubs and acacias of the *bushveld*; a sharp contrast to a landscape dotted with shopping malls. Since 2002, five new malls have opened their doors and could be said to rival not only one another, but also any international mall. Naming successively developed parts of the city, Rose remarks, 'It was not developed up to Phase 2 or Phase 4. There was just Phase 1. Bushes. It was just bushes up to Old Naledi. But now there are no bushes. It is just malls like Game City [a new shopping mall].' A state-making strategy for creating what James Scott (1998) calls 'legibility' is evident in the generic planning names (Phase 1 or Block 5) that simplify place and population.

Gaborone's growth has not only created new neighbourhoods, but has consumed nearby villages as demand for accommodation has inspired both the

poor and the affluent to move beyond the city's boundaries. 55-year-old MmaB describes the city's sprawl and absorption of neighbouring villages:

> Gaborone is still growing. Places are growing. When I see Gaborone, it has already covered Kgale; it has covered Tsolamosese; it has covered Mmopane; it has covered Mogoditshane. It has even continued to cover Sebele, even other places. It jumps north, south, and east …so Gaborone grows every minute. There are so many buildings.

She continues on about her first visit to the city,

> 'Gaborone of '78 … There were just so many spaces … It was just bush, it was very small … but it grew a lot. Most of the buildings were extended by the government'.

Gaborone was selected and constructed as Botswana's administrative capital in the 1960s. Previously, the British had administered the then Bechuanaland Protectorate from across the border in Mafikeng, South Africa. In the 1960s, Gaberones, as it was called, was a small township with limited infrastructure and few employment and educational opportunities. At that time, and for much of the twentieth century, Botswana's predominantly agricultural economy was supplemented by remittances from migrant labourers in South Africa (Alverson 1978; Schapera 1947).

Over the past forty-five years, Gaborone has become the primary destination for migrants, making it one of the most rapidly expanding cities in Africa. According to the 2001 census, Gaborone has a population of approximately 186,000 in a country of about 1.68 million inhabitants; a relatively small city on a global scale[3] (Government of Botswana 2001). Nonetheless, the capital is the vital centre of political and economic power for the country and increasingly important to the southern African region.

RraDineo, a 63-year-old man who helped to build Gaborone in the 1970s, describes Gaborone's growth, as 'It was just bush… that growth came through developments, through school education of Rre Khama'. RraDineo refers to Botswana's revered first president, Sir Seretse Khama. RraDineo continues, 'So, in town came developments of modern buildings … The ones which can touch the sky. *They are even built on top of one another*. I don't know why, since we thought that the land is still there, because as you travel you will see a land which is widespread in Botswana.' RraDineo's trepidation for skyscrapers is characteristic of many people of an older generation, who prefer their feet firmly planted on the ground and who perceive land as a plentiful, rather than scarce, resource. Nkoko, two decades older than RraDineo, refuses to ascend a multi-storey building by elevator, escalator or even stairs, because she perceives buildings built vertically to be unnatural and unsafe.

The city's expansion is further questioned in terms of the metaphor of growth. Lebo, a man in his late 30s who works as an assistant administrator in the civil service, remarks:

> A baby, unfortunately, when a baby grows, there are these diseases. A baby can get infected, so I mean Gaborone itself has its own problems that affect it.

Similarly, J.J., an undergraduate student at the University of Botswana, comments:

> You said Gaborone is growing like a baby, right. And if Gaborone is growing there are going to be advantages and disadvantages. You are going to have people dying as Gaborone grows, so I think they go hand in hand.

These statements, and others that are similar, present a puzzle: Do people accept that increased prosperity and burgeoning modernity can be had only at some grave price?

Everyone interviewed explained that there was no contradiction in the growth and prosperity of Gaborone and the tragedy of people dying. Therefore, expectations of modernity in Botswana include acceptance that development comes with a variety of troubles, a far cry from a linear narrative of progress that characterizes the enlightenment narrative of modernity. Across generational and gender contours, respondents make a similar argument: the baby's rapid growth is accompanied by serious growing pains.

Batswana define development in terms of increasing social and material infrastructure: education, hospitals, cars, roads, houses, malls, etc., and see them as (inherently) good or bad, but not without cost. The Setswana word for development *tlhabologo* – used for example in the phrase 'the country is developing,' *lefatshe le a tlhabologa* – means to build, upgrade or improve, with reference to a plot of land or the country or oneself. In the interviews, respondents more often used the English word 'development' rather than the Setswana term, even when speaking Setswana. When asking eighteen year-old Naledi about the meaning of the word development, she responded, 'We use a lot of English words and mix them with Setswana, so I use the English word. It means to make something better off.'

In the interviews, respondents state that development is a causal factor in their explanations for why people are dying. The most articulate explanations of such a perspective are voiced by University of Botswana students; members of a younger generation who are more likely to have participated, and continue to participate, in the opportunities offered through the state's prosperity. In the following remarks, Mosetsana, a University of Botswana student, critiques a shift in values that she implies may be inherent in the rapid growth of the city. She describes her classmates at the University of Botswana, many of

whom have come from other parts of the country, and who are impressed by the novelty of the big city:

> The one which says people are dying is because of the HIV thing and developments, cars and stuff like that … And again, the fact that people think they are living in a place which is developed … People have the tendency of blowing development out of proportion in their minds. Entertainment, energy, money, fun, you want to be there; you want to be seen there; you chase entertainment; there is too much of it… Developments are made to make life better for people, they are not meant for people to lose focus over themselves.

Mosetsana's reflections reveal her perception that Gaborone's rapid development translates into social problems. She observes that her classmates 'lose themselves' in the money, clubs and lifestyle of Gaborone, a place of numerous opportunities for social life. In a remark that resonates with capitalist urbanism, she places the responsibility for being lost squarely on the shoulders of individuals.

Observing Prosperity

If seeing the city as a place of development cloaks the specter of death, it does not mask an awareness of the uneven distribution of Botswana's socio-economic success. A person may observe prosperity without having the opportunity to partake in it. Development has been experienced very unevenly in Botswana. Economic success for the nation has been accompanied by an increase in poverty for many of the country's citizens. According to the government of Botswana, approximately 36.7 per cent of the population lives below the poverty level (Government of Botswana 2003a:24). Like many of the world's cities, such as Sao Paulo, Los Angeles and Johannesburg, there are visible symbols, including houses and neighbourhoods fortified by walls and security systems that accompany the growing disparity between rich and poor (Caldeira 1996; Davis 1992, 2006; Robinson 2000).

Some people grow rich and drive Mercedes, while others must walk, as RraKgomo describes:

> Developments are there, elsewhere, but not amongst the people… Flats are being built, roads are being built, these are developments… The road is being built; it is built for us, the people, since we travel with cars on that road. It is a development, we see it... But where are the people supposed to walk?… You walk in the road. This will mean you are developed if you walk in the road. *But can you walk in the road with tattered clothes while the road is beautiful?* (RraKgomo, a 69-year-old man who runs a tuckshop in Gaborone).

Others experience the city in terms of desires that seem perpetually out of reach. In my conversations with Naledi, whom I have known since 1999, she frequently voiced frustration at her lack of participation in the world of consumption, and her inability to purchase the latest fashions at the shopping malls that have come to dominate the city. In the context of the interview, she states:

> I think they're making a huge, huge mistake building all these malls… only a few people are working and only rich people can afford to go there and spend thousands and thousands of Pula. Not everybody, especially those people who don't really get anything from their jobs (Naledi, an 18-year-old who attends a government high school).

Naledi's remarks reveal that she, too, considers herself to be an observer of Botswana's prosperity. Like most people of an older generation in Botswana, Naledi's parents did not have similar opportunities for education or upward mobility that she and her siblings have today. Such opportunities were just beginning to become available in the 1970s, after Naledi's parents were in their youth. They did semi-skilled jobs to provide for their children, who later had the opportunity to earn university degrees.

Nonetheless, people express pride in the government. 22-year-old Tiro, who is a shop assistant and part-time student, remarks:

> The economy is growing. *Our government is doing the best it can.* The people of Botswana [are] suffering from AIDS, some of them are very poor while our country is very rich, so the development of the person is going down. There are better opportunities in Gaborone … if [you are] well educated and … know big people. Nowadays, it's about who you know, where they are in higher places, that's when you get a good job. If you don't have connections you'll starve.

Tiro perceives a wealthy country where many people struggle to make a living and to cope with HIV/AIDS. Yet, her comments converge with those of others who generally voice support for the government and the development process, but diverge in expectation for the individual who may not necessarily access the prosperity of the nation. One of the more obvious reasons is that HIV/AIDS affects virtually all families in one way or another. As Gaborone 'grows like a baby,' real babies are losing their parents, and members of the older generation cannot 'afford' to die, inasmuch as they become the surrogate parents of their own grand and great-grandchildren.

People are Dying: Locating Death in Gaborone

The government of Bostwana (2003a) has documented the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS for the country including orphaned children, rising health

care demands and costs, a diminishing labour force and economic slowdown. The number of funerals occurring weekly is another visible indication of the impact of HIV/AIDS. 54-year-old MmaB points out that funerals have become increasingly important social locations when she says, 'We meet at the cemetery'. 55-year-old MmaLesedi agrees on the frequency of funerals. She remarks, 'Not one weekend can pass without someone dying and plenty, not only one'.

The impact of HIV/AIDS contradicts, and threatens, the presentation of Botswana as Africa's shining example of success. It is again statistics that have been effectively deployed to paint this stark picture. The National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA) has estimated the prevalence of HIV at approximately 35.4 per cent, that is over one-third of the working population between the ages of 15 and 49 (NACA 2002). HIV/AIDS has reduced overall life expectancy by about ten years (Mogae 2005), and there is considerable concern about how the impact of the epidemic affects the stability of the economy as well as family life. The government of Botswana has declared a war against HIV/AIDS, and it is a country that has never been at war. Combating the epidemic has brought together national and international resources to sponsor prevention, research, and treatment.[4]

Amidst the growth of the city, the sounds and signs of the government's 'national war against HIV/AIDS' are loud and visible (Mmegi 2003:24). Discussions of HIV/AIDS in the government, in newspapers, on billboards, on radio and in schools are part of daily life in the city. Plans are made and resources allocated from Gaborone, the seat of the national government, as well as headquarters for international agencies. Funding decisions and plans for testing centres, hospital facilities, social and medical research, educational programs and treatment are made in Gaborone. MmaSetilo, a female lecturer at the University of Botswana remarks, 'There is definitely a lot of information, almost too much information these days. There are placards, there are boards talking about HIV/AIDS, the 'abc's'; that we should abstain, we should condomise, we should be faithful and so forth. It is easy to talk about' [*sic*]. American hip-hop artist Nelly has been included in the cause to increase awareness. He is on the radio warning, 'Yo, what's up Botswana! …Protect yourself, protect your future, wear Lovers Plus.'

Anthropologists Deborah Durham and Frederick Klaits (2002) describe how funerals have become important spaces for public negotiations of belonging in a nation that is beginning to recognize its heterogeneity. They discuss how sentiment is expressed through a language of civility at funerals, public spaces of death. In the present article, however, death is distanced from a particular setting, such as a funeral, and placed in Gaborone, a public

space of reputed prosperity. This juxtaposition results in an unemotional discourse about death from a younger generation.

I anticipated that HIV/AIDS would be the primary explanation for why people are dying as expressed in the interviews. While all of the respondents agreed that death is prevalent, the explanations were considerably more varied. Indeed, HIV/AIDS and motor vehicle accidents were frequently cited together. Several respondents also included crime and deaths associated with violent theft, as well as what are called passion or 'love killings' (murder/suicide of a couple).

There is an important divergence in explanations for car accidents and HIV/AIDS in terms of the attribution of causality, however. One respondent's remarks underscore a sense of helplessness that is articulated about an inability to protect oneself from HIV/AIDS in contrast to car accidents, which seem to be preventable. Lebo, a man in his late 30s who works in a government ministry, comments:

> People are dying, but we should take it as normal that at some point in time we should die. It's unfortunate, because when she says we are dying, it's simply because of accidents and AIDS, unfortunately. As for AIDS, it is a matter of really taking it seriously. But as for accidents, I mean, those can be controlled.

Lebo says that people can more easily prevent being hurt in a car accident caused by drivers' recklessness. It is a striking articulation in the context of the government's extensive HIV/AIDS prevention efforts, which have included a broad-based educational campaign since the 1990s (Chipfakacha 1997; Zaffiro 1994). My experience in Gaborone is that many school children in the city can recite from memory a detailed bio-medical explanation for HIV/AIDS. Yet, these interviews suggest a disconnection in meaning and intention in terms of the socio-cultural context of health and illness, if prevention appears unavoidable. MmaSetilo expresses a similar perspective in her response:

> There was a time when there was nothing here, even the population was so small. Developments were very minimal, but now you see a lot of people. But at the same time a lot of people are dying as well because of HIV/AIDS and because of road accidents. Road accidents for me actually are worse because these are preventable. We can prevent those. *But then with HIV we can prevent it, but I think people have come to a stage where they feel helpless about it, or they are helpless and hopeless. But in terms of road accidents I think that's because of recklessness.*

MmaSetilo's comments are provoked by memories of an absence of people and buildings in contrast to the current, visible presence of both, which she then associates with increasing funerals from car accidents as well as HIV/AIDS.

Her sense of helplessness in terms of HIV/AIDS is a sharp distinction from the recklessness of car accidents and suggests an inevitability of people dying.

The shards of broken glass, and orange and red plastic that dot Gaborone's intersections after a weekend certainly attest to high numbers of car accidents. In 2001, there were 526 fatalities from car accidents in Botswana (Government of Botswana 2003b:415). The same year, however, there were 26,000 deaths from HIV related illnesses (UNAIDS 2002). In the imaginative capacity of citizens, deaths by HIV/AIDS and car accidents are perceived as equally problematic, if for different reasons. The emphasis on death and dying by a range of causes, including but not limited to HIV/AIDS, is a notable difference from the special urgency that the government assigns to the war against the epidemic.

Generational Patterns and Perspectives

While all respondents agree that people are dying in Gaborone, the language used to frame death diverges along generational lines. In this study, I define generation by cohort, rather than genealogy, to mean people who share experience in terms of historical time (Durham 2004; Kertzer 1983). Older generation refers to a cohort born either during the colonial era or the early years of independence, while younger generation refers to people who came of age after independence in 1966 and who therefore had more possibilities for education and social mobility in conjunction with the development of the state.

The pattern that emerges from the interviews shows a striking contrast between how older and younger generations frame their comments about people dying. Respondents from the older generation describe social transformations in terms of a loss of culture and the development of new behaviours that encourage diseases. In contrast, respondents from the younger generation frame comments in terms of an unemotional discourse about population dynamics and demographics by referencing macro-processes of birth, death, and migration. The following section analyzes the explanations of an older generation, followed by those of a younger generation.

Older Generation: Narratives of Nostalgia and Loss

People of an older generation frame the issue of people dying in terms of loss of children and loss of cultural values and practices. With a sense of confusion and sadness, respondents describe that death is experienced very differently today from the old days. Though some respondents also mention car accidents, overall they were much more likely to discuss the implications of capitalism resulting in disease, notably HIV/AIDS.

> We might be getting a little bit [of money], but we are not the same as people of the old days. It is because this little [money] makes people have a brown heart [and become selfish]. In the old days, when you have seen a girlfriend,

> you would just face her alone [be committed and not sleep around]. Not like you see now. So then it means that these diseases will grow (RraThato, a 54-year-old man who is a caretaker at a school).

To RraThato, money and selfishness have changed the tenor of relationships between men and women today, and decrease in commitment has resulted in the growth of disease, a reference to HIV-related illnesses.

The following comment by RraSetlhare similarly refers to changing cultural practices in terms of the immorality of a younger generation. RraSetlhare states:

> These new diseases which have emerged recently, they emerge because of people not behaving. Because when you behave you will not get sick very rapidly … To behave is to build yourself, to be a person who was born by parents. Do not be running up and down looking for things like aunties [girls] (RraSetlhare, a 58-year-old man who is a carpenter).

RraSetlhare's reflections emphasize his perception that the younger generation no longer observes cultural practices that would otherwise avert the development of disease. His comments on good behaviour, in contrast to 'running up and down,' reflect a continuous refrain in Gaborone by older people, who shake their heads at the younger generation's literal and metaphorical mobility, and all it may signify in terms of sexuality.

45-year-old MmaSeapei, who makes her living by selling cooked meals during lunch hours at the Main Mall, explains that 'this disease' is attributed to *boswagadi*, an illness of the blood that occurs after a person's spouse dies (Ingstad et al. 1997; Klaits 2005). In brief, when a spouse dies, there are expected cultural practices, including wearing certain clothes and sexual abstinence, that accompany a period of mourning. The non-observance of these practices causes misfortune and is said by respondents to cause 'this disease.' MmaSeapei is referring to *boswagadi* in the following explanation:

> About this disease, in the old days… the woman would wear black but now that is not being done. That culture is not being done… [Today] you will not know when a woman has lost a husband. You will meet that person [have sex with that person] and get dirty blood [contract a sexually transmitted disease]…She would not talk [say that she is a widow]; the thing is she wants to eat.

According to MmaSeapei, practices of mourning are not being followed by women, who desire money and other things from men, and it is this loss of cultural practice and belief that is causing misfortune and death. Similarly, RraThato describes the selfishness expressed by men now wanting many girlfriends, which he perceives to be a change from his youth. These respondents comment on the epidemic in terms of changing cultural practices or, as RraSetlhare states above, in terms of 'people not behaving.' The

explanations by an older generation are in accordance with existing scholarly analyses of ethnomedical perspectives on death and dying in the time of AIDS (Bruun 1994; Ingstad 1990; Ingstad, et al. 1997; Klaits 2005; Livingston 2005). While research on bereavement (Klaits 2005), disappointment (Lambek and Solway 2001), and love and jealousy (Durham 2002) offer greater understanding of sociality and emotion, this study emphasizes the analysis of discourse in the context of a changing urban economy.

To some extent, reflections presented by an older cohort reverberate in ways anticipated by a life cycle change that not unexpectedly includes nostalgia for 'the old days.' In the early twentieth century, Schapera (1940) too recorded complaints by elders about a lack of adherence to traditional practices by youth in terms of taking care of parents. Ingstad argues that the idealized past 'remains a standard against which they [elders] measure their present life situation' (2004:65-66).

While accusations of neglect may have a lengthy tradition, there is more at stake than complaints about youth today from the perspective of the older generation. In contemplating the future, these respondents recognize that there is something fundamentally different and wrong about the experience of death today compared to the experience of death decades ago. In the following heart-wrenching statements, two elderly men acknowledge that the wrong generation is dying:

> The issue about people dying in Gaborone, it is not something that I understand well … We only hear about this disease …Some people will bury a child. One month passes and then the other child is sick, another one dies. The other one on the other side dies. It [a funeral] needs money. We don't know who will bury us when we die … *We don't know who will bury us when we die. They are leaving us. You will find that I don't have children. My children have died and it will be like I never had a child* (RraKgomo, a 69-year-old man who runs a tuck shop in Gaborone).
>
> The first education you are taught [by parents] is so that you can live, so that you can escape from the bad things. The pandemic which has just affected us … we are used to the youth not listening when their parents are teaching them. It does not make us happy, since *in the old days we were born knowing that the parents have to be buried by us* (RraDineo, a 63-year-old man who repairs shoes in Gaborone).

It is extraordinarily painful for parents to bury their children and challenges established traditions regarding social relations, obligations, and responsibilities. For example, RraKgomo and RraDineo also struggle with the question of who will bury them when they die. In a place where children are expected to care for aging parents, they too anticipated that their future

in old age and in death would be secured by their children or grandchildren, or their siblings' children or grandchildren (Ingstad 2004).

The comments by RraKgomo and RraDineo further convey a sense of frustration by elders who perceive that they no longer have authority or are shown respect. Many people of the older generation had little opportunity in their youth for upward social mobility in a modernist sense, and so have little access to the forms of power and knowledge that now dominate the city, including university degrees, administrative jobs, and high-end commodities such as cars. The city's prosperity, now accessed through children, thus ought to ensure a parent's security in old age. But with the wrong generation dying, expectations for the future have been drastically altered, no matter how such a future may be imagined.

Younger Generation: Narratives of Population Dynamics

In contrast to the emotional remarks of an older generation, responses by a younger generation suggest a normative experience that birth and death go hand in hand. Scholarship of health and illness in Botswana (Ingstad et al. 1997; Livingston 2005) provides insight into generational shifts in an understanding of illness. Unlike older Batswana whose perceptions of the causation of disease fall most readily within contexts of ethnomedical illnesses like *boswagadi*, Instad et al. argue, 'Younger people more often use modern medicine as a frame of reference or turn to ethnomedical and biomedical categories and explanations interchangeably' (1997:363–4).

The observation of a younger generation's increasing use of biomedicine to explain illness provides a useful analogy for understanding the younger generation's discourse of statistical abstractions. The state-making practice of disciplining a citizenry through simplifying measurements has become an effective technique of governmentality in Foucault's (1991) sense of the diffused relationship of knowledge to power. The following comments exemplify this pattern:

> Every day male children are born and female children are born. So, this means the growth rate increases as compared to the number of people who die. So this means that in a District you will find that in a day, a certain number of children would have been born. Let me say in Molepolole you will find that 10 children would have been born in a day, but 10 people would not have died …People die every day, I agree. The thing is people die every day but it is not equal to the rate at which people are born (Botshelo, a woman in her mid-30s who guards an ATM).

Botshelo attempts to reconcile Gaborone's growth and the numbers of people dying through a confusing demographic explanation of birth and death

rates. In the next excerpt, Kagiso uses a similar demographic discourse that is striking in its absence of emotional pain.

> It's true, people are dying and at the very same time, Gaborone is growing… M*aybe there's an equilibrium in the birth rate and the death rate*, because, as you know, Botswana is mostly affected by HIV/AIDS, and most people are dying from it. The population is growing rapidly, so I think maybe there isn't much space between the death rate and birth rate of people… *You see the most deaths are caused by accidents and HIV/AIDS. Those are the two ways that people die. And also we have people being born. So it's like a replacement, kind of a replacement*.

Both Botshelo and Kagiso's explanations of equilibrium between birth and death rates present a matter of fact response to the interview question, and appropriate a form of knowledge accessed through state-sanctioned institutions. It is likely that this discourse was learned through school, presented in the media, and sanctioned by an administrative city that is a bureaucrat's dream. Kagiso further states that people die from two causes: accidents and HIV/AIDS. Dying in/from old age does not enter into her calculation. The association of dying in old age is perhaps more aligned to an expectation of village life where proportionally there are more people of an older generation. Her appropriation of the demographic discourse is specifically located in Gaborone, and, I would argue, the narrative of demography is closed linked to the visible construction and identity of the city.

Gaborone is a city characterized by movement of the population, in the sense that residents often travel to home-villages or elsewhere, and there are many recent arrivals from other regions of Botswana. In the following comment, Gaborone is represented as a transient town, a place where people come and people go, usually to work, and where people die.

> These issues are both happening, you see, Gabz is growing too much, and again people are dying very much… The thing is people who die in Gabz are the people who have been staying in Gabz for a long time. There is always somebody who is arriving here, it will be their first time to come to Gabz… The population of Gabz is increasing and [Gabz] is also growing… As you can see Riverwalk has been built, Game City… Block 3, Block 6, Block 9, you see, this is growth… [Gaborone is] bigger every day… Those who are not taking care of themselves… It [this disease] is really finishing them, it is finishing us, even me included (Khumo, a man in his late-20s who is a salesman at the Riverwalk shopping mall).

Khumo was the only person interviewed to mention the possibility of his own impending death, yet he maintains a matter of fact presentation.

The relationship between visibility of the city's growth and the invisibility of people dying resonates in these interviews. There are numerous problems that accompany development, and the crisis of the epidemic appears to be subsumed within that discourse rather than separately recognized.

> [People are] flocking to Gabz so maybe the fact that there are more people coming in, that sort of takes away the truth [about] the number of people who are actually dying… Gabz is a sort of centre of attraction because of the availability of resources. Almost all government ministries and any other government sector [is in Gabz]… *A lot of people are coming here; so actually, I think that sort of like bails out the whole truth of realizing that people are actually dying*… People are dying because there are these problems basically: AIDS, accidents, health problems, in the city people eat a lot of junk food. Actually I see a lot of truth in it [that people are dying] but then I'm saying that maybe it is not being realized because there are more people coming to Gabz than are dying (Len, a 20-year-old man who is a NIT computer student).

Much like the Ministry of Health building, which houses bureaucrats whose responsibility it is to distribute resources to all aspects of health care while the city's primary hospital suffers from equipment and staffing shortages, it is difficult to see, or perhaps to imagine, the process of dying in a city dominated by development. Moreover, funerals (those spaces where death is socially recognized) happen more regularly in home-villages, where many people go during an illness or for a funeral.

This emphasis on visibility is not unlike observations made in other African cities. Simone (2004), for example, examines what he terms 'the manipulation of visibility' in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, where 'large numbers of young people have died of HIV-related diseases. Most have silently disappeared… It is a community with an extensive history of people coming in to stay and people leaving to go elsewhere, and death is simply imbricated into this already accelerated and extensive ebb and flow' (Simone 2004:66). Regular patterns of movement to and from Gaborone may similarly affect the younger generation's perception, such that people are often not seen for long periods of time, and being away could then mean passing away.

Gaborone symbolizes opportunity for young people and prosperity for the nation, a place where even death can be transformed into opportunity as the following comment implies:

> Right now you can go to Lynn's Funeral Parlor, you find that there are lots and lots of corpses there, being collected today because tomorrow's Saturday. And you know, in the past, let me say '90s, people were buried on the weekend only, but nowadays because of many deaths, people are being buried from Monday to Sunday. Because now people are dying, a lot of

> people are dying. And even the mortuary, they don't have enough spaces so you have to take people out in order to take people in… *It is a very good business, I can start one and I will be rich (*Kagiso, a female University of Botswana student).

It is not naiveté that gives rise to the preceding comments for it is impossible in this country not to be affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The government's process of fighting a war against HIV/AIDS has become, in some sense, a productive rather than destructive endeavour. The following comment by Kabo makes this point:

> *Everyone can see that Gaborone is developing*… If you think about a town like Phikwe or Francistown*; if you compare the death rate, more people are dying in Phikwe; more people are dying in Francistown. But as for Gaborone, really the death rate is not high. It is normal.* As you know, people have to die of course. We have funerals like any other place… So the most significant thing you can see right here is the developments, new infrastructure, new technology and improve[d] standard of living (Kabo, a male University of Botswana student).

Kabo's words point directly toward how a process of 'seeing' development, that is to say urban infrastructure, may affect the expectation of crisis in Gaborone. Moreover, the visibility of people dying is then made metaphorically invisible by a discourse that cloaks premature death in statistical abstractions. The process of Gaborone's visible growth through development initiatives is perceived to conceal the appearance of HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS has become part of 'development' in its own right.

The following conversation between Naledi and the author reiterates the 'normalization' of premature death as an expected accompaniment to an experience of modernity. At the time of the interview, 18-year-old Naledi was completing her final year of secondary school at a government school and hoping to attend the University of Botswana. The following response to the interview question shows how she uses global comparisons that emerge from a naturalized demographic discourse to argue that expectations of premature death – whether from AIDS or SARS – have become 'normal':

> Naledi: Yeah, a lot of people are dying, I believe everywhere people are dying. Yeah, you know how people are. Even in other countries or in other cities I think they experience the same [thing] that people are dying.
>
> Author: But do you think people are dying as quickly in other places? There are a lot of funerals here.
>
> Naledi: Yeah there's a lot of funerals. Every weekend there's a funeral, yeah, people are dying. With the AIDS issue people are dying. People are dying. A lot of people are dying and a lot are being born every day, so I think in a way

> it's not bad. Imagine if you were all being born and nobody dying, I mean only a few percentage dying, there'd be a lot of people in the country, so yeah it's sort of like a good [she bursts out laughing]. It's normal. It's normal that people should die, you know.
>
> Author: Do you think that AIDS is normal, that they should die like this?
>
> Naledi: I don't know what to say about AIDS actually. People are, we are being so stubborn, and we act so carelessly, but AIDS is really scary. And I think for the moment AIDS is less. People are thinking of SARS nowadays.

These remarks suggest that the younger generation seizes an imaginary connection with the global world through measurements. Following her thought process on birth and death, Naledi concludes that death is so normal that if not AIDS, it would be by some other cause. Her explanation for the normality of death is that people are born every day. Similar to respondents from the younger generation, Naledi does not mention that *who* is dying is unusual. For her generation, she accepts that it is normal to die, and she was just about to say 'It's a good thing' until she began laughing, recognizing the nonsense of her words. The repetitive theme throughout the interviews is that 'it happens everywhere', as JJ, a female University of Botswana student, states.

Though some would argue that this is a fatalistic discourse, I argue that this is a development discourse that has been appropriated by a younger generation, who came of age at a time when the development project and discourse shaped urban life and subjectivities in Botswana. In this sense, governmentality is a useful way of considering the productive dimension of power in relation to discursive practices as applied to Botswana. The present discourse represents a profound shift in expectation between an older generation, which experienced the shadow of a colonial state that considered Botswana a 'wasteland,' and younger generation, which has enjoyed the fruits of the successful state. The shift in explanation speaks to the power of the state in implementing the development project, as evident in the change in discourse of the next generation.

The younger generation is matter of fact about death, asserting that it is a normal part of life, an expected accompaniment to modern life. There is scarce mention that the rate and identity of those who are dying is unusual. In contrast, the comments made by the older generation show the abnormality of the situation by asking, 'Who is going to bury us?' A 29-year-old University of Botswana lecturer, who recently returned from a Masters program abroad, pointed out that, for two years in the U.S., she had not been to a single funeral. Nobody, not one of her classmates had died, she told me with amazement. It is normal that people die, but it is remarkable when people do

not die! The abstraction of birth and death rates are a relatively new, negotiated cultural discourse, likely imported through widespread, government-sponsored education and prevention efforts.

Conclusion: Expectations of Modernity in Gaborone

Old and young, men and women agree that there is a significant correlation between the experience of rapid urban development and the devastating experience of death. This has sobered their views of development, urbanism, and prosperity. In short, it has tempered expectations of modernity. 22-year-old Tiro explains:

> The fact that Gaborone is growing means that there are a lot of new things coming up. A lot of new things are good. *Some of the new things have effects that make people end up dying.* People want to buy things. People want to own something, and some are not even working. Some, yeah, they earn a living, they work. Some they don't work. They end up getting into prostitution and they get AIDS and they die. Some of the people have cars which are luxurious… They drive recklessly. They knock people down and they overturn. So you find that new cars are coming and people are dying from accidents! New things are coming and people are dying from AIDS and other things.

She observes that the city offers prostitution for some and cars for others; however, death remains a likely possibility for all.

Over the past twenty years, educational campaigns to prevent HIV/AIDS, which were based on a bio-medical approach that the government hoped would reverse the trend in HIV-related deaths, have not proven to make people any more hopeful about surviving the epidemic. The narratives represented in this article suggest that HIV/AIDS is more than a preventable disease; it is perceived as part-and-parcel of development. However, given the advances in anti-retroviral mediations and the government's current distribution policies, the discourse analyzed here may well privilege an earlier moment in the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

I have suggested that it is the visibility of prosperity and the desire to partake in the country's success, even in the face of death, that makes the epidemic appear to be less than an emergency, at least for a younger generation. A development project congruent with an expectation for improvement in the quality of life has therefore been unhinged by premature death. Whether by car accidents or disease, 'If it's your day, it's your day, you got to go,' so says 18-year-old Naledi.

The ways that members of the younger generation appropriate a demographic narrative, as I have shown, suggest two patterns: first the 'normalization' of the epidemic of HIV/AIDS, and second, a 'naturalization'

of an international and national discourse of development communicated through statistical measurements. That respondents discuss the city in these terms is indicative of the success of the dominant economic growth model. While the younger generation likely recognizes the explanations offered by the older generation, it is the state's rationality and discourse of numbers that have come to dominate their explanations. The generational shift that I have documented has not been pushed to the point of intergenerational antagonism, which Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) have characterized for contemporary South Africa. Nonetheless, these explanations parallel a shift in power away from a rural, agrarian base and toward a capitalist economy consolidated in an urban administrative centre.

The modernist vision to transform social relationships through urban planning was a critical element in the construction of Gaborone at the time of independence. In the 1960s, aspirations for democracy were couched in a promise of development not unlike the design of the parliament building. The architecture of the parliament building symbolizes openness and accessibility for a nascent democracy through its single-story design that opens into a park. In contrast, Botswana's twenty-first century economic prosperity is exemplified in the towering Ministry of Health building, which is designed for motorized accessibility and it can be difficult, even dangerous, to approach the front door on foot, due to traffic. The contradiction of concurrent premature death and urban development is manifest in the construction of a building that is dedicated to improved health administration at a time of HIV/AIDS. The twentieth century narrative of development as progress, a linear narrative of popular emancipation has been replaced by a narrative that naturalizes dying as a component of development, and does so by drawing on the very same statistical indicators that are intended to measure progress.

Notes

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3. Gaborone's population figures indicate 23.4 per cent growth from 1964 to 1971, 12.9 per cent from 1971 to 1981, and 8.4 per cent from 1981 to 1991, according to the Government of Botswana (1994).
4. National programs include: Botswana Christian AIDS Intervention Program (BOCAIP), Botswana Network of People Living with AIDS (BONEPWA), National AIDS Council (NAC), Government of Botswana AIDS/STD Unit, National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA). International support includes: World Health Organization, UNAIDS, African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnership (ACHAP), and BOTUSA.

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Children at Risk: A Study of the Psychosocial Impact of HIV on Orphans and other Vulnerable Children in Benin

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Abstract

This paper describes the effect of parental HIV on the life of children in Benin. A total of 2,043 children aged from 10 to 16 were surveyed on health, diet, violence, school attendance and psychosocial state. The results indicate that, while Beninese children who have had a parent living with HIV are not necessarily subjected to different economic and material conditions than those who have not, they do experience a much greater lack of psychosocial support. In contrast to children whose parents are not known to have HIV, these affected children are less prone to general illness (OR=0.69, 95 per cent CI 0.55-0.86). However, when they *are* sick, HIV-affected children are significantly more likely to undertake self-treatment (OR=1.38; 95 per cent CI 1.04-1.86) and more likely to work (OR=1.65, 95 per cent CI 1.04-2.60). They are also offered fewer meals than unaffected children (OR=1.94; 95 per cent CI 1.52-2.47). With respect to psychosocial factors, the data suggest that children who have had a parent with HIV have significantly higher levels of psychological distress than those who have not. Governments and civil society organisations need to address not only the material deprivation, especially hunger, of children thus affected by HIV, but also their need for social services.

Résumé

Ce document décrit l'effet sur les enfants des parents atteints du VIH au Bénin. L'étude a été faite sur un total de 2 043 enfants âgés de 10 à 16 ans par rapport à leur santé, leur régime alimentaire, la violence, leur présence aux cours et leur

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état psychosocial. Les résultats montrent que même si les enfants Béninois qui vivent avec un ou des parents atteints du VIH ne sont pas nécessairement assujettis à des conditions économiques et matérielles pires que celles des autres enfants, ils sont tout de même sujets à une absence d'assistance psychosociale. Contrairement aux enfants dont les parents ne sont pas reconnus comme étant atteints du VIH, ces enfants sont moins disposés à souffrir des pathologies courantes (OR=0,69, 95 per cent CI 0.55-0.86). Cependant, il a été noté que ces enfants concernés, une fois malades, semblent beaucoup plus disposés à se traiter eux-mêmes (OR=1,38; 95 per cent CI 1.04-1.86). Ils sont aussi plus disposés à travailler (OR=1,65, 95 per cent CI 1,04-2,60). Il a été également constaté qu'on leur offre moins de repas que les enfants non-concernés (OR=1,94; 95 per cent CI 1,52-2,47). En ce qui concerne les facteurs psychosociaux, les données montrent que les enfants avec un ou des parents atteints du VIH ont un niveau de détresse psychosociale beaucoup plus élevé que ceux des autres enfants. Les gouvernements et les organisations de la société civile doivent confronter non seulement la privation matérielle, notamment la faim dont les enfants concernés font l'objet, mais également satisfaire leurs besoins en services sociaux.

Introduction

In the beginning of the HIV epidemic, the international community increasingly responded to HIV as the emergency situation it was. Improved access to effective antiretroviral therapy now makes it possible to look beyond issues of survival, prevention and treatment, and start addressing issues of care and support for people affected by HIV. One group that has come more into focus is children of people living with HIV. The situation of children in the low-income countries that are hardest hit by HIV has been described as a 'rising tide of orphans' (Gosh and Kaplipeni 2004), referring to the fact that the number of children orphaned by HIV will not peak in the foreseeable future. Due to HIV, the overall gains in child survival have fallen, and the total number of orphans due to HIV is estimated to have grown from 11.5 to 15 million between 2001 and 2003 (UNICEF 2004a). If not for the HIV pandemic, the number of orphaned children would have declined globally. Most of the children affected by HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS 2007), and while there are many other diseases that take a high toll on family well-being there, they are socially more acceptable and do not bear the stigma associated with HIV. Such stigma not only 'infects the infected' but also marks their immediate relatives, including children (Brown 2001; Campbell 2005). From a child's perspective, HIV progresses through several stages – infection, illness and, if untreated, death of one or both parents. When a parent can no longer work or when people start staying away from the home, the child starts to feel the impact of HIV with the growing prospect of sorrow and grief.

The consequences of HIV are often unevenly distributed and can have a strong gender bias; for instance, a girl will often be removed from school to care for an ailing parent while her brother continues with his studies. Although there are only few empirical studies on the psychological impact of HIV on children in the developing world, a study of children's reactions to bereavement and their adjustment difficulties in rural Uganda has shown that losing a parent to HIV leads to higher levels of permanent psychological distress, as expressed through anxiety and depression, than losing a parent to other causes (Atwine *et al.* 2005). These findings are consistent with those from similar studies in sub-Saharan Africa (Adato *et al.* 2005; Nyambedha *et al.* 2003; Guest 2003; Foster and Williamson 2000).

In addition to the social and psychological consequences of becoming an orphan, a recent study of female adolescent orphans in urban Zimbabwe indicates a possible association between orphan status and increased risk of, for example, HIV or unwanted pregnancy (Birdthistle *et al.* 2008). It has increasingly become clear that African governments and the international community have failed to protect orphans and provide them with decent opportunities. To do so, however, it is important to understand the living conditions and coping mechanisms of children affected by HIV.

While there is a growing focus on the impact of HIV on children in the eastern and southern parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the situation of affected children in West Africa is poorly represented in the academic literature. Furthermore, research on children affected by HIV in countries with concentrated epidemics has been limited. Existing research on affected children has largely emphasised economic deprivation, rather than possible psychosocial consequences (Birdthistle 2004; Stein 2003). The main objective of the present study has been to assess whether children affected by HIV are experiencing more psychosocial distress than other children, and whether they are subject to negative differential treatment in terms of self-reported health status, diet, exposure to violence, or education.

Methodology

Context, Study Area and Selection of Participants

This study was carried out in Benin over a period of six months in 2005 in all 12 administrative departments.[1] Benin has a population of approximately 6.6 million people and a rich diversity of ethnic and linguistic groups, with the Fon, the Adja and the Yoruba as the most dominant. Approximately 31 per cent of the people call themselves Catholic, 24 per cent Muslim, 19 per cent Protestant and 17 per cent animist, with the rest referring to themselves as

belonging to another or no religion (INSAE 2001). Northern Benin is predominantly Muslim, while the Christian populations are concentrated in the southern and central regions. It should be noted, however, that the majority of the population practises Vodun (voodoo) in combination with another religion, and that Vodun plays an important role in official government discourse as well as in private life (Strandbjerg 2008).

Benin has a rather young population, with an estimated 48 per cent of the people being younger than 15. Although many of these children live a relatively uncomplicated life, a large proportion of them must confront major survival, health, educational and employment challenges. Living in one of the poorest countries in the world – the UNDP ranked Benin 163 out of 177 on its Human Development Index 2007/08 – Beninese children must face many obstacles before they reach adulthood. The child mortality rate is high, at 152 per 1000 live births (UNICEF 2006), and child morbidity is also high, with diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and malaria as the most severe diseases (INSAE 2002).

Benin has a pluralistic family structure with many polygamous marriages and many children born out of wedlock. While illegitimate children are not necessarily exposed to social stigma, protection of their rights has been regulated by a mix of traditional and colonial law (the *Coutumier du Dahomey* from 1930). It was only in 2002, after more than 10 years of debate and pressure from women's organisations and external donors, that a new family law, *Code de la Famille et des Personnes*, was adopted by Parliament. Among other things, this law guarantees basic inheritance rights and a family name to married women and to children, whether born inside or outside a marriage (Boko Nadjo 2004). If one or both parents die, custody of the children will typically be decided by a family council, the family's elders or a divine authority (a *Fâ*), without involving any legal authorities. Adoption from outside the country is almost nonexistent, and orphans are seldom placed in orphanages (United Nations 1999). Children in Benin have many duties and few officially recognised rights. One fundamental principle is domestic reciprocity, meaning that every child should perform household chores and contribute economically to the household (by working in the fields or engaging in petty trade) in exchange for protection, shelter and food.

Children affected by HIV are not the only children in Benin experiencing hardship and a higher risk of negative outcomes in life than their peers. One especially vulnerable group is known as 'Vodun children' – twins or children born with certain physical marks, who often, especially in northern Benin, become victims of infanticide or abuse (United Nations 1999). Other groups of vulnerable children include *les Talibés* – boys who are sent to Qur'anic

schools (Amadou *et al.* 2001) – and the 'Vidomegon' children who have traditionally been placed as domestic workers in urban households by their families (Kielleand and Tovo 2006). Additionally, Beninese children are at significant risk for trafficking since the country is a main source of child labour to the cocoa plantations of neighbouring countries (UNICEF 2005; Anti-Slavery 2000). *Les Talibés* and the Vidomegon children live away from their biological parents in often-exploitative situations. The difference between them and children affected by HIV is that children in the latter group have lost or can anticipate the likely loss of at least one parent to a heavily stigmatised, often fatal disease.

Benin is not as hard hit by the pandemic as many of the countries in eastern and southern Africa. New data indicate that its HIV prevalence is estimated to be 1.9 per cent of the adult population (age 15–49), or approximately 62,000 people (UNAIDS 2005, PNLS 2005). The number of Beninese children younger than 18 who have become orphans as a result of HIV was estimated to be as many as 28,000 in 2002 and was projected to reach 50,000 in 2008 (PNLS 2005). In principle, access to life-prolonging antiretroviral therapy is free for every child and adult who has tested positive for HIV. However, not all infected people are tested, so their actual status remains unknown. HIV-related stigma and misconceptions about the transmission of HIV are widespread, often in combination with Vodun beliefs. For instance, in northern Benin, HIV infection is referred to as 'the monkey disease', and many inhabitants are afraid of HIV-positive people and their children.

Study Design and Sampling Framework

This paper is based upon the results of a survey, which was a part of a larger study that used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In addition to the survey, the more comprehensive study included 170 focus group discussions with children and 171 with parents and foster parents. These discussions were supplemented by key informant interviews with schoolteachers, NGO representatives, health personnel and other resource people.

The study population was defined as children aged 10–16. The sample included two groups of respondents: a) children with a biological parent who was living with or had died from HIV, and b) children who lived with both their biological parents, neither of whom was known to be infected with HIV.

Children with a parent who is either living with HIV or dead because of HIV are referred to as orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs), and the other children as non-OVCs. This terminology is widely used by international development agencies (UNICEF and Benin 2004; UNICEF 2004b; Banque

Mondiale 2004) because it offers a practical operational definition, but it is not unproblematic. It loses some of its significance in Benin, where many children live separated from one or both of their biological parents for various other reasons, and where a child's vulnerability is associated less with being an orphan than with not having any family members who can defend the child's interests. Another problematic aspect is the fact that an OVC is defined as being younger than 18, an age-specific definition that is not particularly germane in a society where childhood ceases when a person marries or has a child, which often happens well before age 18 in Benin. Moreover, in some Beninese languages, including Batambu and Dendi, the word for *orphan* is also used to designate a child who is simply behaving badly and 'does not respect anybody'. Nevertheless, OVC has been retained as a case definition for this survey because it requires precise definitions to be meaningful, and a concerted effort was made to ensure that the research assistants employed a correct translation of the term in the various local languages used.

The quantitative data were collected using standardised questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions. Communities were selected from a national list of all registered communities – *arrondissements*, villages and neighbourhoods – using a random sampling approach. In each chosen community, households with at least one OVC were mapped using community-based lists, as well as information from local NGOs working with OVCs or HIV and from other relevant health organisations. To identify OVCs, it was necessary to rely on NGOs that assist children affected by HIV; while the actual serostatus of these children and their parents was not known, each of the children thus identified did have a parent who had HIV symptoms or who had died from a disease most likely resulting from HIV. It should be noted that the OVCs chosen through these organisations are likely to be better off than OVCs who are not receiving assistance from them, and that the OVCs studied may therefore not be representative of all children affected by HIV in Benin. A household was defined as a group of related people living together in the same compound. In each of the chosen communities, several households were then randomly selected. In the vast majority of cases, an OVC was matched with a non-OVC of similar age.

Prior to the survey interviews, informed consent for participation was obtained orally from all the selected children and their respective parents or foster parents. Field assistants interviewed each child in the local language and recorded the answers directly on the questionnaire.

The 50 field assistants who collected data were selected on the basis of their academic records, their experience with data collection and their knowledge of relevant local languages and the country's cultural and social

fabric. A team of senior researchers trained all the field assistants in how to interact with children in an empathetic way that respected each child's right to opt out of the survey at any point, and that arranged follow-up counselling when it was indicated. The field assistants also translated the questionnaires and interview guidelines from French into the local language, giving special consideration to key terms – such as *orphan, orphanhood, vulnerability, rights* and *protection* – that might prove difficult to translate exactly. For example, in Fon, one of the country's dominant languages, /Cyɔvi/ is used to identify a child with a dead parent, while /tɔcyɔvi / is used for a child whose mother has died and / nɔcyɔvi / a child whose father has died.

During a pilot phase, the field assistants systematically tested all of the data collection tools. To ensure consistency in administering the questionnaires, the assistants were divided into groups under the supervision of experienced team leaders.

The field assistants surveyed a total of 2,043 children aged 10-16 years old (1,033 OVCs and 1,010 non-OVCs). They also surveyed the adult head of each household to obtain data on household income (size and main source), assets and religion to help provide a general portrait of each household. Finally, the data were transcribed and then translated back into French.

Variables

Fifteen dependent dichotomous variables were included in the analysis, covering self-reported aspects of children's health, diet, violence, psychosocial condition and school attendance. The children were asked to answer questions based on their recollection of the previous two weeks, except for the questions about school attendance and graduation. Health indicators included: the presence or absence of general illness, of malaria, of diarrhoea and of stomach pain; self-treatment for general illness; and whether the respondent worked while being sick. Diet indicators included the number of meals available each day, and whether the respondent had been offered enough food in the last two weeks. Violence indicators were whether the child had been beaten by parents and/or foster parents, or by other children in school. Psychosocial indicators included whether the respondents felt discontented with themselves, whether they had negative feelings about themselves, and whether they felt isolated or rejected in school. School attendance indicators were whether the respondent had ever attended school regularly and whether the respondent had left school before graduating. In addition, the adult informants provided data for the household variables, including household assets, household income and the educational background of the parents or other caregivers. These variables were combined with the child's sex and age as covariables in a logistic regression model.

Data Analysis and Statistics

Research assistants entered the data under the supervision of senior statisticians. Logistic regression was then used to assess the gross and net associations between each dependent variable and OVC status. First, bivariate associations between OVC status and dependent variables were assessed. Subsequently, stepwise backward regression was used to adjust the significant associations obtained in the bivariate analysis for the effect of the two covariables, sex and age. All analyses used the SPSS software package, version 15.0.

Results

A total of 2,043 children were surveyed; see Table 1 for a general demographic and household profile of the study population. All the OVCs studied were living with members of their extended families. The male-female ratio for the sample was 1:1.3 for OVCs and 1:1.4 for non-OVCs. A total of 56.5 per cent of the households were characterised as poor, which was defined as having a monthly income of less than 25,000 CFA francs (• 37), while 39.3 per cent had no more than one type of household asset, such as a radio, telephone or bicycle. Approximately one third of the households surveyed included more than three OVCs.

The results of the bivariate and multivariate analyses are shown in Tables 2 and 3. In general, the overall response rate for questions related to health, diet, psychosocial condition and school attendance was high (79.5–99.8 per cent), but for questions related to violence the response rate was lower (29.5–42.1 per cent). Comparison of the children who answered the violence questions with those who did not answer them did not, however, reveal any marked differences in the age or sex distribution of the two groups.

The results of the bivariate analyses showed that OVC status was significantly associated with 11 of the 15 dependent variables. Of these, 9 remained significant in the multivariate analysis. Contrasted with non-OVCs, OVCs were less prone to general illness (OR=0.69, 95 per cent CI 0.55-0.86) but more prone to stomach pain (OR=1.40, 95 per cent CI 1.04-1.86). The OVCs were significantly more likely to undertake self-treatment (OR=1.38, 95 per cent CI 1.11-1.72) and almost twice as likely to work while sick (OR=1.65, 95 per cent CI 1.04-2.60). OVCs were also offered fewer meals than non-OVCs (OR=1.94; 95 per cent CI 1.52-2.47) and were twice as likely to indicate that they were not being offered enough food (OR=2.42, 95 per cent CI 1.71-3.41). With respect to psychosocial factors, OVCs were four times as likely as non-OVCs to feel discontented (OR=3.94, 95 per cent CI 2.80-5.54), five times as likely to have negative feelings about themselves (OR=5.46, 95 per cent CI 4.27-6.97) and four times as likely to feel isolated or rejected in school (OR=4.35, 95 per cent CI 2.37-8.00).

Table 1: General Characteristics of Respondents and their Households

Characteristics	
Respondents	
Number (males/females)	2,043 (1179/864)
Mean age (years) (range)	12.5 (10-16)
Households	
Number of children in urban households (% of total)	716 (35.0%)
Mean number of individuals in household (range)	8.6 (2-70)
Mean number of children in household <18 years (range)	6.1 (1-50)
Mean number of OVCs in household (range)	3.2 (1-15)
Number of households with more than 3 OVCs (% of total)	561 (34.0%)
Mean number of asset types in household (range)[1]	1.98 (0-8)
Number of children living with only 0-1 asset type in household (% of total)	782 (39.3%)
Number of households with low household income[2] (% of total)	939 (56.5%)
Number of households with agriculture as primary source of income (% of total)	824 (50.0%)
Primary Religion in Rousehold (% of total)	
Catholicism	481 (29.2%)
Animism	394 (23.9%)
Islam	371 (22.5%)
No religion	135 (8.2%)
Other	221 (13.4%)

1. Household assets were defined as radios, bicycles, televisions, refrigerators, motor-bikes, cars, land-line telephones and mobile telephones. The figure indicates the total number of different types of such assets.
2. Monthly household income < 25 000 CFA.

Table 2: Self-reported Occurrence of Illness and Food Intake among OVCs and Non-OVCs

	Health Status						Food Intake	
Variable	General Illness	Malaria	Diarrhoea	Stomach Pain	Self Treatment for General Illness	Worked While Being Sick	Offered 1-2 Meals/Day[3]	Not Offered Sufficient Amount of Food
No. of OVCs who answered the question (percentage reporting the event)	891 (52.0)	808 (20.2)	779 (4.0)	824 (19.5)	975 (61.6)	888 (8.7)	1,025 (38.0)	1,030 (18.1)
No. of non-OVCs who answered the question (percentage reporting the event)	933 (57.8)	850 (20.2)	831 (3.1)	855 (15.3)	961 (52.5)	856 (4.7)	1,002 (21.0)	1,008 (7.2)
OR (95% CI)[1] for OVCs versus non-OVCs	0.79 (0.66, 0.95)*	1.0 (0.78, 1.27)	1.28 (0.76, 2.18)	1.34 (1.04, 1.73)*	1.45 (1.21, 1,74)***	1.94 (1.31, 2.87)*	2.31 (1.89, 2.81)***	2.82 (2.12, 3.76)***
OR (95% CI)[2] for OVCs versus non-OVCs	0.69 (0.55,0.86)***	ns[4]	ns	1.40 (1.04, 1.86)*	1.38 (1.11, 1.72)**	1.65 (1.04,2.60)*	1.94 (1.52, 2.47)***	2.42 (1.71, 3.41)***

1. Results of binary analyses
2. Results of logistic regression analyses; adjusted for sex and age of child, items in household, urban/rural location, household income, and main source of household income
3. Versus 3-5 meals per day
4. Non-significant association

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$

Table 3: Self-reported Occurrence of Violence, Psychosocial Problems and School Attendance among OVCs and Non-OVCs

	Violence		Psychosocial factors		School attendance		
Variable	Beaten by Parents[3]	Beaten by Children at School	Feeling Discontented with Oneself	Having Negative Feelings about Oneself	Feeling Isolated and/or rejected at school	Have Never been to school	Dropped out of School
No. of OVCs who answered the question (percentage reporting the event)	441 (80.3)	289 (8.7)	936 (22.1)	988 (55.5)	1,023 (7.9)	887 (11.4)	916 (14.2)
No. of non-OVCs who answered the question (percentage reporting the event)	509 (85.6)	314 (7.0)	941 (8.7)	968 (20.7)	1,002 (1.7)	903 (8.7)	924 (10.8)
OR (95% CI)[1] for OVCs versus non-OVCs	0.67 (0.48-0.94)*	1.26 (0.69, 2.28)	2.98 (2.26, 3.91)***	4.78 (3.92, 5.84)***	4.98 (2.93, 8.47)***	1.34 (0.98, 1.83)	1.36 (1.03, 1.80)*
OR (95% CI)[2] for OVCs versus non-OVCs	ns[4]	ns	3.94 (2.80, 5.54)***	5.46 (4.27, 6..97)***	4.35 (2.37, 8.00)***	ns	ns

1. Results of binary analyses.
2. Results of logistic regression analyses; adjusted for sex and age of child, items in household, urban/rural location, household income, and main source of household income.
3. Beaten by foster parents and/or biological parents.
4. Non-significant association.

* P < 0.05, ** P < 0.01, *** P < 0.001

Discussion

Negative Differential Treatment within a Household

The findings from this study suggest that, in some respects, orphans and vulnerable children receive less care and attention from their caregivers than other children in the same household. At the same time, however, the results show that the effects of being an OVC are less pronounced than initially expected. For example, OVC school attendance is almost identical to non-OVC attendance, while somewhat surprisingly, OVC status can even predict slightly more positive outcomes, as in the case of general illness and caregiver violence. Nonetheless, OVCs were more likely to eat only one or two meals per day, and they also reported higher levels of dissatisfaction with the amount of food offered. In Benin, children are typically given a small amount of money to buy breakfast on the way to school, and it may be that OVCs are not always given this money and therefore eat less throughout the day. Access to regular meals is associated with intellectual performance and physical development; since the OVCs in this survey reported not receiving sufficient food, their learning abilities and general development have likely been compromised.

Another area where the data indicate strong disadvantages for OVCs is disease status. Considering that OVCs are at much higher risk for being infected with HIV perinatally and therefore for suffering from HIV-related illnesses later in life, it is surprising to find that OVCs are actually less likely to report general illness. It may be that many of the infected children die before the age of ten and therefore are not widely represented in the OVC sample. The data show that when OVCs are feeling sick they are more likely to engage in self-treatment, for example buying drugs at a local market or pharmacy. This finding suggests that OVCs are less likely to be taken to a health clinic or a traditional healer for treatment than non-OVCs. As the study did not specificially investigate levels of morbidity in the two groups, the health consequences of this relative failure to access available services are difficult to assess. However, it does suggest that OVCs are subjected to greater hardship, a conclusion supported by the fact that the OVC cohort was twice as likely to work while sick.

Levels of Psychological Distress Among Orphans and Vulnerable Children

One of the objectives of this study was to assess the psychosocial impact of HIV on children. The findings suggest that OVCs have significantly higher levels of psychological distress than non-OVCs, in accordance with findings from previous quantitative and qualitative studies employing other assessment methods (Birdthistle 2004; Atwine *et al*. 2005; Stein 2003). As indicated by the high proportions of both OVCs and non-OVCs who reported

being beaten by their caregivers in the previous two weeks, violence against children is endemic in Benin (Kielland and Tovo 2005). Although the data indicates that OVCs are less exposed to violence from their caregivers than non-OVCs, the association does not remain statistically significant after adjusting for the covariables.

The study also showed that Beninese OVCs are more likely to feel discontented with themselves than their peers are, and that they are as much as five times as likely to report that they have a negative perception of themselves, rather than a positive or neutral one. These feelings were just as pronounced when it came to self-perception in a specific social setting, for example school, where OVCs were again five times as likely to feel isolated or rejected. Other studies have found that OVC status is a significant predictor for feeling isolated in school, for example in South Africa, where 97 per cent of children orphaned by HIV reported that they had no close friends (Cluver 2003, as cited in Stein 2003). Thus, although the OVCs in the present study had almost the same school enrolment rates as non-OVCs, their learning opportunities may already have been compromised when they entered school, given that they have eaten less and are less likely to receive treatment when ill than their schoolmates. Psychological distress compounds these initial disadvantages.

Ways Forward: Areas for Future Research and Support

The results of the present study clearly support the presumption that children affected by HIV are at higher risk for various negative experiences, including not being able to eat when hungry, not being cared for when sick and not feeling social and emotional connections to others. The vulnerability of Beninese OVCs appears to be rooted in the dynamics of stigmatisation and poverty. They suffer a double stigma of being children who are associated as orphans with both bad behaviour (as noted above) and HIV; a widely feared infection. Yet there remains a dearth of comparative research into the similarities and differences between HIV orphans and other orphans. Most existing studies – this one included – compare children orphaned by HIV with non-orphans. It would be useful for future research to assess different kinds of vulnerability among different kinds of orphans.

The findings from this study may reflect the fact that many of the households surveyed were already constrained economically, and that parents who have taken an average of more than three OVCs into their household are already stretching meagre resources and merely choose to prioritise their own children. However, poverty and closeness of blood ties cannot explain all the negative differential treatment these children are subjected to both inside and outside their households. Stigmatisation and prejudice directed

against people living with HIV also affects their children and places these children in a difficult situation. It cannot be stressed enough that improving the lives of OVCs requires broad-based HIV educational efforts, as well as advocating for the rights of children in affected communities.

Though the OVCs studied have urgent physical needs, particularly for sufficient food, very few of these children receive any government help. Instead, they have all been unsystematically connected to various faith-based organisations and other NGOs. From these NGOs, they typically receive a small amount of food or other allowances, but it is very rare that they are given any kind of psychosocial support addressing the emotional neglect and other negative changes they have experienced during their parents' illnesses.

It seems obvious that Benin requires a new type of OVC support project, one that provides not only material support but psychosocial support as well. Such projects should assess each child's well-being and check up regularly on how they are handling their situations emotionally and psychologically as they grow up. One entry point for this kind of intervention could be schools, which are at present far from being a safe place that can support the passage of OVCs from childhood to adulthood. Another entry point could be the foster families, where regular visits from social workers would support caregivers in providing OVCs with appropriate care and development opportunities. Such interventions should not, however, exclude other categories of vulnerable children, as there are, as mentioned above, several other significant groups of children who live in Benin as *de facto* social orphans. The importance of inclusiveness is especially important in a low HIV-prevalence country like Benin, where singling out the relatively few children who are orphans as a result of HIV may only contribute to their social isolation.

Study Limitations

The present study has some overall limitations that chiefly relate to selection bias generated by the sampling procedures, and these potential biases should be considered before generalising the result to apply to Benin as a whole. As previously mentioned, the OVCs surveyed were identified by health sector and NGO staff and may differ from the overall population of OVCs. In addition, the non-OVCs surveyed were selected because they shared a household with an OVC, and they may therefore differ from the population of non-OVCs who live in families without OVCs. Finally, as mentioned above, less than half of the children studied answered the questions on parental and peer violence. This low coverage probably reflects the sensitive nature of the questions, which may have influenced the responses. Questions on sensitive matters such as these can often result in over or underreporting of the phenomena being investigated.

Conclusion

Even though access to antiretroviral therapy for both adults and children in Africa has progressed considerably over the past few years, the social impact of the epidemic there is far from over. Many more children in low-income countries will find their parents becoming sick or dying from HIV in the years to come, and their needs urgently need to be addressed. Although anthropological research has shown that the circulation of children in and out of different households and their residing away from their biological parents is a widespread and well-functioning phenomenon throughout the continent, the situation of OVCs there calls for special attention. This study shows that the current focus on providing these children with financial assistance has left some critical gaps. The children that HIV has made vulnerable do require material help, especially food, but they also require psychosocial support to help them thrive and grow. Governments and NGOs alike have key roles to play in ensuring that these children receive it.

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Performing Our Stories, Performing Ourselves: In Search of Kenya's Uhuru Generation

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> "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it". Frantz Fanon, 206.

Introduction

'Performing Our Stories, Performing Ourselves: In Search of Kenya's Uhuru Generation' is an auto-ethnographical study of the first generational cohort of Kenya's post-colonial era.[1] It explores the concept and reality of an 'Uhuru Generation' in Kenya by exploring the lives and creative responses of three of its articulators in the contexts in which they exist. The dissertation is a conversation between story-tellers, whose artistic careers and intellectual work approach the idea of a generational historical mission through the re-creation, invocation and facilitation of performance as a site of individual and communal reflection. In this way, the dissertation exemplifies Orature as an aesthetic intellectual tradition focussing on the transcending of boundaries in the making of meaning.

This study uses as its point of departure the vibrant debate that greeted Njonjo Mue's July 2000 seminal identification of Kenya's 'Uhuru Generation' as:

> that generation of women and men born after the midnight hour of December 12, 1963… [T]he true daughters and sons of Kenya, having been born after the country joined the family of sovereign nations, in contrast to those naturalised citizens born before this date who had to give up the citizenship of the empire when Kenya was born in 1963.[2]

That debate became critical in bringing interventions into the Kenyan public sphere that one might characterise as the youth discourses defining the emergence of a new national generational cohort.[3] The existence, definition, potential and agenda of an Uhuru Generation are still very much a

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subject of discussion in Kenya, more than a decade after the idea first emerged in the small discussion groups whose deliberations inspired Mue's address. Despite the widespread acceptability of the term, especially in the political realm, there are still multiple perspectives as to what exactly it entails, who should be included in its definition, and whether it serves any useful purpose as a signifier of socio-political commitment, vision or agenda.

Guiding this investigation into some of the theoretical and practical possibilities embedded within this concept is an understanding of performance as a site for the enactment of multiple, sometimes simultaneous, discourses. As 'a means by which people reflect on their current conditions, define and/or reinvent themselves and their social world, and either reinforce, resist, or subvert prevailing social orders' (Drewal 2), performance becomes a way of knowing the generational cohort that the three artists at the centre of this research identify with. Using the lens offered by their commitment to the art of storytelling, and their own journeys discovering and using the process of storytelling and its products, I have crafted a multi-faceted narrative of what it means to belong to the Uhuru Generation.

The Uhuru Generation

Uhuru Generation discourse rests on two founding principles. First is the ideal associated with the transition from colony to republic articulated as 'Uhuru'. Second is the contemporary manifestation of an endogenous socio-political tradition coalescing around indigenous principles of generational organisation.

The word 'Uhuru' as employed here, may be traced back to the beginning of the new socio-political dispensation that began with the end of the colonial era in Kenya. The achievements of the attainment of self-government (*madaraka*) in June 1963 and of 'flag independence' (*uhuru wa bendera*) in December later that year, followed by the transition to a republic (*jamhuri)* in December 1964, were later widely acknowledged to have fallen short of the dreams long cherished by those who had fought for a fully independent Kenyan nation. Just a few years after these national milestones, the republic's first vice-president, Oginga Odinga, one of the negotiators and signatories to the Independence Constitution, defined the reality that followed as 'not yet Uhuru'. He argued, 'Freedom is not just raising a flag. Freedom is not just having political power. Freedom, national freedom, requires economic independence and cultural independence' (Oruka and Odinga 50).

This distinction between '*uhuru wa bendera',* the legal but limited status of independence from the direct rule of a colonial master symbolised by national symbols such as a flag, and 'Uhuru' as articulated above by Odinga is crucial. As Amilcar Cabral points out, 'the chief goal of the liberation

movement goes beyond the achievement of political independence to the superior level of the complete liberation of the productive forces and the construction of economic, social and cultural progress of the people' (52). For the rest of the century, the battle to define how the vision articulated as 'Uhuru' ought to be realised, dominated the political scene in Kenya. Despite the different personalities and phases of this struggle, it remained essentially a conflict of political ideology, as Kenyans joined the rest of the continent in embracing Kwame Nkrumah's challenge to 'seek first the political kingdom' in the hope of seeing 'all these [other] things.... added as well'. The political battle pitted those who advocated a radical transformative approach bringing about a decisive break with the status quo prevailing at the end of the colonial era, against those who favoured a reformative, generally conservative agenda. As it turned out, the latter were able to win and keep control of the state for the first four decades of Kenyan independence; thus the phrase 'not yet Uhuru' became indelibly associated in the first couple of decades of the post-colonial era with those fighting for radical transformation. By the beginning of the eighties however, the struggle took on a new dimension, and the call for Uhuru underwent a metamorphosis, becoming the push for 'true democracy' initially envisioned as liberal pluralism, which the radicals hoped would enable the attainment of their transformative agenda.

With the new millennium however, amidst growing disenchantment with multi-party politics as experienced in Kenya, a new discourse recovered Odinga's formulation, centring it in the emergence of a critique of the national status quo, which sought to consolidate a new social movement around the idea of a generational mission. Its articulators chose to rally themselves around the historical event of the national transition from colony to republic; measuring Kenya's success at achieving that promised to the post-colonial era generations as their birthright - the legacy defined as Uhuru. Pointing out the glaring discrepancy between the dream and the reality, they attributed it to the failure of their generational predecessors in overcoming the historical challenges that followed the attainment of *madaraka, uhuru wa bendera*, and *jamhuri*. At the same time, they expressed their frustration at being collectively marginalised in decision-making forums influencing or determining the state of the nation.[4] Uhuru Generation discourse thus emerged out of attempts to formulate a collective mission that would enable the generational cohort born around Kenya's emergence from colonialism meet the contextual challenges of attaining the vision articulated as uhuru.

In his seminal treatise on decolonisation, *The Wretched of The Earth*, Frantz Fanon makes a persuasive argument for the identification of a generational mission in the fight for decolonisation. The idea of a collective mission, based on meeting the challenges of a particular historical moment,

is also enshrined in principles of socio-political organisation found in several of the indigenous nations gathered together by British imperialism into what is today the Kenyan republic. One such prominent tradition, manifested differently in diverse cultural and historical contexts in the pre-colonial and colonial eras, was that of using generational cohorts to organise societies. Understanding tradition as the on-going transmission of the past through the present to the future, I trace in this study the evolution of the concept of generational organisation from its roots in the pre-colonial era through to its current manifestation in contemporary Kenyan society. I construct a narrative of the Kenyan nation using the stories of successive generations, identifying each with a mission derived from the challenges particular to the historical context of its existence. These ranged from the imposition of British colonial rule, to the struggle to come to terms with the drastically changed socio-political environment that resulted, and finally the struggle to create a truly independent republic out of a colony. I argue that the emergence of Uhuru Generation fits naturally within this plotline, and examine here a selected number of interventions intended to turn theory into practice, shaping its mandate and consolidating it as a distinct entity whose members have the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship in the project of making the nation.

Presenting Our Stories, Presenting Ourselves

The lives and work of the three people at the centre of this research project provide an opportunity to explore multiple contexts and facets of Uhuru Generation discourse, and also contribute to the crucial question of the creation of knowledge in, about, and of Africa. To this end, the dissertation both reflects and reflects on story – the crafted, creative, representation of (real or imagined) lived experience – by using it as the epistemological framework for undertaking, interpreting and reporting this research project. I engage the three storytellers as conscious actors who have chosen, each in his or her own unique way, to be active participants in the project of shaping the social movement that is the Uhuru Generation. At one and the same time, they model the "thinking men and women of words", the eloquent men and women of mobilisation and the 'practical men and women of action', that Shadrack Nasong'o identifies as crucial to the successful emergence and consolidation of a social movement (21). The investment they have individually and collectively made in defining the vision of the Uhuru Generation allows an examination of the contemporary manifestation in Kenya of the decolonisation / democratisation project.

I examine here the processes and products that have enabled Aghan Odero, Mkawasi Mcharo and Abubakar Zein to actively participate in translating the vision of the Uhuru Generation into reality. I emphasise in this study the

existence of multiple perspectives in the central concept of an Uhuru Generation. Therefore each case study is considered within an exploration of the contextual realities that have influenced the direction that one of these artists has taken in conceptualising and contributing to the development of an agenda that he or she sees as fundamental to enabling this generational cohort to successfully fulfil its historical mission. Beginning with an exploration of the legacy of the academic debates accompanying the challenge of decolonising the Kenyan academy in the first couple of decades of independence, and going on to consider the evolution of present understanding and practices of democracy in the nation, the study extends beyond the physical boundaries of the Kenyan nation to engage the growing national diaspora and the challenges of living in the borderlands of citizenship. While each approach is distinctly unique, corresponding as it does to the priorities identified by the artist under consideration, they collectively form part of the collective body of thought and action contributing to the imagining and consolidating into being of this generational cohort. They model the importance of performance as a way of knowing; affirming Margaret Drewal's articulation of artistic performance as the primary site of knowledge production, consumption and transmission on the African continent.

Notes

1. 'Post-colonial era' as used here refers to the period following the end of the colonial era and is not an indicator of the success at achieving Uhuru.
2. Mue makes no indication of the cut-off point at the other end. I argue in the dissertation that the Uhuru Generation is only the first of Kenya's post-colonial era generations.
3. I have discussed generational youth discourses in Kenya elsewhere. See 'Leaders of Tomorrow?'
4. Kenyans born after 1963 form a majority of the population. However, they are marginalised in political, economic and socio-cultural decision-making forums where they are dismissed as youth, 'leaders of tomorrow' who cannot yet be trusted with the responsibilities of leadership in these crucial areas. See 'Leaders of Tomorrow' for an extensive discussion of this.

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'New Wars: Forgotten Warriors': Why Have Girl Fighters Been Excluded from Western Representations of Conflict in Sierra Leone?

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Since the end of the cold war, the way we talk about war has changed. Instead of talking about 'noble' inter-state warfare, as was common in the past, there is a new Western vocabulary depicting modern conflict as chaotic and callous. Child soldiers are seen as emblematic element of the 'new wars', yet the presence of girl fighters has been continually ignored by the international community and neglected in academic writing. When girls have attracted attention, it has been purely as victims. Using a case study of Sierra Leone, this essay analyses how the Western representation of girls as victims plays into the Western construction of Africa as a place needful of military and humanitarian intervention. By looking at discourses of gender and youth, I examine how the construction of the girl child is integral to maintaining the myth of the young 'aggressive' African male and the white 'saviour'; both essential for 'new wars' and the humanitarian industry.

The conflict in Sierra Leone has been considered by many academics as a prime example of a 'new war' (Kaplan 1994; Kaldor 2001) and thus lends itself particularly well to the subject under discussion. The emphasis in the West has been on the 'barbarity' and high level of atrocities carried out by combatants[1] as well as the use of child soldiers. As Rosen points out, it is seen as a 'symbol of the horrors of modern war' (2005:58) and continues to attract media attention, as has done the recent film *Blood Diamonds* shows. Sierra Leone has also been chosen as a case study because of the high level of female participation in the conflict (Mazurana and Carlson 2004:2) and because of the recognition that girls were failed in the Demobilisation Demilitarization and Reintegration (DDR) process (Coulter 2005), which I shall briefly touch on in this essay, although space limits a more detailed analysis.

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Rhetoric and Reality: Girl Soldiers in Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, girls made up 25 per cent of the child soldiers and 8 per cent of the total number of fighters (Mazurana and Carlson 2004:3). This is a significant figure, given their invisibility in this conflict. Significantly, Paul Richards points out that 'women figure quite prominently in the leadership of both the NPFL and RUF' (2005:89). Indeed, when male commanders were absent from camps, a high level of responsibility often passed to their 'wives'. For example, it was up to them to decide how food was distributed (Mazurana and Carlson 2004:14).

Although some girls used this level of power to protect the more vulnerable in the camps, girls also committed a high level of atrocities. As Coulter points out 'there has been little or no emphasis on women as fighters and killers' despite the fact that commanders' wives were often in charge of the notorious Small Boys Unit and the lesser known Small Girls Units (Coulter 2005:6). Similarly, the mammy queens were 'some of the most violent and powerful female combatants' (Rosen 2005:70), assuming names such as 'Queen Cut Hands', Lieutenant 'Cause Trouble' and Lady 'Jungle Law' (TRC 2007:394).

Despite the active role that girls played as fighters, international organisations and NGOs have focused on the girl purely as victims of sexual violence (HRW 2003). For example, in one Human Rights Watch Report, there is little acknowledgment of the active roles girls played in the conflict. The authors note that, 'even within the rebel forces, women still held much lower status' (2003:22). However, as the example of the commanders' wives shows, generalisations of this nature should not be made as some girls held more power than men. Another NGO report also focuses on rape, stating 'In Sierra Leone, young girls in particular were singled out for rape' (PLAN 2007:109).[2] Similarly the UNIFEM website mentions girls in Sierra Leone only as sex slaves and human shields, rendering them as passive objects rather than subjects.

So, how can we explain this blinkered representation? While assumptions which humanitarian agencies make about age as 'a closed age-bound category of agency-free individuals' (Utas 2004:211) may explain the lack of representations of violent girls, it is only part of the picture. If this were the case, NGOs would represent girls as reluctant fighters in much the same way as the majority of boy soldiers are configured, but, in fact, they are significantly absent from conversations about war unless it is as victims, as we can see from the case study of Sierra Leone above. Due to their gender and age, girls are the ultimate symbol of victimhood and are thus a powerful advocacy tool for NGOs, journalists and researchers (Nordstrom 1999:18). As McKay points out 'Women and children' rolls easily off network tongues

because, in network minds…, women are family members rather than independent actors (cited in Karam 2001:19).

Clearly, the idea of the girl soldier is for many an 'impossible oxymoron' (Fox 2004:476); anathema to the traditional Western assumptions about women and warfare. This can be linked to gender stereotyping embodied in the idea of a Western hegemonic masculinity in which masculinity is linked to violence.

As Park states, girls have been 'too visible as super-victims' (2006:316). This representation of girls as victims is an integral part of the political project of war and should not be seen as an inconsequential stereotype.

The 'super-victim' tag was clearly applied in Sierra Leone where girls and women were seen purely as 'camp followers', abducted by the various fighting groups (McKay and Mazurana 2004). In fact, girls carried out a multitude of roles; as cooks, porters, wives, food producers and spies. Furthermore, nearly half of those interviewed by Mazurana and Carlson received basic military and weapons training (2004). Clearly the 'supervictim' tag does not fit the girls in Sierra Leone whose display of agency and rational choice is a far cry from the passive female victim, which the international community prefers to represent. As Arty notes, 'there is a general misconception that the majority of youth were forced to take up arms by the RUF. Whilst this is true for many, many more joined voluntarily' (Peters 2005:275). Significantly, Rosen notes how girls fought 'because of the excitement, power and material gain it (war) offered' (Rosen 2005:87).

The evidence from Sierra Leone thus underlines how the representation of girls is based on predetermined ideas of them as objects not subjects, rather than a rational assessment of reality. Assumptions about gender and the patriarchal nature of the international system mean that the girl fighter is ignored because she does not fit culturally acceptable ideas of how women should behave. The hierarchical submission of female to male, both in the domestic and international sphere, is unfortunately a continued assumption in contemporary society and any attempt to challenge this binary opposition 'threatens the entire system' (Scott cited in True 1996:236).

I take the system highlighted here to be the domain of nationalism to which the issue of girl soldiers can be linked. Gender and nationalism are intricately linked – the idea of the nation state is often based on the idea that the nation is female whilst the state is male. As Nagel points out, the nation 'is a male-headed household in which both men and women have "natural" roles to play' (1998:254). The 'natural' role of men is as protector, whilst that of the female is of 'protected'. The separation of children from war can therefore be understood through the association of the mother figure with

the nation. The image of the girl soldier would challenge 'the essentialist construction of men as aggressive and violent (that) fits the nationalist-militaristic myth in which men fight for the sake of the women and children, the "protected-protector myth"' (Yuval-Davis 1999:111). Nationalism is based on the idea that the nation needs to be protected; an image which centres on the nurturing mother or passive female. If this changes and girls are perceived as violent, many of the common tropes and assumptions underlying the concept of nationhood are lost.

Although these assumptions about the cultural roles fitting women and men are common throughout the developed and developing world and can help to explain the invisibility of girls in Sierra Leone, there is another explanation which centres on the constructed image of a 'mythical, culturally and religiously violence-prone Third World' (Hendrixson 2004:15) and is linked to post-cold war security paradigms. The predominant narratives on the Sierra Leonean conflict are emblematic of this.

Aggressive Males, Passive Females, the Interventionist Agenda

After the end of the cold war, the international system was thrown into a state of flux and the dominant theory of realism was shaken to its core. This inevitably led to new ways to understand conflict. In the contemporary era, two narratives on conflict stand out; 'New Barbarianism' and the underdevelopment paradigm (Duffield 2001).

'New Barbarianism' is based on the idea that cultural differences are the 'origin of antagonism and conflict' (Duffield 2001:109) and has been particularly influential in shaping popular understanding of conflict in Africa. Despite the complexity of the conflict in Sierra Leone, it was the 'New Barbarianism narrative that dominated, as embodied in Robert Kaplan's influential article, 'The Coming Anarchy' (1994), in which Sierra Leone is used as a case study. Kaplan's argument, based on the 'youth bulge' paradigm referred to later, is that, due to the high number of young men in Africa, conflict is unavoidable (1994:46). His theory presents a monolithic portrait of youth in Africa and refuses to see them as anything other than violent thugs. Sierra Leone's conflict is thus clearly emblematic of the West's conception of Africa's 'uncivil war(s)' (Ferme and Hoffman 2005:88).

By contrast, in the underdevelopment model, the causes of conflict are the 'modalities of underdevelopment and its associated pathologies of crime and terrorism' (Duffield 2001:114). In this model, 'new wars' provide an opportunity for liberal developmentalists to prove their utility, but depend on the existence of a helpless victim.

The Spectacle of Humanitarianism

The overt racism of 'New Barbarianism' can be found more subtly in developmentalist discourse, which makes the same assumptions about superiority and inferiority. For example, Robert Kaplan believes that 'only when people have attained a certain economic, educational and cultural standard is this trait (propensity to violence) tranquilised' (Kaplan cited by Duffield 2001:115). The international human rights regime adopts a similar belief in its attempt to introduce 'universal' human rights worldwide. Both models therefore pave the way for Western intervention – whether military or humanitarian.

International development agencies adopt the idea that underdevelopment necessitates Western intervention to achieve Western 'standards'. Attitudes towards women and girls in the third world, their so-called 'oppression' are often seen as emblematic of this kind of underdevelopment.[3] By representing the girl child as a victim, agents of liberal developmentalism can claim the power to deal with them paving the way for the insertion of Western liberal values into often completely different cultures.

In their representations of girls in the developing world, humanitarian organisations create an 'other' who is silenced and has no power. Girls are not analysed as individuals, nor given the space to express their own opinion on conflict and their role within it, but rather become part of the 'bureaucratization of knowledge about the third world' (Escobar 1995:106). This permits a certain institutionalisation of them as passive bodies who are acted upon. The ability to protect the girl child is seen as criteria for establishing who needs the help of the 'civilised' West, thus the maintenance of the girl victim is a way to ensure 'an alibi for humanitarian action' (Debrix 1999:142). Paradoxically, this does not always have the desired positive effect. For example, in Sierra Leone this misunderstanding of the complex roles girls played in the conflicts had direct negative repercussions on their reintegration into society. Despite their presence in the fighting forces, only a very low percentage of girls went through the DDR programmes, usually run by international agencies (McKay and Mazurana 2004:20).

In a perceptive comment, Tony Brauman observes how 'This emptying out of interiority to the benefit of its exterior signs, this exhaustion of the content by the form…is at the basis of humanitarianism as a spectacle' (cited in Debrix 1999:136). His comment emphasises how humanitarianism must be seen as an ideology which selects the images that fit its own goals and objectives, often to the detriment of the individual. In this case, it is the experiences of the girl fighter that has been lost within a set of discourses, which refuse to see her as an active agent.

The Youth Bulge

If we now turn to 'New Barbarianism', we find another narrative that is fundamental in understanding the construction of the passive female: 'the youth bulge'.

The youth bulge refers to an unusually large population of 15–24-year-olds relative to the adult population (Goldstein 2002:11) who predominantly live in the global South. Instead of representing the 'hope of the nation', this young population are pejoratively seen as a 'demographic ticking time bomb' (ibid), which will inevitably trigger conflict. This is particularly significant in relation to security paradigms, as 'the state needs threats, a degree of insecurity in order that it generates security' (Brocklehurst 2006:153). The youth bulge is therefore a way to ensure that the West's security identity is maintained. Furthermore, employing the youth bulge to explain intrastate conflict means that it is easier to ignore other factors, for example the neo-liberal agenda, in influencing peace and security in Africa.

One may ask how this paradigm is relevant to the invisibility of girl combatants. As Yuval-Davis points out, 'Womanhood is a relational category' and must be examined in the context of notions of both 'manhood' and 'womanhood' (1997:1). Whilst the unstable elements present in this picture are assumed to be young men, the image of the passive girl, in fact, plays a crucial role in the maintenance of these stereotypical images, as she serves as a counterpart to and reinforces the image of the aggressively heterosexual young man (ibid:10). Strategies of interventionism and 'otherness' are clearly linked as intervention is not possible without an 'other'– this other can either be the weak victim who will be 'saved' by the powerful or the barbaric 'other' who can only be defeated by the 'civilised'.

There is concrete evidence of the youth bulge paradigm in Sierra Leone where the economic approach, which focuses on how youth affects war rather than how war affects youth, was adopted by organisations such as USAID and the World Bank in the DDR programmes (Kemper 2005:11). Indeed, tellingly, according to Paul Collier, director of the Research Group of the World Bank from 1998 to 2003, 'the true cause of much civil war is not the loud discourse of grievance, but the silent force of greed' (ibid: 35), one of the key messages of the 'new wars' paradigm.

The World Bank's approach thus fits the youth bulge analysed earlier, in which young men 'are considered more prone to violence than women' (ibid: 26). Consequently, the priority is to focus on men in order to avoid a return to conflict. As Coulter (2006) notes in relation to the DDR programmes, 'Male fighters were also high on the priority lists of both government and aid agencies as they were perceived to be a real threat to peace and stability'.

This demonstrates a tendency to sacrifice the individual to the collective as the assumption, that girls are biologically pacifist and men are by nature aggressive, persists. Aid programmes focus on those most likely to pose a threat to stability. As such, a kind of cost-benefit analysis is done resulting in the marginalisation of a large section of the population, particularly women and girls.

Another area of which Sierra Leone is emblematic is the tendency to hold up the protection of women's rights as a reason for intervention in other countries. For example, in an interview in 2001, first lady Laura Bush stated that 'The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women' (ibid: 10). Hendrixson rightly identifies the underlying message as 'white men saving brown women from brown men' (ibid). This is clearly true of the war in Sierra Leone. In a telling passage of the Truth and Reconciliation commission reports, it states that

> 'women and girls are shunned and punished by members of a society who refuse to acknowledge that it is their failures that led to this conflict and their failure to protect women and girls that has led to the plight they find themselves in today' (2007:2).[4]

The implicit subtext here is clear; 'society' refers to the *men* whose job it is to protect women, which implies that women and girls are helpless without the intervention of men. As these men in these countries are seen as weak, external intervention is therefore justified.

This is a common message in the 'new wars' literature; according to one author, 'the purposeful starvation of women and children in Somalia and the random execution of uncovered women in Algeria are all acts of atrocity difficult to imagine *civilized* people committing' (Snow 1996:145, emphasis added). In a similar vein, the narrative of the 'barbarity' of men in the developing world is clearly demonstrated by Ignatieff when he states: 'the particular savagery of war in the 1990s taps into another vision of male identity – the wild sexuality of the adolescent male' (1998:127). The rampant sexuality of the African male was a common trope of colonialism and the quotes above clearly demonstrate how narratives on the developing world have evolved very little.[5]

By denying women and girls agency and depicting them as innocent and passive victims, men in Africa are turned into aggressors. This allows foreign intervention (humanitarian or military) as the African state is seen as incapable of controlling the young who are believed to be 'prone to criminal behaviour, petty theft, drugs, drunkenness and anti-social tendencies' (Abdullah 2005:180). This relates to the idea of war as a political construction in which women and children are 'considered innocent in the war-constructed contexts

of rationality and irrationality' (Nordstrom 1997:1) Whilst young men in the third world are considered irrational because of a predisposition to violence, girls are denied a position altogether, relegated to objects to be manipulated for political purposes.

Thus, girl combatants are neglected in representations of war because they challenge the clearly defined picture of civility versus barbarity that a certain powerful faction in the West prefers to promote.

It is therefore clear that the 'new wars' mantra has stripped wars of their social content (Richards 2005:17) and reduced the actors to cardboard cut-outs of perpetrators and victims, facilitating Western intervention. Whilst I do not wish to dismiss the suffering that girls obviously do experience in war, we must read beyond this and deconstruct these discourses as part of a political project. The emergence of individual agency threatens discourses of victimhood. As such, there is a clear, if subconscious gain in suppressing them and maintaining the symbolic collective tropes of victimhood, which ensures 'othering' as part of interventionism.

Conclusion

There are many factors preventing an accurate portrait of the roles girls played in the Sierra Leonean conflict. Gender stereotyping with its emphasis on the victim has played a key role in this respect. However, whilst it is important to apply a gender lens to all situations, this cannot be employed in isolation and other discourses of race, ethnicity and age. Girls are clearly appropriated for a range of purposes: the construction of the aggressive African 'other' or the construction of the white liberator.

The predominant narrative of 'savage warfare', which characterises much discourse on civil conflicts in the developing world, has had a consequential effect on attitudes towards girls. Michael Ignatieff comments that, 'Intolerant people are uninterested in the individuals who compose despised groups; in fact they barely see "them" as individuals at all. What matters is the constitution of a primal opposition between "them" and "us"' (1998:63). Ignatieff's comments can easily be applied to the situation of girls in Sierra Leone, whose individual experiences and agency were ignored in favour of a homogenised picture, which assumed the singular experience of girls in war. Indeed, collectivism has come to characterise much of the approach of the international community, leading to an arrogant application of Western stereotypes about the 'barbarity' of the South. The idea that girls may be fighters as well as victims challenges the black and white ideas of conflict in Africa that many in the West hold. As such, the image is intentionally or subconsciously repressed, much to the detriment of the empowerment of women that many in the West claim to advocate.

Notes

1. As Richards has shown, the causes of conflict were not straightforward, he demonstrates how many of these barbaric acts were actually based on rational calculations. For example, the use of amputations can be seen as a message to civilians not to vote.
2. PLAN is a large international development NGO focusing specifically on children.
3. See for example the debate on female genital mutilation which, although perceived as a barbaric practice by many Western agencies, has been defended on the basis of cultural difference.
4. Although the TRC was supported by UNHCR, UNDP and UNAMSIL this report was produced by the Sierra Leonean government, perhaps indicating the introduction of Western values. Unfortunately given limited space a comparative study of African and Western representations of girls and conflict is not feasible but is an interesting area for further research.
5. Further evidence for this is Kaplan's statement that 'West Africa is reverting to the Africa of the Victorian atlas' (1994:47).

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The Use of Land to Generate Political Support

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Introduction

On the 14th of October 2005, President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya vowed 'I will go to Olenguruone tomorrow to issue title deeds to the members of the Ogiek community as all plans have been finalized by the Ministry of Lands' (*The Standard* 15 October 2005). The President kept his word and distributed 12,000 land title deeds to members of the Ogiek community the next day (*The Standard* 17 October 2005). This is interesting because the Ogiek had, earlier that year, been evicted from the Mau forest complex by Kibaki's state agents who assaulted many so-called squatters and burnt down homes, schools and even clinics in a bid to discourage them from returning. Further, the president blatantly disobeyed a Nakuru High Court injunction against the issuance of those title deeds (*The Standard* 17 October 2005).

Given the fact that Kenyans, displaced during clashes around the 1992 and 1997 elections, had yet to be resettled, the stubborn generosity of the president is bewildering. But these were no ordinary times in Kenyan politics. Mwai Kibaki was leading a Banana (*Ndizi)* campaign team seeking a 'Yes' vote in a referendum for a proposed constitution in November of that year. Opposing the passage of the new constitution was an Orange (*Chungwa)* campaign team led by many members of Kibaki's own government like Raila Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka as well as leading members of the opposition Kenya African National Union (KANU). Many opponents and civil society activists perceived the issuance of titles at Olenguruone as part of the widespread distribution of 'campaign freebies' (*The Standard* 17 October 2005). These freebies also included the creation of many new districts and handover of the famous Ambroseli National Park to the Masai community under the Olkejuado County Council, to the anger and wild protestation of the Kenya Wildlife Service responsible for managing the park (*The Standard* 31 October 2005).

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The use of land to generate political support has received considerable attention, as many African countries have re-adopted multiparty democracy (Klopp 2000:82; Addison and Laakso 2003:458–59). This use of land to garner support should come as little surprise in a context where governments, as well as opposition politicians, are known to 'buy' votes in cash and kind. As many African states control land in parts of their national territories, land is another of the public resources used to further private political ambitions. This redistribution of land during electioneering should not be necessarily seen in a negative light. Democratic pressures on leaders to redistribute land in countries with highly inequitable distributions could help alleviate the landlessness and land hunger plaguing many in such societies.

In this paper, I place the use of land to garner political support in a broader perspective and examine the institutional implications of this exchange of land for support. What institutional arrangements facilitate these political exchanges? What are the wider social implications of these mediating institutional structures?

I argue that one of the more pernicious effects of the use of land to generate electoral support is that it depends on an environment in which the power to guarantee land rights is placed in the arbitrary hands of politicians and removed from autonomous and predictable institutions such as courts, deeds registries and councils of elders. I highlight two reasons why such an institutional environment is critical. First, it gives politicians the ability to punish people who accept land but fail to render political support. It is this ability that gives politicians the confidence that people will engage in proper political behaviour once they get the land. It is also what gives voters the ability to convince politicians of their intent to stick by their promise to engage in 'appropriate political behaviour' once they receive the land. Second, it allows politicians to perform the delicate task of gerrymandering constituencies without redrawing boundaries.

The problem is that, while such an institutional environment is useful for these political exchanges, it is fundamentally harmful to the wider society in many ways. It breeds uncertainty that can lead to the loss of life and property by many as people contest over uncertain land rights. Uncertainty over rights can disempower the weakest members of society by tying them to bosses who provide them with security (Addison and Laakso 2003:459). Furthermore, uncertainty and unpredictability can discourage many from undertaking certain long term investments in land.

Using Land to Garner Support

The exchange of land for political support seems to be a widespread practice in contemporary Africa. Politicians use land rights to reward followers, buy

the support of would-be opposition members and punish opponents. Nigerian parliamentarian, Uche Onyeagucha, alleged the existence of an extensive scheme to convince Nigerian parliamentarians to support the failed bid by President Obasanjo to change the constitution to allow for a third presidential term in 2006 by offering MPs land parcels in Abuja (BBC News 9 May 2006 and 15 May 2006). In Ghana, Kwamena Bartels, Minister for Private Sector Development and the President's Special Initiatives of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), in the guise of promoting agricultural activity announced a plan in September 2005 to award hundred-acre parcels to ministers and MPs. A public outcry thwarted this plan (Ghanaweb 21 September 2005 and 26 September). Ntsebeza has roundly criticized the ANC's passage of laws that increased chiefs' powers over the allocation of rural land. He sees this ceding of rights over land partly as an effort by the ANC to court the support of chiefs who are sometimes strong enough in their local domains to influence how people vote (Ntsebeza 2005:269). There have been widespread allegations that President Mugabe has transformed land redistribution programs into instruments for rewarding supporters, winning over opponents and punishing reluctant opposition members and supporters. It is alleged that, while close supporters of the president receive land, many land-hungry peasants have not seen any benefits from these programs. Furthermore, it is argued that white settlers have been targeted for expropriation because they are friendly to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (Good 2002:12–18; Addison and Laakso 2003:459).

It is tempting to regard the exchange or land for political support as another dimension of the pathologies of contemporary African politics. Klopp falls into this tempting trap in 'Pilfering the public'. But neither the favouring of government supporters in land distribution programs nor the exchange of land for political support is new. Colonial governments in countries like Kenya, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa expropriated large tracts of lands from indigenous populations for the use of friendlier and more supportive European settler communities. These then contributed tax revenues to the colonial enterprise and participated in efforts at subjugating these communities. Members of the Pioneer Column were thus given land in Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) for their contribution to the subjugation of African resistance in the colony (Worby 2001:480).

The workings of British colonial rule in Ghana (the former Gold Coast) provide evidence of the use of land to cultivate support by colonial authorities. Faced with the challenge of governing the territory cheaply, the British used land as a key instrument to buy the support of traditional chiefs and enable them to control their subjects on behalf of the state. The arbitrary recognition

and suspension of the rights of chiefs was used by colonial officials to get chiefs to act as the adjuncts of the British within the system of indirect rule (Asante 1975:40–47). Troublesome chiefs like the Asantehene that dared resist, had their land rights summarily suspended (Bentsi-Enchill 1964:19). Compliant chiefs could count on the British to reinforce and even magnify their rights over land. This included the fabrication of various 'traditional' norms governing customary tenure that quashed all challenges to the rights of chiefs to act as custodians of land (Asante 1975:40–47; Mamdani 1996:21–23). This reinforcement of customary tenure, even in the face of obvious evolution towards individual freehold forms in certain areas, was also an attempt to reinforce the powers of chiefs over their subjects to facilitate rule. Phillips notes in this regard that the colonial official/anthropologist Capt. Rattray, in arguing against reforms aimed at diminishing the powers of chiefs over land, pointed out that 'it was the responsibility of the colonial states to prevent them [Africans] escaping from the control of tribal authorities' (Phillips 1989:122).

The point I wish to make here is that the exploitation of property rights in land to cultivate and sustain political support, and discourage and punish opposition is far more widespread than many of the recent denunciations of Zimbabwean or Kenyan leaders' political exploitation of land suggest. It is neither a very recent practice characterizing the return to multiparty democracy in Africa nor a preserve of corrupt African leaders. Land as an important resource is a key instrument of political control and important cause of political contestation (Shivji 2006; Berry 2001:19; Kanyinga 1996, 2000).

An Enabling Institutional Environment

A key disconcerting effect of the exchange of land for political support is the environment of uncertainty over land rights that facilitates such arrangements, and which politicians often actively seek to create. By an environment of uncertainty, I mean an environment where the security of property rights ceases to depend on the workings and decisions of autonomous institutions that determine the location and extent of rights, adjudicate disputes over rights and enforce decisions concerning rights to land. These institutions take various forms. They could take the form of village committees and councils of elders that allocate land, keep information on the existence and extents of land interests and adjudicate and enforce land disputes. They could also take the form of land commissions, land courts, title and deeds registries and special enforcement agencies. For instance, the postcolonial state in Botswana under the BDP passed the Tribal Land Act (1968) to create land boards that assumed powers over customary land previously held by chiefs. These land boards and subordinate land boards allocate land, adjudicate land

dispute, record and document land interest and also engage in land use planning (Kalabamu and Morolong 2004:48–58). Pursuant to the Tribal Land (Establishment of Land Tribunals) Order, Statutory Instrument No. 59 of 1995, a land tribunal was created in 1997 as a specialized court that dealt with appeals against the decisions of land boards (Kalabamu and Morolong 2004:58–60). The state also created two web-based land information systems: the State Lands Information Management System (SLIMS) and the Tribal Land Information Management System (TLIMS) to improve geographical information available to state officials and the public.[1]

Where these institutions work well, they take the guarantee of land rights away from the arbitrary whims of politicians. The location and dimensions of one's plot of land would be determined by councils of elders and cadastral maps instead of the local parliamentarian. Similarly, a competent tribunal using evidence from elders, title registers, maps and field visits will decide who has a more convincing case in a land dispute, instead of the secretary to the president. Whether the rights claimed by someone would be protected by police will be decided by tribunals and land administration agencies instead of an aspiring parliamentarian with a strong influence on the local police chief. The point is not that all will have equal access to land under the reign of these institutions, but that whether one has access to rights will be determined by laid down procedures by competent parties. As the highly discriminative land tenure regimes deployed by colonial administration in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Kenya indicate, the security of property rights and well-functioning title registries and land tribunals should not be obfuscated with equal access to land right by all. These institutions often underpin and calcify the theft of land by dominant groups as is evident in various parts of Latin America, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. But where land rights are equitable, they can also protect the weak from predation by more powerful parties.

Why are these proper-functioning autonomous institutions problematic and have to be undermined in order for the exchange of votes to be successful? They are problematic precisely because they protect the weak from predation by powerful politicians. First, they could lead to a failure in the political market for land. Take the example of a local politician Masego who has control over land that he wants to exchange for votes in an upcoming election. On the other side of the potential bargain is Neo, a landless voter who has a vote that she would like to sell for a parcel of land. Even where both parties would like to transact, the existence of proper functioning institutions that protect the land rights of Neo might prevent the two from undertaking the exchange. If Neo knows that her rights are secure, then she would be able to 'sell' her vote to Masego and receive the land. Since her rights to the land

would be secure and untouchable by Masego once she gets the land, she could then go ahead and refuse to vote for and attend rallies organized by Masego. She might even then 'sell' her vote once again to Masego's opponent. Knowing this, Masego will hesitate to give Neo the land parcel for her vote. Put differently, the presence of strong institutions that guarantee property rights will inflict on both parties an inability to credibly commit to certain future behaviour that will render the transaction attractive to both of them. Masego cannot credibly commit to punish Neo for deviance once she receives the land. Neo cannot credibly commit to supply the vote once she gets the land.

In an environment where the guarantee of Neo's right rests in the hands of the politician Masego, the problem will be solved. Masego will be able to credibly threaten Neo with eviction and repossession of the land if she refuses to attend campaigns, wear T-shirts with certain engravings, and if she is suspected of not voting for Masego. Neo will be able to commit to render support once she gets the land.

Politicians understand these institutional needs of their exchange of land for political support. Senior British colonial officials in Ghana routinely overruled appeals for the creation of title registries and land tribunals by reform-minded but politically naïve junior colonial officers who thoroughly detested what they saw as the disruptive effects of chiefs' control over land (Phillips 1989:127; Berry 2001:10–20; Meek 1949:172–173). The senior colonial officials who overruled these reforms were wise. If they had transferred the power to guarantee chiefs rights to land to title registries and independent tribunals, rebellious chiefs would have had nothing to fear from colonial district officials and provincial commissioners. It would have fundamentally undermined the system of indirect rule.

In a similar bid to seize the power to guarantee rights in a bid to facilitate the exchange of land for loyalty, the Kenyan Minister of Local Government, William ole Ntimama is reported to have declared boldly in the early 1990s that land titles were 'mere pieces of paper' (*Weekly Review* 9 July 1993). Ole Ntimama was facing Gikuyu residents of his Narok North Constituency who were thought to be opposed to his parliamentary bid and the presidential bid of his KANU party in the 1992 elections. To make his offer of the peaceful enjoyment of their lands in exchange for their political quiescence or loyalty work, he had to impress it on them that he, not land titles, would ultimately decide who would reside in Narok North. At the instigation of leading politicians like ole Ntimama and Nicholas Biwott many title-bearing Gikuyu people were subsequently violently evicted from their lands because of their perceived opposition to KANU around the 1992 and 1997 elections (The Commission 1999).

Beyond facilitating the exchange of land for votes, politicians find their arbitrary control of the power to guarantee rights in land useful because it allows them to gerrymander constituencies even in situations where they lack the formal power to redraw constituency boundaries. The fundamental goal of gerrymandering is to make the voting complexion of a constituency more favourable to certain parties. But redrawing constituency boundaries is not the only means of achieving this. You could also just evict unwanted voters and move in sympathetic ones while maintaining existing boundaries. This involves arbitrarily cancelling the land rights of some and granting those rights to others. The land clashes around the 1992 and 1997 elections were partly efforts at gerrymandering without redrawing constituency boundaries. Luo, Luhya, Gikuyu among other populations thought of as sympathetic to opposition parties were violently evicted from areas in Narok, Uasin Gishu, Nakuru, Kericho, Nandi, Laikipia and Trans Nzoia districts (Judicial Commission Report, Klopp 2002). Their lands were then occupied by others. Meanwhile, populations who were thought of as more sympathetic to KANU were moved into certain constituencies to reduce the advantage of opposition parties. The settlement of 318 Kalenjin families in Likia just before the 1997 elections was perceived by resident Gikuyu as an effort to swing the elections in the favour of KANU (IDMC 2006:13–20).

The social costs of such exploitation of land rights by politicians and the institutional environment that facilitates it can be very high. There are the obvious human costs of violent evictions and expropriation of properties. The clashes around Kenyan elections in 1992 and 1997 discussed in the preceding paragraph, left an estimated 1500 dead and 300,000 displaced (IDMC 2006:13). Many of those displaced by these clashes had not been resettled by 2005, when President Kibaki vowed to resettle the Ogiek victims of state evictions. An old victim of election evictions in the 1990s, Wanjiku Njoroge Rumiriti, had to adopt the desperate measure of taking the state to court to seek redress in October 2005 (Inter press service 2005). The fact that many clash victims abandoned their farms, some of which were destroyed during the clashes, was bound to have a negative impact on agricultural production for those years. Furthermore, the threat of eviction and uncertainty concerning land rights would force many Kenyans to think twice about investing in certain parts of the country given their own political inclinations and ethnic identities.

Conclusion

With the return of multiparty elections to many African countries, the role of land in generating political support has received much attention lately. This paper has done two things. First, it places the use of land to garner and

reward political support in broader historical perspective. Placing it within its broader historical and spatial context, I showed that, like a lot of phenomena in contemporary African politics, it is not as much of a peculiar pathology of recent African politics, as we might be tempted to believe. Second, I explored the institutional foundations of the exchange of land for political support. Beyond clarifying the dynamics involved in this practice, this exercise enables us understand the crusade against institutions that guarantee property rights and the uncertainty that tends to go along with the exchange of land for political support. In doing this, I highlighted some of the social costs of this phenomena beyond the fact that in these political markets for land, parcels sometimes go to those who need them the least and those who are least likely to make productive use of them.

Note

1. Interview with an official of the Department of Lands, Gaborone, (Bots 9), 21 January 2004, and another official of the Department of Lands, Gaborone, (Bots 12), 22 January 2004.

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Youth Subjectivities and Associational Life in Bamenda, Cameroon

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Introduction

How do young people at the margins of national citizenship make sense of their lives in local society? What mechanisms do they employ to negotiate transition to full adult status in contexts where national institutional support for them has become tenuous or disappeared completely? How do we analyse and account for the ways in which younger generations of Africans, experiencing blocked mobility, deal with their predicament on account of postcolonial elites' continuous cling to power and resources? How, and in what contexts, are social categories (such as youth or adult) constructed, negotiated and experienced? These questions inevitably demand a critical discussion of the meanings of youth (understood in this study as a position of structural dependency), social adulthood, citizenship and social participation. This study answers the above questions by focusing on the subjectivities and activities of three associations of young men and women in Bamenda, Cameroon's leading Anglophone city. The associations include the Chosen Sisters, the United Sisters and the Ntambag Brothers Association (NBA).

Being an ethnographic study, context is essential for its appreciation. The study is set against a background of what is known popularly in Cameroon as *la crise* – crisis that conjures simply more than the spectres of economic and political uncertainty; indeed, understood by most as a deep moral crisis. Against this background, this study analyses the ways in which young Cameroonians create meaningful lives in local society. Clearly, youths embody the sharpening contradictions of the late capitalist era (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2005:23) and tend to be 'positioned at the leading edge of many aspects of contemporary social change, and experience acutely the risks and opportunities that new social conditions entail' (Hall, Coffey and Williamson 1999:501).

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Faced with massive unemployment, many young Cameroonians feel their youth is protracted and accession to social adulthood delayed. This is specifically true for many young people in their 20s and 30s who remain jobless, unmarried and uncertain of their future, but are continuously reminded by the leadership to 'wait for their turn'. The protraction of young people's youth, or what James Côté (2000) has termed 'arrested adulthood', seems to be the defining preoccupation for many young people who, without succumbing to despair, continue to explore mechanisms of making ends meet while aspiring to middle-class status.

The study focuses on young people's associations which, I argue, can be understood as critical sites for the production and experience of a diverse range of subjectivities. By subjectivity, I refer to social actors' thoughts, sentiments, and embodied sensibilities, and especially their senses of self and self-world relations (Holland and Leander 2004:127). Subjectivity involves making choices about one's identities as well as resisting those identities that are imposed by others or outsiders (Brettell and Sargent 2006:4). In this sense, I argue that young people occupy multiple subject positions – some of which they define for themselves and others which are defined for them. Building on this claim, I argue that, for many young people in Bamenda, the processes of positioning and the production of personhood are largely experienced through involvement in associational life.

The study analyses the ways in which young people in Cameroon negotiate their youth against the predicament of potent forces (both global and national) that structure their marginalisation and undermine their aspirations for meaningful citizenship and social adult status. Central to my argument is the claim that, through associations, young people position themselves and claim adult status by participating as part of a collective in a range of social and moral projects – most of which draw on and celebrate customary markers of social adult status. Importantly, involvement in associational life also reveals other processes at play, such as the collective basis of performance, the drama of social and moral control, as well as signals of young people's aspirations to middle class status.

Critical to my analysis is the transition paradigm which, according to Ken Roberts, involves among other things, 'charting the routes via which young people from different ports of departure reach different adult destinations'(Roberts 2007:264). In this sense, I show that transition embodies process, difference and particularities rather than linear development (Soares 2000:209). I also draw on the concepts of personhood and subjectivitity to explain the ways in which social actors position themselves and are positioned in varying social contexts and hierarchies. In this vein, I attempt to make

connections between the categories of gender, moral practice, personhood and citizenship.

Gendered Identities

How is gender a significant organisational principle among young people in Bamenda? I show that, while young women seek to reconfigure gender relations through specific kinds of activities and positionings, members of the NBA (whose membership is exclusively male) use their association to undermine female ascendancy and to assert the idea of male superiority, thereby resisting the possibility of a redefined gender order. These processes and the various constestations and identities generated thereof signal the view that there is more to associational life than the simple quest for social visilibity and claims to adult status.

The gendering of associational life in Bamenda is far from new but the reincarnation of old patterns in the face of changing contexts. The gendered nature of associational life among young people's associations in Bamenda points to the desire of social actors to position themselves differently and to carve out new biographic trajectories. In this study, I show that young urban women in Bamenda tend to opt for exclusively female associations. This is partly because it provides them broader scope to set their own agenda and partly as a response to national and international initiatives that assert women's issues, evidenced by the growing popularity of the International Women's Day (celebrated every 8 March).

Young men in the NBA on their part, seek to position themselves as superior. By dint of the kinds of activities undertaken by the NBA, members see themselves as occupying a superior moral high ground than their female counterparts leading to the emergence of certain masculinities, some of which are carefully staged in order to represent themselves as the leading youth association in the community and in other respects in opposition to feminine identities. The NBA for instance, consisting at the time of my fieldwork of predominantly unemployed young men, tended to construct and display signs of what Richard Waller (2006) has termed productive masculinity, which provided them with a sense of credibility and respectability in the neighbourhood. Productive masculinity is often associated with the world of work and responsible citizenship. It is the kind of masculinity predicated on a man's ability to work, provide for his family and ensure the general welfare of his family and kin-network or community. Unlike most members in the Chosen and United Sisters, who tended to be self-employed in the informal economy, most young men in the NBA often identified themselves as 'applicants' – meaning unemployed. As applicants, they could not easily assume to be 'productive' young men unless they redefined their

understanding of what it meant to be 'productive' by including their participation in the social projects carried out by the NBA. Thus, many came to see these projects as productive and worthy causes, pursued on behalf of the community and aimed at the ultimate development of the neighbourhood. In this sense, they represented themselves as providers for the community – and therefore *productive*.

Morality and Moral Practice

Another concern in this study is the question of moral practice, which remains the substance of much anthropological debate. This is because morality is often tied to questions of power and control. While some anthropologists emphasise an Aristotelian perspective of morality, expressed simply as the striving for human good (Lambek 2000:313), others maintain that like culture, it is a set of shared values that underlie certain practices (Zigon 2007:131). However, in this study I am interested in what may be termed the production of *local moralities*, that is, a set of practices defined and employed by local actors as constituting 'morality'. These practices are largely informed by Christian ethos and local customs.

One of the defining activities of youth associations in Old Town includes the pursuit of moral regeneration or in their own words, the fight against social ills. Social actors employ the term 'moral' in reference to a range of practices, beliefs and rules that are critical for the pursuit of human good. For example, all three associations involved in this study frequently justified their fight against social ills as essential to their *raison d'être*. Each association retained a series of rules or moral codes expected to be followed by members if they desired to remain in good standing in the association. Transgressions, such as sexual promiscuity or abortion, were seen not only as bringing dishonour to the association, but also undermined the broader agenda of pursuing moral regeneration.

Citizenship

This study also raises issues that relate to current debates on citizenship. Citizenship is often understood as a social status that derives its legitimacy from the state. But how does one understand citizenship in a context where the postcolonial state is perceived to have failed, or is structured in a way that overtly marginalises and excludes some of its members? Critics have pointed out that the claims of democratic citizenship are not only false (cf. Werbner 1998) but also that the dominant framework for understanding citizenship remains 'bounded' or chained to the nation-state (cf. Nyamnjoh 2006) – a link that needs to be interrogated and deconstructed.

In a context where national citizenship for many Cameroonian youths means little more than carrying a passport, alternative forms of social participation (as seen in associational life) empties national citizenship of its false claims and raises critical questions about the meanings of local participation, identities and subjectivities. Associations therefore provide scope for the construction and articulation of new identities, sociabilities and emergent forms of citizenship, which potentially deny the state its primary role in defining citizenship.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates on the one hand, the interplay of structural forces (both global and national) that position young people into categories of dependency, thereby protracting their youth and, on the other hand, how they negotiate social adult status through involvement in associational life. Clearly, the study reveals that young people occupy different subject positions, which lead to the experience of different subjectivities. However, through youth associations, individual peculiarities blend with collective claims for social visibility and moral legitimacy. The fact that young people negotiate and articulate new gendered identities while laying claim to social adult status does not negate or exclude the multiple contestations, moral economies and hierarchies generated thereof. If anything, we learn that social formations such as youth associations permit us to appreciate the vast array of processes, power relations, claims and moralities generated by social agents who occupy different subject positions, which in turn shape and are shaped by history and the promise of a better future.

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