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Special issue on "The Social Sciences in Post-independence Africa: Past, Present and Future"

Numéro spécial sur «Les sciences sociales dans l'Afrique post-indépendante: passé, présent et avenir»

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# Editorial Note

*The papers selected for publication in this Special Issue of* Africa
Development *reflect; in their coverage, scope and divergence of views and
paradigms; the wide range of thought, practices, concerns and
methodologies that to some extent constitute social science work in Africa.*

*Although certain important disciplinary concerns such as anthropology,
sociology and psychology are not included, the broad thrusts of the papers
particularly those that focus on larger methodological and institutional
questions such as the contributions of Amin, Mugo and Bujra attempt in
some ways to grapple with issues as they range across the whole gamut of
what can be called the social science enterprise.*

*This is what the theme of the Conference — The Social Sciences in
Post-Independence Africa: Past, Present and Future — attempted to capture
in some way. However these papers and the discussions that they generated
cannot be taken in a vacuum. They must be situated within the context of the
20 years of debate that has been part of CODESRIA's history. These
debates concerned with the nature, objective and responsibility of the social
sciences and scientists; the question of Africa's development process, its
interpretation and directions; the relationship between research, the
development process and policy formation; and other related questions have
been pursued with vigour, intensity and extensive diversity. According to
Mkandawire,[1] the outcome of all of these has been an interesting diversity in
thought, approaches and practices. But it is a diversity that has been unified
by the collective objective among social scientists of providing an
understanding of the African situation for transformation and development.
Whether African social scientists and social science have succeeded in their
objective is another question.*

*Broadly, the papers selected here can be seen as confronting three major
elements. These are the review and tackling of theoretical and
methodological questions, the review and examination of the status of some
disciplines and finally a critical review of the institutional and*

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1    Thandika Mkandawire, 1993, *Report of the Executive Secretary to the 20th Anniversary of
     CODESRIA,* pp. 12-14.

*organizational context and dynamics of the production and reproduction of the social sciences in Africa. These are however not treated in mutually-exclusive box-like compartments. Most of the papers here touch upon all these elements, although some are emphatically more concerned with one of these elements than the others.*

*It is however interesting to note that while these contributions seem to focus on the past, to evaluate what has been done so far, from this they point at the future. They not only identify the unmet and broken promises of the African social science enterprise, chronicling the mistakes and disappointments, they also salute the achievements, the unnoticed small victories and positions that time has proven correct in terms of the choice of approach, theories and research questions. The papers therefore not only look back but point forward.*

### *Methodological/Theoretical Questions*
*Three contributions here mainly Amin, Mugo and Koulibaly can be said to be directly concerned with methodological/theoretical questions.*

*Samir Amin in his characteristic style deals with methodological/ theoretical issues in broad paradigmatic terms. He examines the nature, validity and usefulness of the traditions of the critiques of capitalism as against that of the current critiques of modernism. The essay attempts to bring out the essential problems with some variants of the recent conflation and confusion of the critique of capitalism with that of modernism. The paper devotes some space to providing an understanding and clarification of what some of such efforts at critique really are. This is particularly so in the case of the increasingly popular post-modernist analytical currents. Given the nature of what constitutes the real concern of inquiry and practice, Amin's conclusion of post-modernism is clear and unequivocal. For him, post-modernism offers no conceptual instruments capable of transcending the capitalist framework, neither does it demonstrate any capacity to inspire an innovative design for social change. In short it is less radical than the seminal ideas in Marx's work. It is back to these seminal ideas whose elaboration and development have been part of Amin's intellectual and political project that the article takes us on a journey of questioning and examining but with the injunction that the process must be forward-looking and creative, breathing new life into such concepts as pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism, the building of progressive regional blocs, and the reconstruction of the social power of the popular classes that the on-going development crisis has eroded.*

Taking another methodological perspective is Micere Mugo's paper on 'The Woman Artist in Africa Today: A Critical Commentary'. *Micere Mugo introduces among others, three main methodological elements into the discussions by offering a) the importance of gender analysis and decrying the invisibility of women and gender issues in most mainstream intellectual work; b) the significance of 'orature' or popular oral narration, testimony and artistic creation as a valid and useful method of study and source of data and c) through an artist's perspective emphasizing the need to humanize and concretize intellectual work as concerned with real peoples, events and problems, not reified into abstract notions such as agents, actors and empty life-less classes and categories recognized not only in terms of social and structural relations but also actual human experiences. By focusing on writers, she points out that many of the ills that characterize wider society are too often embedded unnoticed and uncriticized even amongst the enlightened circles of the intelligentsia, academia and literary people. Inequality and inequity located in patriarchy and the cult of giants and celebrities too often bestride the cloistered hearths of the learned!*

*In many ways, her contribution stands out as an important challenge that any liberatory and critical intellectual effort faces in Africa. She demands that:*

> ... the perpetuation of patriarchal values that undermine women's creativity must be addressed with uncompromising frankness. Unless this is done we will be condoning oppressive cultural practices designed for the purpose of creating islands of power in the midst of oceans of powerlessness.

*In her conclusion, Mugo raises important questions that link her paper with CODESRIA's concerns, she states that her paper '... has direct and indirect relevance to the deliberations on CODESRIA and the achievements during the last twenty years. The concerns and problems articulated by women artists complement many of the goals that CODESRIA has set for itself as a center for research and human development'. The paper is then concluded with a series of questions raised by Mugo on the extent to which CODESRIA has attained the lofty goals she has set for herself.*

*Koulibaly's paper, written from one of the perspectives of conventional economics, raises questions about the relevance of some methodological positions in the social sciences in general and economics in particular. In a position that is scarcely taken in CODESRIA's circles, Koulibaly questions the validity of the holistic approach common in analysis as unhelpful to providing a solution to current problems of Africa's development. He*

*emphasized a specific form of methodological individualism which provoked severe criticism at the conference but which anyhow demands closer scrutiny particularly since Koulibaly insists that we need to rethink our conception of the 'African household' and the way policies impact on it.*

### The Status of Social Science Disciplines

*Thierno Bah's paper on the role of history in the social sciences reviews both a methodological concern and the status of a discipline. Reflecting the long standing CODESRIA position of the centrality of history both as a discipline and as methodology, Bah traces the changes that have occurred in the discipline leading to the emergence of an autonomous and truly African School of History. The school became more visible in the 1960s and 1970s and its work has contributed to the understanding of the importance of social change in all its aspects in Africa. The school has also contributed to the development of appropriate methodological tools in the area of oral tradition and in other multidisciplinary studies.*

### The Institutional and Organizational Contexts and Policy Interface

*The three papers by Ndongko, Rasheed and Bujra deal with questions of policy interface and the institutional and organizational contexts of the social sciences in Africa. Ndongko devoted a considerable amount of his analysis to the social sciences and policy-making as it relates to governments and public policy while Rasheed shifts the terms of the input of the social sciences in policy-making beyond governments to include all the stakeholders in society. Rasheed's paper is particularly interesting and provocative as it situates the policy interface in the context of the production and reproduction of social science knowledge and the problems engendered by this. Bujra's paper shares many common grounds with Rasheed's and even the other more theoretical contributions as it attempts to situate the social sciences in Africa in the broadest possible terms of origins, trends, concerns and their environmental and socio-political determinants. Beyond being a review of the past, the strategic objectives of this paper are clear in the questions it poses and the scenarios it constructs for the social sciences. The analysis is valuable for its intensely personal/historical account of the evolution of social sciences and their institutions in Africa. Bujra himself was a major player in the debates and transactions of the past twenty years as he was CODESRIA's Executive Secretary for 10 years.*

*His analysis however examined the institutions, structures and processes in relation to the struggles and activities of concrete collective social actors — i.e. governments, university teachers, students, the broad middle class, and the donor community. Analytically Bujra recognized a differentiation and diversity within these groups and the changing nature of alliances and coalitions in the power struggle for the destiny, autonomy, quality and*

*relevance of African social sciences and their institutions. It is in the varied undulations and swings of these struggles and actions that the patterns Bujra paints emerge expressing closures and blockades in some parts and utilizable political spaces for progressive action and work in others. It is in the recognition of these different patterns and the capacity to use them to the advantage of Africa that Bujra locates the challenge that lies ahead for CODESRIA.*

*In conclusion, the importance of all these contributions including Mamdani's review of Basil Davidson's* The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State *is the need for not only an evaluation of the role of the social sciences and their institutions in the contemporary development of Africa but more significantly the need to rethink this role strategically in terms of Africa's future development and her place in the world.*

*Tade Akin Aina*
*Editor*

# Note de la rédaction

*Les articles sélectionnés et publiés dans ce numéro spécial de Afrique et Développement, de par les domaines qu'ils couvrent, leur portée et la divergence de leurs vues et de leurs paradigmes, traduisent l'étendue de la pensée, des pratiques, préoccupations, et méthodologies qui, dans une certaine mesure constituent le travail des sciences sociales en Afrique.*

*Certes, certaines préoccupations de disciplines aussi importantes que l'anthropologie, la sociologie et la psychologie, ne sont pas prises en compte ici. Cependant, les différentes contributions, axées sur les grandes questions méthodologiques et institutionnelles, en particulier celles de Amin, Mugo et Bujra, tentent tout de même d'aborder des questions qui touchent à l'ensemble de ce que l'on pourrait appeler l'entreprise des sciences sociales.*

*C'est cette dernière qu'a tenté de saisir le thème de la Conférence — Les sciences sociales dans l'Afrique post-indépendante: passé, présent et avenir. Cependant, ces papiers et les discussions auxquelles ils ont donné lieu, ne sauraient être considérés dans le vide. Il importe de les situer dans le contexte de 20 années de débats qui ont jalonné l'histoire du CODESRIA. Ces débats centrés sur la nature, l'objectif et le rôle des sciences sociales et des chercheurs, sur la question relative au processus de développement de l'Afrique, son interprétation et ses directions, sur la relation entre la recherche, le processus de développement et la formulation de politiques, et sur d'autres questions connexes, ont été poursuivis avec rigueur, intensité et diversité. Selon Mkandawire,[1] le résultat de tout cela aura été intéressant sur le plan de la diversité au niveau de la pensée, des approches et des pratiques. Cependant, il s'agit d'une diversité qui a été unifiée par l'objectif collectif des chercheurs en sciences sociales de fournir une compréhension de la situation africaine pour la transformation et le développement. Que les chercheurs en sciences sociales et les sciences sociales aient atteint leur objectif, est une autre question.*

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1   Thandika Mkandawire, 1993, *Report of the Executive Secretary to the 20th Anniversary of CODESRIA*, pp. 12-14.

D'une manière générale, on peut dire que les papiers sélectionnés dans le présent numéro tentent d'aborder trois éléments majeurs. Il s'agit d'examiner et d'attaquer des questions théoriques et méthodologiques, d'étudier et d'examiner le statut de certaines disciplines et enfin, de faire l'examen critique du contexte et de la dynamique institutionnels et organisationnels de la production et de la reproduction des sciences sociales en Afrique. Cependant, tout cela n'est pas traité de façon exclusive et séparée. La plupart des articles, à des degrés divers, abordent l'ensemble de ces éléments.

Cependant, il est intéressant de faire remarquer que ces contributions, tout en mettant l'accent sur le passé pour évaluer ce qui a été fait jusqu'ici, n'en sont pas moins tournées vers l'avenir. Elles identifient non seulement les promesses non tenues ou rompues de l'entreprise des sciences sociales africaines, en relatant les erreurs et les déceptions, mais elles saluent également les réalisations, les petites victoires qui passent inaperçues et les prises de position qui se sont avérées justes dans le temps, concernant le choix des approches, des théories et des questions de recherche. Par conséquent, les papiers font un retour sur le passé certes, mais ils sont également résolument tournés vers l'avenir.

## Questions methodologiques/théoriques

Il y a ici trois auteurs, en l'occurrence, Amin, Mugo et Koulibaly dont les contributions semblent aborder directement les questions méthodologiques et théoriques.

Samir Amin dans le style qu'on lui connaît traite des questions méthodologiques/théoriques dans un vaste contexte paradigmatique. Il examine la nature, la validité et l'utilité des critiques traditionnelles du capitalisme face à celles actuelles du modernisme. L'essai tente de souligner les problèmes essentiels que comportent certaines variantes de la récente fusion et confusion de la critique du capitalisme avec celle du modernisme. L'article insiste sur la compréhension et la clarification de la véritable nature de certaines de ces critiques; en particulier dans le cas des courants d'analyses postmodernistes de plus en plus en vogue. Etant donné l'enjeu réel de la recherche et de la pratique, la conclusion que tire Amin du postmodernisme est claire et sans équivoque. Pour lui, le postmodernisme n'offre aucun instrument conceptuel capable de transcender le cadre capitaliste, pas plus qu'il n'affiche une quelconque aptitude à inspirer un projet innovateur de changement social. Bref, il est moins radical que les idées fécondes contenues dans l'oeuvre de Marx. C'est à ces idées dont l'élaboration et le développement, ont fait partie intégrante du projet

*intellectuel et politique d'Amin que nous renvoie l'article, à travers une série de questionnements, mais avec l'injonction que le processus doit être progressiste et créatif. Il doit également ranimer les concepts tels que le panafricanisme et le panarabisme, et raviver la construction d'entités régionales progressistes, et la reconstruction du pouvoir social des classes populaires, laminé par la crise actuelle du développement.*

*Micere Mugo s'inscrit dans une autre perspective méthodologique, avec son article intitulé:* «The Woman Artist in Africa Today: A Critical Commentary». *Micere Mugo a introduit dans la discussion trois éléments méthodologiques majeurs, à savoir, a) l'importance de l'analyse de genre et la critique de l'invisibilité des femmes et des questions de genre dans les principaux travaux intellectuels; b) l'importance de «l'orature» ou narration orale populaire, le témoignage et la création artistique comme méthode d'étude et source d'informations valables et utiles; et c) la nécessité, du point de vue de l'artiste, d'humaniser et de concrétiser le travail intellectuel en tant qu'il est concerné par des personnes, événements et problèmes réels, non réifié en notions abstraites tels que agents, acteurs, classes et catégories inanimées et vides, qu'on reconnaît non seulement du point de vue des rapports sociaux et structurels, mais également des expériences humaines concrètes. En se penchant sur les écrivains, elle souligne que les maux qui frappent la société sont trop souvent enfouis et passent inaperçus, échappant ainsi à la critique, même parmi les milieux éclairés de l'intelligentsia, la communauté académique et les littéraires. L'inégalité et l'injustice inhérentes au patriarcat, de même que le culte des géants et des célébrités, bien trop souvent, surplombent le cloître des érudits!*

*A bien des égards, sa contribution constitue un important défi pour toute action de libération et pour tout effort intellectuel critique en Afrique. Elle affirme avec force que:*

> ... la perpétuation des valeurs patriarcales qui détruisent la créativité des femmes doit être examinée franchement et sans complaisance. Faute de quoi, nous trouverons toujours des excuses pour pardonner des pratiques culturelles dont le seul but est de créer des îlots de pouvoir au milieu d'océans d'impuissance.

*Dans sa conclusion, Mugo soulève des questions importantes qui rapprochent son article des préoccupations du CODESRIA. Elle affirme que son article «... a un rapport à la fois direct et indirect avec les délibérations sur le CODESRIA et ses réalisations au cours des vingt dernières années. Les problèmes et préoccupations exprimés par les femmes artistes viennent compléter la plupart des objectifs que s'est fixés le CODESRIA en tant que*

*centre de recherche et de promotion humaine». L'article se termine par une série de questions que soulève Mugo sur le degré de réalisation des grands objectifs que le CODESRIA s'est fixés.*

*L'article de Koulibaly qui reflète une des perspectives de l'économie conventionnelle, s'interroge sur la pertinence de certaines positions méthodologiques dans les sciences sociales, en générale, et en économie en particulier. Dans une position rarement défendue dans les cercles du CODESRIA, Koulibaly met en cause la validité de l'approche holiste qui, bien que courante dans l'analyse, est incapable de fournir une solution aux problèmes actuels de développement de l'Afrique. Il met en exergue une forme d'individualisme méthodologique sévèrement critiquée lors de la conférence. Toujours est-il que celle-ci requiert un examen plus attentif d'autant plus que Koulibaly insiste sur la nécessité pour nous de repenser notre conception du «ménage africain» et la manière dont les politiques influent sur lui.*

### L'Etat des disciplines de sciences sociales

*L'article de Thierno Bah sur le rôle de l'histoire dans les sciences sociales traite un point méthodologique en même qu'il fait l'état des lieux d'une discipline. Reflétant la position de longue date du CODESRIA qui soutient la centralité de l'histoire en temps que discipline et en temps que méthodologie, Bah retrace les changements qui se sont opérés dans la discipline et qui ont conduit à l'émergence d'une Histoire autonome et authentiquement africaine. Devenue plus visible dans les années 1960 et 1970, l'école a contribué à une meilleure compréhension de l'importance du changement social dans tous ses aspects en Afrique. Elle a également contribué à la mise au point d'outils méthodologiques appropriés dans le domaine de la tradition orale et dans d'autres études pluridisciplinaires.*

### Contextes institutionnels et organisationnels et interface de politiques

*Les trois articles de Ndongko, Rasheed et Bujra traitent de l'interface de politiques et des contextes institutionnels et organisationnels des sciences sociales en Afrique. Ndongko consacre une bonne partie de son analyse aux sciences sociales et à la formulation de politiques, en rapport avec les gouvernements et les politiques publiques. Pour Rasheed, la contribution des sciences sociales dans la formulation de politiques ne se limite pas seulement aux gouvernements. Elle concerne tous les acteurs sociaux dont les intérêts sont en jeu. Le papier de Rasheed est d'autant plus intéressant et provocateur qu'il place l'interface de politiques dans le contexte de la production et reproduction des connaissances en sciences sociales et les problèmes que cela engendre. Sur de nombreux points, le papier de Bujra rejoint celui de Rasheed et même d'autres contributions plus théoriques, dans la mesure où il tente de situer les sciences sociales en Afrique dans le*

*vaste contexte de ses origines, tendances, préoccupations et paramètres environnementaux et socio-politiques. Plus qu'une revue du passé, les objectifs stratégiques de cet article sont clairs dans les questions qu'il pose et les scénarios qu'il construit pour les sciences sociales. La valeur de son analyse tient à son exposé profondément personnel/historique de l'évolution des sciences sociales et leurs institutions en Afrique. En effet, Bujra fut lui-même un acteur principal dans les débats et transactions de ces vingt dernières années, en tant que Secrétaire exécutif du CODESRIA pendant dix ans.*

*Cependant, son analyse a porté sur les institutions, les structures et processus, par rapport aux luttes et activités des acteurs sociaux collectifs concrets, c'est-à-dire, les gouvernements, les professeurs d'université, les étudiants, la classe moyenne dans son ensemble, et la communauté des bailleurs de fonds. Sur le plan analytique, Bujra a reconnu une différenciation, une diversité au sein de ces groupes, ainsi que le caractère changeant des alliances et coalitions dans l'épreuve de force engagée pour assurer la destinée, l'autonomie, la qualité et la pertinence des sciences sociales africaines et leurs institutions. C'est dans le contexte agité de ces luttes et actions qu'émergent les schémas que dépeint Bujra, où il est question tantôt de fermetures et de blocages et tantôt d'ouverture d'espaces politiques utilisables pour l'action et le travail progressistes. C'est fort de la reconnaissance de ces différents schémas et de l'aptitude à les utiliser dans l'intérêt de l'Afrique que Bujra situe le défi que doit relever le CODESRIA dans les années à venir.*

*En conclusion, il faut retenir que l'importance de toutes ces contributions, y compris l'examen critique de Mamdani de* The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State, *c'est la nécessité non seulement d'évaluer le rôle des sciences sociales et de leurs institutions dans le développement contemporain de l'Afrique, mais également, et plus important encore, c'est la nécessité de repenser ce rôle sur le plan stratégique, en songeant au développement futur de l'Afrique et à sa place dans le monde.*

*Tade Akin Aina*
*Rédacteur en chef*

# L'idéologie et la pensée sociale: l'intelligentsia et la crise du développement

## Samir Amin*

J'emploie de préférence l'expression de pensée sociale (ou de théorie sociale) plutôt que celle de sciences sociales de manière à éviter l'amalgame entre les sciences de la nature et les analyses concernant la société. Je ne crois pas que ces dernières puissent nourrir l'ambition — illusoire — d'acquérir le même statut épistémologique que les sciences de la nature. D'ailleurs une science de la société qui accueillerait une puissance d'un degré comparable (cette puissance fut-elle toujours relative) serait une malédiction: elle permettrait de gérer la société comme on gère un troupeau animal, elle abolirait donc la liberté humaine. L'ambition de libération humaine et sociale et de maîtrise de la nature, encore une fois fussent ces deux objectifs relatifs, s'inscrit contre les prétentions d'une gestion s'autoproclamant rationnelle, adossée à une connaissance sociale elle-même également autoproclamée scientifique, objective et donc efficace.

Pourtant la pensée bourgeoise — celle que les critiques postmodernistes qualifient de pensée moderne — s'est toujours proposée de construire une science sociale à l'instar des sciences de la nature. Le système social qui a accompagné son déploiement — le capitalisme pour l'appeler par son nom — est selon elle l'expression des exigences de la rationalité — une rationalité qui est d'abord celle de son économie. Weber, aujourd'hui à la mode, a formulé avec une extraordinaire naïveté cette illusion à travers laquelle la société capitaliste se voit elle-même: le capitalisme est défini par lui comme le triomphe de la rationalité par le moyen de la libération du monde enchanté de l'irrationnel antérieur.

J'ai proposé depuis longtemps une autre lecture du contraste pensée antérieure/pensée moderne (capitaliste), fondée sur la dominance métaphysique propre aux sociétés antécapitalistes (que j'ai appelées tributaires) par opposition à la dominance de l'économique propre au capitalisme, mais non nécessairement à une société plus évoluée qui pourrait construire en réponse aux contradictions de l'économisme bourgeois, ce qu'on pourrait appeler la société socialiste.

En faisant de la nouvelle rationalité économique un absolu, la pensée bourgeoise légitimait la nouvelle organisation sociale et prétendait que

celle-ci était destinée à être fille éternelle de l'histoire comme on l'a encore écrit récemment, avec la même extraordinaire naïveté. Dans ce sens le Progrès avec une majuscule se substituait à Dieu pour fonder l'éternité du système.

En dépit de leurs limites, le capitalisme et la pensée bourgeoise ont représenté, dans la vision que je propose, un progrès (sans majuscule) dans un double sens. Ils ont placé au-devant de la scène des forces qui ont effectivement permis un prodigieux développement matériel des forces productives et donc un degré de maîtrise de la nature sans commune mesure avec celui atteint jusque-là (sans que cette maîtrise ne soit unilatéralement positive, puisqu'elle est simultanément devenue une menace pour la survie de la Planète). Simultanément ils ont créé, en libérant la pensée sociale de la dominance métaphysique antérieure, les conditions premières de la naissance du concept et de la pratique moderne de la démocratie, encore une fois celle-ci fut-elle limitée par la nature même du système. L'équation facile qu'on établit entre marché (substitut à la réalité capitaliste) et démocratie se fonde sur ce progrès réel et tangible.

La critique du capitalisme n'a de sens que dans la mesure où elle ouvre les yeux et les esprits sur ces limites de la pensée bourgeoise, où elle regarde le capitalisme à la fois comme une étape qualitative nouvelle de l'histoire et le moment du déploiement de contradictions nouvelles entre les ambitions libératrices qu'il a promues et son incapacité à les satisfaire à l'échelle de la société mondiale qu'il a façonnée. La critique du capitalisme se propose bien de dépasser le capitalisme, donc de dépasser la modernité si on lui substitut cette expression. Il lui faut bien aussi, pour cela, proposer d'autres règles d'organisation sociale, d'autres valeurs, une autre rationalité donc. Doit-elle pour le faire céder à son tour à la tentation de qualifier d'éternelle la rationalité de l'utopie créatrice qu'elle propose? Cela n'est pas nécessaire, à mon avis.

Mais la critique du capitalisme a-t-elle dépassé véritablement les limites de la pensée bourgeoise? La question véritable est là. La réponse à cette question ne peut être que nuancée du fait que cette critique reste inachevée, doit être poursuivie et s'enrichir des réponses aux défis nouveaux auxquels elle est confrontée par l'évolution même du capitalisme. Engagée d'abord sur le terrain des valeurs morales, la critique du capitalisme a franchi avec Marx une étape que je considère toujours comme décisive. Cela étant le marxisme s'est constitué progressivement depuis la II$^e$ Internationale puis à sa suite la III$^e$ Internationale, il a repris à son compte l'économisme de la pensée bourgeoise, cédé à l'appel de sa vision déterministe faisant des "lois de l'histoire" l'équivalent de celles qui s'imposent implacablement dans la nature, proposant — sous le vocable de socialisme — l'utopie d'une gestion rationnelle par la connaissance de ces «lois», abolissant par là même la dialectique de la liberté humaine. Bien que la critique du capitalisme reste

donc bel et bien inachevée, pour le moins qu'on puisse dire, il serait tout à fait injuste de réduire le marxisme à son expression à travers l'idéologie du soviétisme — qui me paraît depuis longtemps plus proche de la pensée bourgeoise que de celle de Marx.

La critique du capitalisme n'a donc pas attendu la critique à la mode qui nous est proposée aujourd'hui par les postmodernistes. Il s'agit donc de savoir si cette dernière critique apporte du nouveau. Pour ma part j'avancerai que le postmodernisme est un échec intellectuel qui, malgré ses prétentions, ne permet pas de dépasser le capitalisme, ni théoriquement, ni par le projet social qu'il pourrait inspirer. Cette critique est moins radicale que celle dont les germes essentiels ont été proposés par Marx.

Sans doute les exercices de «déconstruction» du discours par lesquels Lyotard, Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari, Foucault et Baudrillard ont préparé le postmodernisme (tel que les auteurs américains et Touraine en France l'ont proposé) n'ont pas été inutiles. Ils ont eu l'avantage de montrer le caractère métaphysique du discours bourgeois depuis les Lumières, et de son prolongement dans les courants dominants du socialisme, de dévoiler son essentialisme (c'est-à-dire son choix métaphysique, à la recherche de l'absolu), son économisme (tous les aspects de la vie sociale s'ajustent aux exigences de la rationalité économique), sa portée téléologique (les lois de l'histoire s'imposent d'une manière implacable et expriment le déploiement progressif du Progrès). Mais pour ceux qui n'ont jamais accepté l'essentialisme, l'économisme et la téléologie il ne s'agissait que d'une redécouverte des limites de la pensée bourgeoise, à mon avis déjà faite par Marx.

Les postmodernistes ont donc redécouvert que les Lumières n'ont pas libéré l'humanité. Cela va de soi dans l'interprétation de la pensée marxiste qui est la mienne, mettant l'accent sur l'aliénation économiste propre à l'idéologie bourgeoise (y compris dans ses versions prétendues socialistes) prenant le relais de l'aliénation métaphysique des systèmes antérieurs, en parallèle à la substitution de l'exploitation capitaliste prenant le relais de l'exploitation tributaire. Lorsque donc Lyotard écrit qu'Auschwitz et Staline expriment le fiasco du projet moderniste, il manque à sa phrase lapidaire le qualifiant de capitaliste. Car l'impérialisme, sa forme fasciste exacerbée, les guerres mondiales et les massacres coloniaux sont bien le produit de l'aggravation des contradictions du capitalisme, du conflit entre ses promesses libératoires et son incapacité à les tenir. Car le soviétisme lui-même, par sa vision économiste se proposant de «rattraper», que je qualifiais donc de projet d'un capitalisme sans capitalistes, avatar de l'idéologie bourgeoise, devait naturellement, comme le maoïsme l'avait prévu il y a 35 ans, conduire à un capitalisme «normal», ce que les événements des dernières années — en rien surprenant — ont confirmé.

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Le postmodernisme, en situant sa critique en deçà de celle, plus radicale, contenue dans la pensée de Marx, ne s'est pas donné un équipement conceptuel qui permette de dépasser le capitalisme. Ses propositions restent de ce fait ambiguës et vagues. L'éloge non critique de la différence, la glorification de l'empirisme accompagnent facilement la gestion économiste conventionnelle, perpétuant les pratiques du capitalisme, toujours considéré en définitive comme l'expression éternelle de la rationalité. La voie est alors ouverte à des expressions idéologiques néoconservatrices communautaristes, conformes à la tradition de la gestion sociale anglo-saxonne, ou à la rigueur à des explosions nihilistes. Dans tous les cas il s'agit bien d'une idéologie confortante pour les privilégiés, les «satisfaits» dans l'analyse brillante de Galbraith.

Cela étant, l'insistance placée sur le besoin démocratique n'en est pas pour autant inutile. Au contraire, cette insistance pourrait constituer le moyen efficace d'amorcer de nouvelles avancées de la critique théorique et pratique du capitalisme. A condition évidemment que le concept de démocratie soit saisi dans toute son amplitude dynamique. Comme à un stade antérieur les luttes ouvrières ont approfondi la démocratie, on ne doit pas exclure que la poursuite du combat démocratique soit en mesure d'infléchir l'évolution dans un sens progressiste, souhaité d'ailleurs par tout un courant du postmodernisme. Je ne leur ferai donc pas un procès d'intention «évolutionniste», condamné a priori à l'impuissance. Car je prétends que le contraste «évolution = trahison»/«révolution = voie exclusive de la transition du socialisme», produit circonstanciel (associé à la conjoncture de la guerre mondiale et de la révolution russe), vrai sans doute dans les circonstances de l'époque mais absolutisé par la suite par le marxisme vulgaire, n'est pas une exigence logique de la critique radicale du capitalisme. Tout comme le rôle de la classe ouvrière, s'il a bien correspondu aux conditions objectives créées par le capitalisme à un stade antérieur de son évolution, il doit être révisé en fonction de l'évolution du capitalisme tant à l'échelle de ses formations sociales nationales qu'à celle du système mondial. L'éclipse des stratégies de la rupture révolutionnaire ne signifie pas que l'exigence de dépasser le capitalisme ait disparu. Elle signifie seulement que des stratégies nouvelles doivent être pensées, à la hauteur du défi des transformations du capitalisme lui-même.

La mode reste cependant au rejet du marxisme, amalgamé préalablement avec son avatar soviétique, accusé d'avoir «un pouvoir trop explicateur», c'est-à-dire de faire pencher la balance en faveur d'un déterminisme selon lequel tout ce qui arrive n'est pas seulement explicable mais encore le produit nécessaire des lois du capitalisme. L'accusation est, à mon avis, injuste à l'égard de Marx même si elle est justifiée à l'égard de beaucoup de marxistes.

La question du rapport entre l'économique et le non-économique (la politique et le culturel) n'en est pas réglée pour autant, ni par le marxisme tel qu'il a été développé jusqu'à ce jour, ni par les autres propositions théoriques, celles du postmodernisme incluses. L'idée économiciste que le culturel s'ajuste aux exigences de l'économique n'est pas une thèse de Marx, elle correspond plutôt aux perceptions dominantes de l'idéologie bourgeoise, des Lumières à nos jours. Mais en contrepoint, l'idée que les cultures constitueraient des noyaux durs invariants, mise à la mode par les culturalismes qui ont le vent en poupe, eurocentristes ou eurocentristes inversés (dont j'ai proposé une critique radicale), me paraît encore plus fausse et plus contredite dans la réalité, si l'on peut dire. La position moyenne, que la prudence impose peut être, n'en est pas pour autant satisfaisante. Comment fonctionne-t-elle? Or les sages qui ont adopté en apparence cette attitude (*in medio stat virtus*) ne nous ont pas aidé à améliorer notre compréhension. J'en prends pour exemple Weber, dont les thèses (notamment celle exprimées au sujet du rapport protestantisme-capitalisme) me paraissent peu convaincantes, voire faibles.

De la même manière la dynamique du conflit social, plus simple en apparence, reste l'objet de questions demeurées sans réponses décisives, dans la tradition marxiste elle-même. Par exemple comment une classe en soi devient-elle une classe pour soi? On sait qu'ici Lénine a fait quelques propositions qui sont apparues non marxistes à d'autres, en avançant que la théorie est un élément introduit de l'extérieur dans la classe ouvrière. Par exemple comment se constitue l'intellectuel organique de Gramsci? Bien entendu une avancée sur le terrain que ces questions posent suppose une avancée sur celui de la compréhension du rapport entre les instances: économique, politique et culturelle. On peut donc ici également, par prudence, rester sur le terrain solide des faits et constater que les "acteurs sociaux" comme on dit maintenant sont divers, que leurs projets explicites ou implicites sont partiels, se situent dans des domaines différents par nature, qu'on ne sait donc pas à l'avance s'ils sont conflictuels ou complémentaires, possibles ou irréalistes, et que donc le résultat de leurs confrontations est inconnu à l'avance. Dit de cette manière la proposition est un truisme. En tirer la conclusion que les «mouvements sociaux», toujours pris au pluriel, constituent les forces du changement et que, pour autant que ces mouvements traduisent les aspirations réelles de groupes humains, ils doivent être également respectés, par esprit démocratique, voire soutenus ne me paraît pas convaincant. Pourquoi le devraient-ils si l'on ignore à quoi ils conduisent? Pourquoi éliminerait-on la possibilité de leur manipulation par des pouvoirs en place. Une bonne partie des revendications ethniques de notre époque me paraissent relever de ce genre de manipulation des pouvoirs préoccupés par la gestion de la crise, non par sa solution. Le droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes peut de ce fait devenir le moyen par lequel ces pouvoirs pourraient bien réduire la liberté des peuples en question et non

la promouvoir. Il y a donc, derrière «l'activisme au service des mouvements» (ou l'approche dite fondée sur l'analyse des acteurs sociaux), un risque de préjugé antithéorique pas moins dangereux que celui, opposé, du préjugé théorique dogmatique.

Les sciences sociales constituent un ensemble peu intégré de connaissances et de méthodes d'analyses de la réalité sociale dont les statuts épistémologiques sont hétéroclites.

Dans le domaine de l'économie la préoccupation de gestion, dominante, a imposé à la science du même nom un agenda de questions particulières, un choix des données significatives et des méthodes de lecture de la réalité parfois relativement efficaces du point de vue de la conduite des actions gestionnaires recherchées. Mais alors la science dite économique implique un choix idéologique sous-jacent qui légitime cette gestion et donc le système social — le capitalisme — qu'elle perpétue. De ce fait cette science ne s'intéresse pas aux questions plus fondamentales qui concernent le changement social et le mouvement de l'histoire, qu'elle relègue à l'imagination libre de la pensée considérée par elle comme non scientifique.

Marx a cherché — et est parvenu à mon avis — à dévoiler l'aliénation propre à la société capitaliste qui fait que des «lois économiques» s'y imposent «comme» des lois de la nature, donnant par la même à la gestion du système une certaine efficacité possible. Il a transféré les questions posées de ce domaine étroit à celui justement plus large du changement social. Cela n'a pas empêché que se constitue une tradition marxienne d'analyse de l'économie capitaliste voisine de l'économique par la définition des problèmes qu'elle pose.

Par ailleurs la critique radicale du capitalisme proposée par Marx n'abolit pas les questions relatives à la gestion sociale d'une société libérée de l'économisme, ni celle concernant la transition à celle-ci. Ces questions se sont imposées dès lors que des mouvements sociaux révolutionnaires ont conquis le pouvoir politique et se sont proposés de construire le socialisme. L'ambiguïté de leur projet — socialisme ou rattrapage du capitalisme avancé — dû aux conditions objectives, est sans doute à l'origine des choix concernant la gestion de cette transition (la gestion administrative se substituant à l'abolition du marché). La légitimation de ces choix par la rationalité (construire une société gérée par la Raison scientifique), typique de l'idéologie bourgeoise, avait déjà soulevé les critiques qu'Engels avait adressées à la social-démocratie allemande (en qualifiant son projet de «capitalisme sans capitalistes»). Or ces questions restent posées du fait que, selon moi, la polarisation mondiale inhérente au capitalisme implique des stratégies longues de la transition confrontées à la double tâche, contradictoire en partie, de développer les forces productives et de construire d'autres rapports sociaux. Le débat sur ces stratégies, et notamment sur leur

dimension économique (la gestion sociale du marché), reste donc tout à fait ouvert.

La pensée sociale ne peut donc être réduite aux dimensions dans lesquelles l'économisme l'enferme. Mais comprendre la société dans la totalité de son mouvement ne peut être séparé de la volonté d'en orienter l'évolution dans un sens ou un autre. Idéologie (système des valeurs sous-jacent au projet sociétaire défendu) et science (connaissance des fonctionnements objectifs qui modulent le changement) sont ici inséparables. Par exemple le concept de développement est, selon moi, un concept idéologique défini par le projet sociétaire auquel le développement en question prétend conduire; il doit être distingué, comme je tente de le faire, de la réalité du monde moderne qui est commandée non par le développement, mais par l'expansion du capitalisme. L'amalgame pratiqué par les idéologues, politiciens et gestionnaires du développement en question, exprime en fait le choix capitaliste sous-jacent de leur projet. Autre exemple: les féministes ont parfaitement dévoilé le fondement idéologique de la prétendue science sociale dominante. Elles ont montré comment, par la définition des problèmes (ce qui serait important et ce qui ne le serait pas) et le choix des méthodes associés à celle-ci, cette science élude de son champ la question qu'elles posent, parce que le projet social sous-jacent à cette science se propose de perpétuer le patriarcat.

Les réflexions qui précèdent inspirent à leur tour une distinction claire qu'il faut faire entre les penseurs sociaux en fonction du projet social qui les anime. Pour les uns — les «satisfaits» de Galbraith — notre société n'a besoin que de gestionnaires (du capitalisme, fut-il compris dans un sens qui n'exclut pas une évolution qu'ils souhaiteraient favorable — à définir bien sûr). Au-delà l'utopie devient danger public selon eux. Pour les autres, notre société a surtout besoin d'une pensée critique, apte à mieux comprendre le fonctionnement du changement pour en orienter le mouvement dans des directions qui libèrent des aliénations du capitalisme et de leurs conséquences dramatiques. Pour ce qui concerne la grande majorité de l'humanité — les peuples d'Asie, d'Afrique et d'Amérique latine, ce besoin est vital, le capitalisme réellement existant étant pour eux synonyme de sauvagerie.

La distinction proposée sépare donc ceux que j'appelle les fonctionnaires des appareils idéologiques du pouvoir d'une part, de l'intelligentsia d'autre part. Celle-ci n'a de portée que dans la mesure où elle est critique, compétente au sens qu'elle est capable, à travers une relation permanente théorie-pratique, d'inspirer une action libératoire.

Vu sous cet angle le jugement qu'on peut porter sur les intellectuels du tiers monde (et donc de l'Afrique) doit être fondé sur l'analyse du rapport entre les défis que l'expression capitaliste réellement existante pose à leurs

peuples et les directions d'action qu'ils inspirent. Je reviendrai concrètement plus loin sur la lecture de ce jugement que je propose.

A l'heure où la critique du développement est à l'ordre du jour, il est bon, me semble-t-il, d'examiner la nature des critiques qui lui sont adressées, le jugement porté sur les théories, concepts et pratiques associées au déploiement du projet de développement de l'après-guerre, désormais en crise, les nouvelles méthodes d'analyse et les stratégies suggérées par ces critiques.

Les critiques du développement se partagent entre deux tendances de pensée. Pour les uns, en gros le développement tel qu'il s'est déployé — fut-ce inégalement bien entendu — au cours des «belles décennies» des années 50 et 70, reste largement positif. Mais il est en panne et il s'agit de remettre la machine en marche. Panne due principalement à la crise générale qui frappe les centres développés pour les uns, aux erreurs des politiques de développement — trop nationalistes et par là même en conflit avec les exigences de la mondialisation — pour les autres, à une conjonction de ces deux développements. Comme on le voit, pour ces critiques, développement reste synonyme d'expansion capitaliste mondialisée, dont il serait comme le produit naturel, même si, évidemment, pour certains d'entre eux cette expansion a besoin d'être encadrée, voir corrigée par des politiques adéquates. Ces critiques restent donc dans le champ de la réflexion des gestionnaires. Pour d'autres par contre le développement en question est en crise parce qu'il n'a pas produit ce qu'il promettait; il s'est soldé par une répartition des revenus de plus en plus inégale entre les sociétés de la planète et à l'intérieur de celles de la périphérie, aggravant les phénomènes de paupérisation et d'exclusion sociale au lieu d'intégrer d'une manière toujours plus large et plus solide l'ensemble des salaires populaires, comme il s'est soldé par un gaspillage dangereux des ressources non renouvelables et par une destruction dramatique de l'environnement. Ces critiques se situent donc dans le champ de la préoccupation qui est la nôtre. Aussi est-il utile de rappeler que la critique du développement n'a pas attendu la crise des années 1980 pour s'exprimer. Il est donc nécessaire de revoir aujourd'hui ce que les critiques du développement disaient hier de celui-ci, à l'époque de son déploiement triomphant.

Bien entendu les critiques adressées aujourd'hui aux critiques du développement d'hier sont de nature et de portée diverses et on ne peut pas les réduire à quelques propositions générales, sauf à défigurer le sens des débats en cours. J'essayerai donc d'éviter les simplifications outrancières. Il reste qu'il me paraît que fréquemment nos critiques résument à leur manière les thèses qu'ils réunissent sous l'appellation générale de néomarxisme des décennies précédentes, qui serait lui-même en crise selon eux. Nos critiques d'ailleurs ont le plus souvent appartenu à l'une ou l'autre de ces «écoles

néomarxistes» et, pour certains, leur critique-autocritique reste motivée par les mêmes soucis qui ont été les leurs dans le passé.

Dans cette présentation fréquente, les écoles néomarxistes sont à leur tour classées sous trois rubriques principales: l'école des modes de production, l'école de la dépendance, l'école du système monde. Bien que les analyses soient ici évidemment nuancées et diverses selon leurs auteurs, j'avoue que je partage en grande partie les critiques les plus fréquentes faites à ces écoles néomarxistes. Par exemple que le raffinement sans fin sur les modes de production traduit une préoccupation — je dirai presque une déformation — académiciste de nature plutôt à éluder les questions véritables qu'à mieux les éclairer. Par exemple que les théories développées dans le cadre de la dépendance ou du système monde ont parfois été mécanistes, économicistes, déterministes, etc. En dépit de ces critiques je ne crois pas utile de jeter le bébé avec l'eau du bain en revenant sur ce qui me paraît être des acquis importants du néomarxisme en question, entre autre la préoccupation de relier le national et le mondial, dont toutes les évolutions ultérieures ont démontré qu'elle était vitale et corrigeait les visions naïves sur ce terrain soit de la pensée bourgeoise, soit du marxisme dominant. Cela étant je ne me reconnais dans aucune de ces «écoles» (cf ma critique in: *Capitalisme et Système monde*) et je ne suis certainement pas le seul dans ce cas, ce qui montre une fois de plus les limites artificielles de ce type de classement. Les préoccupations qui ont toujours été les miennes, relevant du matérialisme historique pris dans sa totalité, mettant l'accent sur la lecture de l'histoire et du passage au capitalisme, la critique de la vision économiciste et eurocentrique des métathéories dominantes dans ces domaines, traduisaient pour le moins un souci d'éviter ce qui est reproché aujourd'hui aux écoles néomarxistes, parfois à juste titre, à savoir l'économisme, l'essentialisme (et la lecture scolastique et dogmatique du marxisme qui lui est souvent associée) et le téléologisme (particulièrement marquant dans le marxisme vulgaire du soviétisme).

Mais l'essentiel dans ma critique de la critique se situe au-delà de ces terrains dit théoriques. Car la pensée sociale est inséparable de l'action qu'elle inspire. Je préférerais donc, pour ma part, lire — et relire — les analyses et les propositions faites dans le cadre des critiques néomarxistes du développement en situant le rapport théorie-politique qui leur était sous-jacent dans l'ambiance du moment où elles ont été formulées. C'est ce que j'ai proposé dans une relecture récente «du déploiement et de l'érosion du projet de Bandoung» (in: *itinéraire intellectuel*), mettant l'accent sur les questions posées à la réflexion théorique par les enjeux des conflits sur le terrain de la réalité. Dans cette optique il est impossible d'oublier ce qu'ont été les formulations du soviétisme, les contre-propositions du maoïsme, les ambiguïtés du nationalisme populiste radical du tiers monde, dont malheureusement on ne retrouve pas le fil conducteur dans la plupart des

critiques d'aujourd'hui de la critique du développement d'hier. Je le déplore et avance que cette insuffisance grave exprime le caractère largement académiciste de ces critiques. Cette insuffisance exprime également, à mon avis, le revirement à 180 degrés de beaucoup d'intellectuels de la gauche occidentale, passés d'un tiers mondisme naïf qui leur était propre à un repliement presqu'anti-tiers monde et pro-impérialiste aujourd'hui.

L'argument principal qui est avancé dans cette autocritique du tiers mondisme est que la diversité des évolutions interdit la poursuite d'un discours globalisant sur le capitalisme mondial, le contraste centres-périphéries, l'impérialisme, etc. qui aurait été l'erreur fatale du marxisme, néomarxisme inclus. Cette diversité appelle nécessairement la nuance, la prise en considération sérieuse des conditionnements internes propres à chaque société (conditionnements particuliers opérant à tous les niveaux, économique, politique et culturel) qui commandent à leur tour l'évolution — progressive ou régressive — dans le système mondial. Dit de cette manière l'argument n'est, pour moi, qu'un truisme. A aucun moment les analyses proposées par moi-même et d'autres n'ont prétendu que l'expansion mondiale du capitalisme rabotait les différences. Au contraire tout l'effort consistait à analyser la nature et la portée des différentiations que cette expansion accuse, précisément du fait de l'interaction du général-mondial et du particulier-nation. La reconnaissance de la diversité, laquelle n'est en rien surprenante, ne supprime pas l'exigence d'une reconnaissance parallèle du général, à défaut de quoi la diversité perd son sens. La question véritable que pose la diversité est autre, et souvent mal vue par les critiques en question; la modernisation dans le capitalisme permet-elle le «rattrapage», c'est-à-dire l'annulation de la polarisation mondiale? Cela dépend-il, si la proposition est vraie, des conditions nationales internes?

A cette question deux réponses divergentes, explicites ou implicites, sont données aujourd'hui comme hier. Oui disent les uns. Non, disent les autres (j'appartiens à ce groupe); la polarisation prend de nouvelles allures, en consonance avec les caractéristiques de l'étape nouvelle du capitalisme, qui sont différentes de celle de l'essor de l'après-guerre (1945-1990).

D'autres critiques se situent d'emblée en dehors de la tradition marxiste, ou néomarxiste, avec laquelle elles proclament leur rupture. La critique postmoderniste évolue dans cette orbite. En réalité on peut même dire que les postmodernistes ne s'intéressent pas au tiers monde, dans lequel ils ne voient guère que des pays en «retard», conformément à la vision bourgeoise d'hier et d'aujourd'hui. Les extrapolations auxquelles quelques uns d'entre eux se livrent, étendant aux «mouvements sociaux» de la périphérie les caractères qu'ils attribuent à ceux du monde développé sont, à mon avis, fantaisistes. Ces mouvements n'expriment pas un refus de la modernité; ils sont au contraire le produit d'une modernisation avortée, propre au capitalisme périphérique.

Les stratégies de développement prétendument nouvelles qu'on avance en les habillant souvent trop vite de vêtements neufs, restent ambiguës et peu convaincantes. L'insistance sur la démocratie, à laquelle le discours contemporain est devenu sensible, presqu'unanimement, n'est certes pas un fait négatif. Bien au contraire cette insistance devrait permettre de renverser quelques préjugés erronés, mais courants, notamment celui selon lequel la démocratie viendrait d'elle-même après que le développement ait porté ses fruits. Pour ceux qui, comme moi et d'autres, considèrent le développement comme un terme rapide désignant un projet social progressiste, la démocratisation de la société est par définition un élément constitutif nécessaire au développement sans lequel l'objectif de libération et d'exercice réel du pouvoir par le peuple devient rhétorique creuse. Mais il ne suffit pas de se rallier à ce point de vue pour croire que la question soit réglée. Il faut aussi analyser comment concrètement le capitalisme périphérique constitue un obstacle objectif à la démocratie (et c'est pourquoi le préjugé antidémocratique n'a pas été seulement celui des technocrates dits socialistes mais également des pouvoirs ouvertement capitalistes), admettant par la même que le développement est en conflit avec les exigences de l'expansion capitaliste. Il faut enfin être capable de formuler des programmes d'action concrets associant la démocratisation au progrès social et oser mettre en œuvre des politiques efficaces dans cette perspective, au risque d'entrer en conflit avec les tendances de l'expansion capitaliste (c'est ce que j'appelle la déconnexion).

D'autres éléments de stratégie mis à la mode sont certainement par eux-mêmes d'une importance indéniable; le progrès de la libération des femmes, le souci culturel, le souci écologiste par exemple. Combien néanmoins les discours produits sur ces terrains demeurent ambigus et superficiels! Les agences du développement ont développé dans ces domaines d'extraordinaires capacités à changer le langage sans jamais remettre en cause les pouvoirs en place. On parle ainsi des femmes dans le développement, du respect des valeurs culturelles, d'un «développement soutenu» (*sustainable*) sans que — sauf rarement — on se soit donné la peine d'analyser au préalable les rapports que l'expansion capitaliste entretient avec le partage des rôles masculins et féminins, ou avec les valeurs culturelles en question, ou avec la reproduction des conditions naturelles de la production. Les questions complexes à l'extrême qu'un projet de développement libératoire pose dans ces domaines ne peuvent pas être éludées avec cette arrogance, bien caractéristique des gestionnaires du développement. Ici encore le rapport entre l'universel (et notamment donc l'objectif universaliste de transformation nécessairement à l'échelle mondiale) et le particulier (qui définit les étapes de la transition) constitue un ensemble de difficultés théoriques et pratiques que la rhétorique superficielle de ces gestionnaires a évacué sans vergogne.

Dans ces conditions, les éléments de stratégie proposés, avancés en ordre dispersé, risquent fort de n'être que des éléments de politiques de gestion de la crise et non d'une sortie de celle-ci. Une gestion qui d'ailleurs n'hésite pas le cas échéant à recourir à la manipulation de ces propositions-slogans au bénéfice des pouvoirs en place.

Je propose donc de lire ce que furent les analyses et les stratégies avancées par l'intelligentsia du tiers monde et de l'Afrique en particulier au cours des décennies précédentes d'une manière qui permette de relier ces analyses et stratégies aux enjeux réels des combats de libération de l'époque. Je me propose également d'intervenir de la même manière dans le débat concernant les transformations en cours à l'échelle du système mondial et des systèmes africains, comme de suggérer ce qu'on peut en déduire au plan des enjeux nouveaux et des stratégies appropriées.

J'ai proposé de lire le demi-siècle de l'après-guerre (1945-1990) comme une phase longue d'expansion capitaliste forte assise sur trois piliers: le compromis national social démocrate en occident développé, le projet soviétiste de rattrapage dans la déconnexion à l'Est, le projet national bourgeois de développement dans le tiers monde que j'ai qualifié de projet de Bandoung (cf *l'Empire du chaos, Itinéraire intellectuel*). L'érosion graduelle puis l'effondrement des systèmes fondés sur ces bases a ouvert une phase de crise structurelle longue, à l'échelle mondiale, tandis que l'approfondissement de la mondialisation, à l'origine de l'érosion des systèmes désormais tous dépassés, définit les formes nouvelles de la polarisation capitaliste mondiale et donc les défis nouveaux auxquels les combats de libération sont confrontés.

Dans cette perspective les analyses et stratégies proposées par l'intelligentsia du tiers monde et de l'Afrique au cours de l'après-guerre doivent être relues comme les expressions de ce que j'ai appelé «le déploiement et l'érosion du projet de Bandoung». Il s'agissait d'un projet de modernisation nationale bourgeois, de construction d'économies nationales relativement autocentrées et industrialisées, s'inscrivant dans une interdépendance mondiale contrôlée (et non dans une déconnexion à la soviétique). Bien entendu les variantes de ce projet ont été diverses, en fonction de données internes, notamment au degré de radicalisation du front de libération anti-impérialiste, comme également les résultats de libération anti-impérialiste, comme également les résultats obtenus, en termes d'industrialisation efficace et de capacité compétitive, ont été inégaux, en fonction des données internes et externes. L'axe de clivage essentiel qui a partagé tout au long de ce demi-siècle les camps principaux dans les débats du tiers·monde et de l'Afrique a été défini, selon moi, par la question suivante: ce projet était-il viable, c'est-à-dire permettait-il de mettre en place effectivement des sociétés capitalistes nationales modernisées s'inscrivant dans l'interdépendance mondialisée comme des partenaires «rattrapant» leur

retard? Ou bien il était utopique dans ce sens que l'objectif aurait exigé une radicalisation du projet et le dépassement de sa logique capitaliste? Pour les uns donc la bourgeoisie nationale avait encore un rôle historique à remplir, pour les autres cela était une illusion appelée à s'effriter rapidement. Les premiers ont constitué le camp de ce qu'on peut appeler les «développementalistes»; les autres (dont moi-même) celui de la critique maoïste de l'illusion nationale bourgeoise. Je crois que l'histoire a finit par nous donner raison.

Aujourd'hui donc le défi doit être défini de manière nouvelle, à partir des positions acquises au terme des «décennies du développement» comme on dit et des caractères nouveaux de la mondialisation.

Je propose donc d'analyser la diversité de l'ex-tiers monde à partir du critère de la capacité compétitive des différents partenaires du système. Sur cette base les périphéries apparaissent clairement classifiables en deux groupes distincts: celles dont les productions manufacturières ont acquis une compétitivité sur les marchés mondiaux et celles qui, qu'elles soient toujours non engagées dans l'industrialisation ou que leurs industries soient encore loin d'être potentiellement compétitives, restent enfermées dans l'exportation de produits de base, c'est-à-dire dans une division du travail dépassée.

Le premier groupe (Asie de l'Est, Amérique latine, à un moindre degré Inde et Asie du Sud-Est) que les gestionnaires du développement considèrent comme réellement «en voie de développement» c'est-à-dire de rattrapage, constituent à mon avis les véritables périphéries du nouveau système mondial en construction. Leur industrialisation ressemble à un gigantesque système de *putting out* — de sous traitance — contrôlé par les centres mettant en oeuvre ce que j'appelle les cinq nouveaux monopoles par lesquels s'exerce l'effet de polarisation à leur bénéfice exclusif (les technologies nouvelles, le contrôle des flux financiers, le contrôle de l'accès aux ressources naturelles du globe, la manipulation médiatique, le monopole des armes de destruction massive).

Le second groupe (toute l'Afrique, Afrique du Nord et Afrique du Sud inclus), qu'on appelle parfois le «quart monde» est appelé à être davantage marginalisé dans le nouveau système mondial.

Les idéologies et stratégies proposées par les pouvoirs dominants constituent le moyen par lequel ceux-ci s'appliquent à gérer la crise de ce système nouveau en construction. Cette gestion met en oeuvre des discours parcellaires juxtaposés, légitimés en ordre dispersé par des arguments de statuts divers, notamment d'apparence moraux, qu'elle récupère à son profit de cette manière. Au nom de la mondialisation et de l'inadéquation du concept dépassé de nation par exemple on tente de justifier le diktat à peine déguisé derrière le drapeau des Nations Unies, de démanteler les Etats de la périphérie pour les réduire à des Etats croupions inaptes à offrir de résistance à l'assaut de la mondialisation du marché (on mobilise à cet effet

par exemple la défense des minorités, etc.). Au nom de la privatisation on s'emploie à renforcer l'efficacité des monopoles technologiques et financiers et d'empêcher les Etats de la périphérie de se défendre sur ces terrains. Au nom de l'environnement on accuse le monopole dans l'accès et le gaspillage des ressources du globe. Au nom de la démocratie — manipulée — on se donne un droit d'intervention illimité, etc.

L'intelligentsia, notamment dans le tiers monde et en Afrique, doit «déconstruire» ces discours et dévoiler leur rapport aux objectifs tactiques et stratégiques de gestion de la crise. Mais cela ne peut être fait avec succès tant qu'on s'accroche aux formules anciennes, dépassées par le défi renouvelé de la mondialisation. Il faut donc ici s'emparer des thèmes progressistes et démocratiques que l'épuisement des modèles de la phase de l'après-guerre a replacé au-devant de la scène pour radicaliser la réflexion et l'attention fondée sur eux.

A défaut, si l'intelligentsia ne tient pas son rôle dans ces domaines, les ripostes spontanées inadéquates des peuples victimes de la nouvelle polarisation mondiale continueront à se déployer et à être mobilisées par les pouvoirs dominants pour gérer la crise. J'ai à l'esprit ici les forces centrifuges ethnicistes et communautaristes, comme les repliements culturalistes passéistes, religieux notamment, à l'oeuvre, dont les effets dévastateurs, particulièrement dans le quart monde en désarroi, ont pris une ampleur dramatique.

A ces idéologies et stratégies de gestion de la crise, l'intelligentsia doit répondre par sa contribution positive à la cristallisation d'alternatives de sortie de la crise. Sans proposer ici des recettes toutes faites je rappelerai quelques uns des linéaments de ce qui me paraît pouvoir contribuer à reconstituer à la fois des stratégies efficaces de sortie de la crise et les bases d'un internationalisme des peuples, faisant face aux appétits mondialistes du capital. Ces propositions appellent des interventions à tous les niveaux, des bases élémentaires aux Etats, aux régions et au système mondial.

Elles impliquent certes la constitution — fut-elle progressiste — de fronts anticompradores dans les périphéries (les alliances sociales compradores étant justement celles qui s'inscrivent dans le projet capitaliste de la mondialisation nouvelle).

Mais elles impliquent également des actions visant à reconstituer des Etats à la hauteur du défi. Or pour combattre les cinq monopoles identifiés plus haut il est indispensable que soit constitué, dans le cadre de grandes régionalisations, un pouvoir économique, politique, culturel et militaire à la hauteur des défis. Les objectifs de démocratisation, de liaison de celle-ci à des avancées sociales au bénéfice des classes populaires, de respect de la diversité ethnique, religieuse et autre mais en même temps de promotion d'espaces multiples sur ces plans, peuvent constituer le tremplin pour cette reconstruction nécessaire. En Afrique les thèmes du panafricanisme et du

panarabisme, entrés en déclin du fait même des succès du «développement» mis en oeuvre dans la phase précédente, devraient aujourd'hui, alors que les illusions de ce passé se sont effondrées, trouver un nouveau départ.

Enfin à l'échelle du système mondial le combat devrait s'assigner l'objectif d'une reconstruction fondée sur l'articulation négociée des grands ensembles régionaux à la hauteur des défis. Cette reconstruction concerne bien entendu l'économique, c'est-à-dire l'articulation des échanges, la définition de leurs modalités et l'intervention d'institutions nouvelles, monétaires et financières scientifiques et technologiques, commerciales, dans le domaine de l'environnement (se substituant au FMI, à la Banque mondiale, au GATT, à l'accord sur les brevets, etc.). Mais elle concerne également l'organisation politique et implique de ce fait une renégociation du rôle des Nations Unies. C'est ce que j'ai appelé la stratégie nouvelle de déconnexion et de multipolarité.

Ces propositions seront facilement qualifiées d'utopiques. Elles le sont dans le sens banal du terme dans la mesure où les évolutions en cours ne sont pas engagées dans ces directions, c'est-à-dire dans la mesure où les forces sociales, politiques et idéologiques réellement existantes et actives n'agissent pas dans ces directions. Mais elles ne le sont pas au sens que l'amorce d'une évolution dans leur sens engendrerait le cercle vertueux d'un mouvement faisant boule de neige. Il s'agit donc d'une utopie créatrice au bon sens du terme. Dans ce sens je dis «vive l'utopie». D'ailleurs, à défaut, les peuples répondent au désarroi par la réanimation d'autres utopies. Le succès de l'interprétation fondamentaliste des religions répond à ce besoin. Or il s'agit là d'utopies dangereuses par le passéisme qui leur est nécessairement associé, par ailleurs d'utopies inefficaces dans le sens que, situées sur le terrain faux du culturalisme sur lequel elles se fondent, ces utopies religieuses s'accompagnent sans problème d'une capitulation totale face aux exigences de la mondialisation capitaliste dans le domaine de la gestion économique.

Bien entendu les critiques qui qualifieront d'utopique le projet que je défends s'emploient à répéter «qu'il n'y a pas d'alternative». Ce syndrome de TINA (en anglais *There is no alternative*) doit être combattu, comme absurde et criminel. Il y a toujours des alternatives; c'est là le contenu même du concept de liberté humaine. Il est amusant de voir que les gestionnaires qui rejettent par exemple le marxisme sous prétexte de son insistance déterministe proposent ici un déterminisme vulgaire et absolu. De surcroît le projet qu'ils défendent avec cet argument — la gestion du système mondial par le marché — est lui véritablement une utopie, réactionnaire et criminelle, appelée de toute manière à être intenable tant elle est explosive.

L'intelligentsia a, dans la conjoncture nouvelle, des responsabilités redoutables. Au cours des phases antérieures de l'histoire de l'Afrique, à l'époque de la lutte de libération nationale puis durant les «décennies du

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développement», elle a rempli ses obligations assez honorablement. Des institutions comme l'IDEP à son époque, le Forum du Tiers Monde, le CODESRIA, ont été aux côtés de nombreux universitaires engagés, des centres de débats vivants, riches et utiles pour les forces de progrès. Certes leur tâche était facilitée par le fait que l'intelligentsia pouvait alors s'adosser soit aux partis de la libération nationale, soit aux forces progressistes associées à la construction issue de l'indépendance reconquise, c'est-à-dire à des forces sociales et politiques organisées et réelles. Mais en même temps ces associations ont parfois constitué la base d'illusions dangereuses et de régressions ultérieures qu'elles ont entraînées.

Aujourd'hui la conjoncture est différente. Les classes dirigeantes — indûment qualifiées «d'élites» — justifient leur ralliement au projet du capitalisme mondialisé, qui subordonne leurs peuples, par «l'afro-pessimisme» qu'elles partagent avec les gestionnaires du développement dans le système mondial. Séparées de ces fausses élites, les classes populaires se défendent comme elles le peuvent et font parfois preuve de beaucoup de créativité dans leur combats quotidiens pour la survie. L'intelligentsia, elle, paraît absente de la scène. Il faut qu'elle y reconquiert sa place.

Bien entendu la crise ne sera surmontée que si se reconstituent des forces politiques populaires et démocratiques capables de devenir hégémoniques dans la société. Mais il n'y a pas d'hégémonie efficace sans idéologie et stratégie capables de la servir. Et sur ce plan la responsabilité de l'intelligentsia est grande; il lui appartient d'établir entre la réflexion qu'elle peut nourrir et les aspirations et actions des classes populaires les liens sans lesquels l'un et l'autre des partenaires resteront orphelins.

Bien entendu également, à ce stade premier de la reconstruction, la question n'est pas celle de la conquête immédiate du pouvoir d'Etat. Elle est de reconstruire d'abord le pouvoir social des classes populaires érodé par la crise.

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\* Forum du tiers monde

# Le rôle de l'histoire dans les sciences sociales en Afrique: passé, présent et futur

### Thierno M Bah*

Longtemps considérée comme un "continent sans histoire", un continent "stable et conservateur", sans dynamique propre, l'Afrique a fourni depuis la fin du XIXè siècle, d'importantes données archéologiques et anthropologiques qui ont bouleversé la chronologie de l'histoire culturelle et technique de l'Humanité. Des découvertes intervenues notamment dans la région des Hauts Plateaux de l'Afrique orientale montrèrent à l'évidence, que l'Afrique fut une zone privilégiée d'émergence de l'espèce humaine. Les diverses recherches qui se déroulent partout sur le continent, apportent des éléments favorisant une nouvelle lecture de l'histoire africaine, une histoire totale dont les racines plongent dans les profondeurs des temps préhistoriques.

Dans nos sociétés traditionnelles, l'histoire, tellement ancienne et toujours actuelle occupe une place de choix. Tout au long des siècles, elle a exercé un irrésistible attrait aussi bien sur l'aristocratie que sur les autres composantes de la société. Dans l'Afrique Soudano-sahélienne, le griot, au sens noble du terme, fait office d'historien; dans le monde bantu, les spécialistes du *mvet* et joueurs de *hilum* remplissent la même fonction. Guides et conseillers, maîtres de la parole et des secrets du passé, généalogistes, ils apportent à la société la preuve de sa noblesse et retracent le chemin triomphal de son devenir. L'historien traditionaliste, tel qu'il apparaît dans la grande geste du Mali ou dans d'autres épopées, était en mesure de conférer à l'utopie un fondement raisonnable, en la montrant enracinée et déjà grandissante dans le passé. L'histoire ici revêt une dimension totale, englobant tous les aspects de la vie de l'homme en société.

C'est avec les manifestations de l'impérialisme européen et l'émergence de l'historiographie coloniale qu'une habile et cynique stratégie de domestication a voulu déposséder l'Afrique de son passé. Au nom de la conscience raciale doublée d'une attitude paternaliste, des idéologues tel Hegel n'ont pas voulu accorder aux Africains plus de valeur que les autres éléments de l'environnement qui faisaient la convoitise des nations européennes. Toute la production historienne de l'époque est caractérisée par l'européocentrisme, qui explique la dynamique interne de l'histoire de

l'Afrique principalement du point de vue du colonialisme et du chauvinisme, faisant des Brazza, Cecile Rhodes, des personnages Prométhéns.

Les conditions ont récemment changé sur tous les fronts. La lutte anticoloniale a retourné les "arguments" qui légitimaient la sujétion. A la négation du passé indigène, a répondu son innovation et son exaltation. Après la deuxième guerre mondiale, des leaders nationalistes firent un pèlerinage aux sources de leur passé, à la recherche des bases d'une conscience nationale; dans les royaumes de l'époque précoloniale, on cherche l'éclat des gloires ancestrales, et les résistants à l'intrusion européenne furent cités en exemple. C'est là une autre dimension de l'imbrication constante, dans nos sociétés, du passé et du présent, dans une sorte de rapport dialectique.

Une véritable révolution s'enclencha au lendemain de la deuxième guerre. Elle est liée à la fondation d'universités en Afrique noire, dont les plus prestigieuses sont Ibadan, Dakar et Makerere. Une génération d'historiens professionnels s'y forma aux techniques de l'heuristique. Entre 1950 et 1960, une recherche critique organisée remplaça progressivement, les efforts de bricolage dispersés qui avaient caractérisé administrateurs coloniaux et hommes d'Eglise, amateurs d'histoire.

L'accession à l'indépendance des peuples africains a mis l'histoire au premier plan. A cette phase cruciale du devenir de l'Afrique, le problème s'est posé de reconvertir les sciences sociales, particulièrement l'histoire, de manière à les retourner et à les faire fonctionner pour l'Afrique et les peuples africains. Dès lors, l'histoire africaine s'imposait comme faisant partie intégrante de l'histoire de l'humanité, sans laquelle aucune histoire universelle ne pouvait s'estimer complète. L'histoire africaine ici s'entend comme l'histoire du continent qui met l'accent sur les activités africaines, les adaptations africaines, les choix africains, les initiations africaines, en faisant connaître la genèse et les lignes d'évolution de ses structures politiques, sociales, économiques, culturelles et religieuses. Cette histoire est le fait d'Africains, mais aussi d'Européens, d'Américains, d'Asiatiques, "africanistes de bonne foi", pour reprendre une formule chère à Cheikh Anta Diop.

Progressivement, l'histoire allait s'imposer comme discipline majeure en Afrique, en interaction avec les autres disciplines des sciences sociales, dans une perspective pluridisciplinaire féconde.

La science historique ne progresse pas seulement par accumulation. Elle joue pleinement son rôle et fait un bon en avant qualitatif en accordant une grande attention aux problèmes théoriques, en réfléchissant sur les conditions mêmes de la recherche. Dans cette perspective, les congrès, colloques et séminaires ont constitué des cadres privilégiés, des lieux de rencontre et de discussion qui ont brisé les cloisons, permettant l'émergence de ce qu'on pourrait qualifier de véritable Ecole historique africaine.

C'est en 1961, à Londres, pour la première fois au lendemain des indépendances, que fut organisée une conférence internationale sur l'histoire et l'archéologie africaines. Les réflexions portèrent sur l'épistémologie et les méthodologies, au regard des problématiques nouvelles et d'une plus grande valorisation de la science historique africaine.

La même année, fut organisé à Dakar le congrès international d'historiens africains. Des spécialistes venus de plusieurs universités d'Afrique et d'Europe y participèrent. Les débats tournèrent autour de la question fondamentale du rôle de l'histoire en Afrique tropicale. Des orientations de recherches pertinentes furent définies, en rapport avec les techniques de l'histoire, l'histoire devant l'Afrique moderne, les aspects particuliers de l'histoire en Afrique, la dimension régionale de l'histoire, etc. Les conclusions du congrès de Dakar de 1961 insistèrent sur l'urgence de la collecte des documents oraux.

En 1964, la conférence générale de l'UNESCO, dans le cadre des efforts déployés pour favoriser la compréhension mutuelle des peuples et des nations, a décidé de l'élaboration et de la publication d'une histoire générale de l'Afrique. Cet effort marque incontestablement un tournant déterminant la prise en compte, par la communauté scientifique internationale, des valeurs positives de l'Afrique. Document scientifique de grande valeur, oeuvre d'éminents spécialistes, l'histoire générale de l'Afrique, constitue une source de référence privilégiée pour tous ceux qui s'intéressent au passé de notre continent.

Un moment déterminant de l'évolution de l'historiographie africaine est incontestablement le congrès international de Dar-es-Salaam d'octobre 1965. Dans son allocution d'ouverture, Mwalimu Nyerere déclara que "le passé et le présent ne font qu'un et leurs spécialistes respectifs doivent les comprendre tous les deux", donnant ainsi aux travaux du congrès, une orientation plus féconde. Les spécialistes présents à Dar-es-Salaam, par leur qualité et leur nombre ont ouvert des perspectives nouvelles à l'histoire africaine. Si en effet à Dakar, les recherches se sont penchées sur le métier d'historien dans le contexte de l'Afrique, à Dar-es-Salaam, elles posèrent des problèmes de fond touchant à la philosophie même de l'histoire. Aussi, de nombreuses questions théoriques furent envisagées; quels sont les concepts africains du passé? Quelle objectivité peut-on attribuer à l'histoire fondée sur la tradition orale et comment procéder pour la présenter objectivement? Quelle est la valeur historique des oeuvres du passé plus récent, à la lumière des témoignages oraux et *vice versa*? Des résolutions furent adoptées, énonçant que l'histoire africaine est partie intégrante de l'histoire universelle et que son étude suppose que le peuple africain est maître de son destin. C'est de ces principes et idées que naquit l'école historique de Dar-es-Salaam, réputée pour sa vitalité et son engagement.

C'est une nouvelle fois à Dakar, en 1972, que les historiens africains prirent rendez-vous. Cette rencontre revêt une dimension particulière. Placée sous le patronage du président Léopold Sédar Senghor, la réunion de Dakar vit la participation de nombreux scientifiques, conscients de leur responsabilité sociale. Il se dégagea une prise de conscience nette de la nécessité d'unir à l'échelle continentale, les efforts des historiens. C'est là que furent jetées les bases d'une Association panafricaine des historiens qui au fil des ans, allait s'imposer comme cadre privilégié de promotion de la science historique sur notre continent.

Au IIè congrès panafricain des historiens, tenu en décembre 1975 à Yaoundé, on passa de la prise de conscience à la maturité. Pour la première fois, des historiens de toutes les régions de l'Afrique libre se sont retrouvés pour discuter de l'organisation de leur corporation, des problèmes de méthode, de pédagogie et des moyens d'une politique scientifique appropriée. Le thème central du colloque, "Histoire et Développement" est révélateur des problématiques qu'imposait alors à l'historien, un environnement socio-économique caractérisé par l'incertitude. Les communications, riches et variées ont prouvé que l'histoire n'est pas une fuite en arrière, dans un narcissisme béat fondé sur un scientisme stérile. Il est apparu que l'histoire en tant qu'expérience collective vécue et correctement restituée est source et ressource de développement. Une conception économiste et simpliste du devenir des sociétés avait voulu réduire le développement à la seule connaissance matérielle. Or il est établi que le développement doit être conçu comme un processus global de transformation des sociétés. Dès lors, il fut clair que l'histoire, axe des sciences sociales et de la culture, pouvait jouer un rôle fondamental dans la réflexion sur le développement et l'élaboration de stratégies adéquates. L'historien est dans cette perspective d'autant plus sollicité que notre continent a vécu, de façon dramatique une longue période marquée par la traite négrière, la dépossession et l'aliénation, autant de facteurs explicatifs de la situation de sous-développement qui caractérise notre continent.

Au lendemain des indépendances, l'histoire nationale apparut à la fois comme le fondement et le reflet d'une mosaïque d'Etats hérités du partage colonial. Trente ans après, le bilan de l'exercice de l'Etat-nation en Afrique paraît sombre. Le cadre étriqué qui le caractérise n'aura pas pu promouvoir le développement escompté. De plus en plus la dimension régionale s'impose comme l'axe approprié pour sortir nos pays de l'impasse. Face à ces aspirations d'intégration, l'historien qui a une fonction sociale à remplir, ne pouvait être indifférent. Tout en évitant de verser dans un positivisme et un fonctionnalisme de mauvais aloi, il devait mettre en valeur tous les aspects susceptibles de briser les barrières et de favoriser le rapprochement de nos peuples. L'histoire dans ce sens apparaît comme un aiguillon exerçant sur la sensibilité collective un puissant appel.

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Ce sont ces motivations qui expliquent l'heureuse initiative conjointe du CODESRIA et de l'UNESCO d'organiser en 1989 à Ndjaména, un séminaire méthodologique sur le thème "Quelle histoire pour l'Afrique de demain?". Il s'agissait de porter la réflexion sur les moyens de soutenir, par la recherche historique, les efforts d'intégration régionale des Etats africains. Il est apparu que cet impératif catégorique est à même de trouver un argumentaire dans le passé. Il s'agit pour cela, de fouiller les racines susceptibles d'assurer plus de solidité et de vitalité au présent et au futur. Dans cette perspective, l'ouvrage de Boubacar Barry sur *la Sénégambie du XVè au XIXè siècle* constitue un véritable plaidoyer pour l'intégration d'un espace éclaté, du fait du partage colonial et de la balkanisation de l'ex-AOF.

D'un point de vue opérationnel et méthodologique, le cadre régional offre des avantages réels pour l'épanouissement de l'historiographie africaine. Tout en nous permettant d'échapper au carcan d'une histoire nationale étriquée et pernicieuse, il nous évite de tomber dans les généralités d'une histoire continentale certes nécessaire mais parfois mutilante.

Ce cadre, raisonnablement vaste, peut nous éviter les aléas de l'Association panafricaine des historiens qui, créée à Dakar en 1972, n'a pas eu les moyens de sa politique. Le cadre régional nous offre en effet la possibilité de contacts plus faciles et fréquents, entre les historiens, mais aussi avec les spécialistes des autres disciplines des sciences sociales. Ces échanges d'expérience ont une haute portée méthodologique.

Dans les considérations qui précèdent, nous avons voulu rassembler les grandes étapes qui ont marqué le développement de la recherche de l'histoire, en Afrique noire principalement. C'est là incontestablement, l'un des moyens pour cerner les tendances et les problématiques, apprécier les sauts qualitatifs de l'historiographie et évaluer son impact sur la société. On constate aisément que depuis ce cours professé à Berlin en 1830 où Hegel affirmait de façon péremptoire, que "l'Afrique n'était pas une partie historique du monde", beaucoup de chemin a été fait.

Les historiens africains ont très tôt compris la nécessité d'une prise en compte de la communication du savoir, qui apparaît comme une articulation majeure des modèles d'évaluation de la production historienne. C'est ce qui explique que l'initiative la plus importante de l'Association des historiens africains, dès le congrès de Dakar en 1972, fut la création d'une revue appelée *AFRIKA ZAMANI* (l'Afrique d'autrefois). *AFRIKA ZAMANI* apparut très vite comme le forum de la communauté panafricaine des historiens, un incitateur de la recherche et du progrès de la science historique, une banque des expériences méthodologiques et pédagogiques. Au fil des ans, *AFRIKA ZAMANI* s'imposa comme revue éminente, au triple plan d'exigence d'objectivité, de conscience africaine et de science universelle. Son audience internationale fut sanctionnée au XVè congrès mondial des sciences historiques, réuni à Bucarest en 1980.

Seule une volonté inébranlable a permis d'assurer la survie de la revue *AFRIKA ZAMANI*, confrontée de longues années durant, à de difficiles problèmes, dépendante qu'elle était de subventions d'Etats frisant tous la banqueroute. La décision du CODESRIA d'assurer le financement de notre revue et de permettre ainsi une relance bénéfique est à saluer. La mise en place prochainement, d'un comité scientifique et la définition d'une politique et d'une ligne éditoriale permettront à *AFRIKA ZAMANI* de jouer pleinement son rôle.

La production historienne en Afrique et sur l'Afrique, au cours des dernières décennies, est fort appréciable, aussi bien par le volume, la qualité, l'élaboration théorique que par les apports originaux fondés sur des champs d'investigation spécifiques. Nous allons rapidement en dégager les thèmes majeurs et les grandes orientations méthodologiques.

Dans l'historiographie africaine, la détermination des origines, de l'occupation d'un territoire et de la formation d'une entité sociale est parmi les sollicitations nouvelles, l'une des préoccupations fondamentales. Cette quête d'identité se justifie par le besoin de se faire apprécier, de se situer dans la continuité et la pérennité, en faisant renaître une réalité historique et culturelle longtemps ensablée dans une mer de mépris.

Cette vision de l'histoire est symbolisée par l'œuvre monumentale de Cheikh Anta Diop qui, en formulant ses thèses sur l'antériorité des civilisations nègres, a restitué aux Africains le sens de leur identité dans la longue durée. Cheikh Anta Diop a su mener le bon combat et n'a pas reculé devant l'adversité et la falsification. En restituant à l'Afrique noire la brillante civilisation égypto-pharaonique, il a donné une orientation nouvelle et féconde à différents domaines des sciences sociales (anthropologie physique, linguistique, philosophie, etc.), bouleversant ainsi les données antérieures sur l'histoire culturelle de l'humanité.

A une échelle réduite et dans le cadre de monographies, de nombreux historiens africains ont tenté une analyse critique sur les origines, les migrations et le processus d'implantation de divers groupes humains. Cela a donné des travaux remarquables, tel l'ouvrage de Henriette Diabaté sur *Le Sannvin, sources orales et histoire*.

Les problèmes de l'Etat, des institutions sociopolitiques et des modes de gouverner dans l'Afrique précoloniale ont également sollicité les historiens. Si les grandes entités supranationales tels le Ghana, le Mali, le Songhay, le royaume du Congo ont retenu l'attention, l'historiographie africaine s'est également penchée sur des structures d'une moindre envergure, tirant ainsi d'utiles leçons sur les mécanismes de fonctionnement de nos sociétés. L'Ecole d'histoire et d'anthropologie de Brazzaville s'est ainsi distinguée, dans la recherche, en élaborant une typologie des formations politiques dans la cuvette du Congo.

Les effets du contact Europe/Afrique depuis le XVè siècle constituent un autre grand thème. Des études ont été menées dans une perspective à la fois qualitative et quantitative sur les dévastations de la traite négrière. Les travaux de l'historien nigérian Inikori sont, de ce point de vue édifiants et servent valablement d'argumentaire à la demande de réparation pour les préjudices historiques portés à l'Afrique. Le pillage économique, la destruction des sociétés sont un autre aspect de cette problématique.

Les relations transsahariennes, qui unissent de longue date le *bilad-es-Sudan* aux pays du Maghreb ont retenu l'attention de nombreux historiens. Des thèses remarquables ont évoqué divers aspects de ces rapports, à la fois économiques, politiques, diplomatiques, culturels et religieux. Les travaux de Dramani Zakari et de Dahirou Yaya constituent de ce point de vue une contribution appréciable éclairant la problématique des rapports anciens et féconds mais aussi les tensions et conflits qui ont présidé à l'histoire des relations entre peuples et Etats, à travers le Sahara. Aujourd'hui la contribution des historiens s'insère valablement dans les efforts de rapprochement entre le Maghreb et l'Afrique subsaharienne — à travers les ouvrages, mais plus valablement peut-être — par des rencontres entre spécialistes, dans le cadre des colloques. Le dernier en date, tenu en novembre 1992 à Marrakech, a permis des échanges fructueux sur les relations entre le Maghreb et l'Afrique subsaharienne à l'aube des temps modernes, ouvrant des perspectives sur le nécessaire rapprochement des peuples, de part et d'autre du Sahara, que les archéologues et historiens n'ont jamais considéré comme une barrière.

Un thème fort prisé est celui des résistances et rébellions des peuples africains contre l'impérialisme et la domination coloniale. Ce thème porte sur un phénomène socio-politique majeur, qui permet de comprendre non seulement le passé le plus ancien, mais aussi les processus du mouvement de libération nationale et des luttes contemporaines pour la démocratie et les droits de l'Homme.

L'histoire des résistances fut longtemps focalisée sur des biographies de leaders africains célèbres, tel Samory héros de la monumentale thèse de Yves Person, Lat Dior, Rabah, Nzilikazi, etc. Or en Afrique également, ce sont les peuples qui font l'histoire, ce qui a conduit certains historiens à une analyse à la fois plus fine et plus exhaustive du phénomène de résistance à la domination. Les perspectives de recherche de Christophe Wondji sur les peuples forestiers de la Côte d'Ivoire sont de ce point de vue pertinentes.

L'histoire africaine, comme celle de tous les continents, est par essence l'histoire du changement, des mutations liées à des innovations d'ordre technique, politique, social et culturel. Il en a découlé le thème fort ambigu de "modernisation" qui a préoccupé les historiens; une approche méthodologique féconde a voulu, pour mieux cerner les problèmes, les poser en termes de rupture et de continuité. Dans leurs travaux, Ade Ajayi et

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Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch ont abouti à la conclusion qu'en Afrique plus que partout ailleurs peut-être, le nouveau et l'ancien sont étroitement imbriqués, faisant apparaître le changement comme un processus continu et dialectique.

Pour l'historien africain, l'étude des dernières décennies du XXè siècle qui s'achève est primordiale, en raison de l'accélération dans tous les domaines, du processus de changement, et de l'acuité des problèmes de tous ordres auxquels sont confrontés nos peuples. Il y a donc nécessité de développer ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler "l'histoire immédiate", afin de conduire la recherche et l'analyse conjointement avec les spécialistes des sciences politiques. Des sujets d'une brûlante actualité interpellent ainsi l'historien: par exemple le phénomène du militarisme en Afrique, les conflits ethniques, les luttes politiques et sociales pour la justice, la démocratie et les droits de l'Homme. Les problèmes de l'environnement constituent également un champ de recherches pour l'historien dont les données peuvent aider à comprendre les phénomènes de désertification, de déforestation qui sont avant tout des phénomènes anthropiques.

L'histoire en Afrique, se caractérise par l'élaboration d'une méthodologie répondant à la spécificité des sources disponibles. Ici les sources orales constituent l'un des piliers sur lesquels repose la restitution du passé; elles sont d'une richesses inouïe, en tant que support de la mentalité collective, de la transmission des techniques, de la structure politique sociale et religieuse des communautés humaines. Au cours des années 1950, des historiens formés à l'occidentale, tels Dike et Biobaku au Nigéria commencèrent à s'intéresser à la tradition orale pour en faire la trame de leurs recherches. Peu de temps après, l'oeuvre remarquable de Vansina sur la méthodologie de la tradition orale établit une fois pour toutes, la validité de cette source et sa légitimité académique. L'emploi de la tradition orale fut fondée sur une pratique heuristique de plus en plus vigoureuse: la critique "textuelle" qui établit le degré de fidélité et d'intégrité de la narration; la critique sociologique qui est fondamentale; ainsi que la critique culturelle qui prend en compte les canons littéraires et les jugements moraux qui définissent *mutatis mutandis*, une véritable philosophie de l'histoire. La tradition orale qui fournit une vision de l'intérieur, à la fois originale, riche et vivante a donné naissance à des oeuvres remarquables qui au cours des siècles ont imprimé une dimension nouvelle aux sciences sociales mais aussi à la littérature. C'est sur la base de l'oralité que furent établis les textes des fameux *Tarikhs* du *bilad-es-Sudan* (*Tarikh-al-Fattah* et *Tarikh-es-Sudan*), de la chronique de Kano au Nigéria et de la chronique de Kilwa en Afrique orientale. Plus près de nous, l'oeuvre de Djibril Tamsir Niane sur Soundiata Keita, et celle de Wa Kamissoko retraçant la Grande Geste du Mali donnent une tonalité particulière à l'histoire des grands empires de l'Afrique précoloniale. L'utilisation de la tradition orale, aujourd'hui établie dans

toutes les universités africaines constitue, incontestablement, l'une des plus grandes réalisations pour le progrès de sciences sociales en Afrique subsaharienne.

Le découpage et les spécialisations ont parfois paru outranciers. Cependant ils ne correspondent pas toujours à la réalité sociologique africaine qui se présente de manière totale et donc fait appelle à une approche pluridisciplinaire. Si en effet l'histoire occupe parmi les sciences sociales, une place de choix, si elle s'est forgée un outil méthodologique de plus en plus performant, elle ne peut évoluer en vase clos. Elle a ses limites, elle suscite parfois des doutes, d'où le nécessaire recours à d'autres disciplines, dans une perspective de recherches comparatives toujours fructueuses. Il est établi que la réflexion anthropologique peut nourrir la recherche historique, permettant de mettre en évidence les linéaments de la vie du groupe, dans leurs dimensions religieuse, culturelle et économique. L'ouvrage de J. F. Nadel *Byzance noire*, bien que déjà ancien, illustre bien cette heureuse symbiose.

L'ethnologie également, apparait comme un recours indispensable à l'historien africain. L'ethnologue, par son travail sur le terrain a permis à l'historien de replacer ses sources orales dans leur contexte culturel, et d'évaluer ainsi l'impact du milieu sur les traditions orales et leurs déformations. Dans le grand jeu des rapprochements interdisciplinaires en Afrique, la linguistique et l'histoire ont eu souvent à être confrontées. Dans cette science du mouvement des peuples qu'institue l'histoire, il serait en effet paradoxal que n'intervienne pas la science qui étudie le moyen essentiel de communication: les langues. Il n'est pas étonnant que ce soit par le biais de la linguistique comparée que Cheikh Anta Diop et Théophile Obenga ont établi de façon magistrale l'unité culturelle du vaste ensemble "Egypto-négro-africain".

De leur côté, ethnologues, anthropologues et linguistes africains ont connu certaines remises en cause, au contact de la dimension historique. Celle-ci leur a permis de voir dans leur objet d'étude, autre chose que des reliques et des organismes fonctionnels. L'histoire a inspiré à l'ensemble des sciences sociales une démarche attentive aux dynamismes et aux conflits qui président à la vie des communautés humaines. Un autre courant remarquable est celui des spécialistes de science politique qui ont compris l'importance de l'histoire précoloniale pour analyser et expliquer les phénomènes contemporains. Le phénomène de l'ethnicité qui gangrène aujourd'hui la vie politique en Afrique, mais aussi les solidarités primaires qu'il faut exploiter à des fins unitaires, participent tous dans l'effort pour une meilleure connaissance du présent et du devenir des peuples et Etats d'Afrique.

A l'aube du IIIè millénaire, l'Afrique apparait confrontée à bien des défis. Sans verser dans l'afropessimisme, il est clair que le tableau est sombre dans bien des secteurs. La crise économique est devenue rampante.

Les peuples africains ploient sous le fardeau des plans d'ajustement imposés par les institutions financières internationales. Dans bien des régions, l'Etat est en complète déliquescence, incapable de jouer le rôle qui lui revient; la famine menace et le processus de déscolarisation lié à une paupérisation généralisée s'installe inexorablement. Pour toutes ces considérations, l'intelligentsia africaine d'aujourd'hui doit faire preuve d'une ouverture prospective et d'une dynamique plus entreprenante. S'il est vrai qu'une "histoire d'anticipation" n'existe nulle part, il importe cependant de réfléchir à l'avenir de la pratique historienne pour l'Afrique de demain. Que l'on s'interroge sur ce qu'il y a à faire pour les Africains du XXIè siècle. L'entreprise est de taille, et nécessite des problématiques fécondes et des modalités aptes à favoriser l'avènement d'une ère de renaissance, qui permettrait de renouer avec le cycle des grands accomplissements qui caractérisèrent les empires du Mali, du Songhay, du Monomotapa, etc., dans les domaines politiques, sociaux et économiques. Pour cela, d'autres colloques, d'autres séminaires méritent d'être programmés, pour féconder des intelligences, susciter et mobiliser la communauté des historiens africains, dans un dialogue nécessairement enrichissant avec les spécialistes des divers domaines des sciences sociales.

C'est le lieu de saluer l'heureuse initiative du CODESRIA d'organiser en avril 1994 à Bamako un séminaire-atelier sur le thème "Héritage, historiques et processus démocratiques en Afrique: commentaires d'historiens". Comme le souligne si pertinemment l'argumentaire de cet important atelier, il est utile de donner la parole aux historiens, pour introduire, dans le débat sur la démocratisation des sociétés africaines, les cultures et croyances populaires, les prédispositions historiques et les innovations coloniales et postcoloniales. L'histoire, sollicitée comme fondement, recours et mémoire est à même d'enrichir le débat enclenché par les économistes, politologues et juristes sur les conditions d'une bonne transition vers la démocratie en Afrique et d'une bonne gestion des affaires publiques.

Il n'est pas superflu, pour conclure d'insister encore une fois sur la place et le rôle de l'historien dans nos sociétés. L'histoire en effet est bien loin d'être ce dédale de choses mortes et figées. L'apparente confusion entre le passé et le périmé, l'ancien et le caduc, le culte du pragmatisme sommaire ont conduit quelques esprits étriqués à mépriser l'histoire. "L'oubli du passé est mortel pour le progrès" écrivait il y a quelques années le philosophe Régis Debray. Et Paul Valéry de renchérir: "L'histoire donne à l'avenir le moyen d'être pensé". Science de la maîtrise du passé et conscience du temps, l'histoire nous permet entre autres de faire les synthèses nécessaires aux ruptures et aux réajustements que nous imposent, au regard de nos héritages, notre présent et notre devenir. Pour les sociétés africaines en pleine mutation, confrontées à d'énormes défis, l'information et la réflexion historiques constituent un puissant levier en vue d'un "réarmement moral"

pour le développement. On sait au demeurant, comment dans l'Asie orientale contemporaine, le recours critique au passé a favorisé les mutations les plus audacieuses et les plus harmonieuses aussi, permettant à cette partie du monde de relever les défis et d'entrer dans le IIIè millénaire par la grande porte. L'Afrique a là un exemple à suivre.

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# Des défis politiques aux défis
# de la recherche

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## Introduction

Nombreuses sont aujourd'hui les personnes qui soutiennent que l'Afrique est déconnectée de l'activité économique mondiale. Pourtant lorsque l'on regarde de près la situation des économies africaines, en général, c'est beaucoup moins la forme d'intégration que le degré qui a changé. Si pour les échanges marchands, l'Afrique semble peu participer à l'économie internationale, pour l'endettement et l'aide, elle est très largement intégrée (Banque mondiale, 1993).[1] C'est d'ailleurs cette forte intégration sur le marché mondial de la mendicité qui détermine largement les préoccupations de la recherche de nombreux spécialistes des sciences sociales en Afrique et sur l'Afrique. C'est ainsi que la question de l'ajustement structurel a pu occuper bien des chercheurs faisant de ce thème un paradigme autour duquel tournent toutes les autres préoccupations.

Cette orientation prise par la recherche en science sociale depuis la fin des années 1970 remplaçait une première vague d'interrogations sur la dette et le développement économique, c'est-à-dire sur le financement public de la croissance des économies africaines. Il semble de ce fait que dans la recherche en science sociale en Afrique s'est posée durant la décennie 1960-1970 la question de son orientation par rapport à la place et au rôle de l'Afrique dans l'économie mondiale. On a cherché à savoir pourquoi l'Afrique est si pauvre et si faible alors que ses habitants aspirent à davantage de richesses et de forces et que les pays développés sont si aisés et si puissants. On a également cherché à connaître les déterminants de la place de l'Afrique dans le système mondial d'échanges. Ces différents travaux conduits en termes de dépendance, de subordination de mode de production, ont amené les groupes de recherche à la construction de théories générales du développement africain. Cette mouvance fut à l'origine d'une

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[1]  Dans ces données l'on peut lire que l'Afrique bénéficie de dons gratuits et de prêts publics plus élevés par rapport aux investissements directs et aux prêts privés. L'Afrique n'est donc pas déconnectée. Elle est assistée.

partition des sciences sociales sur le développement en différents domaines. C'est ainsi que sont apparus l'économie du développement, la sociologie du développement, le droit international du développement, la démographie et l'urbanisme du développement, la cliométrie du développement, etc. La plupart du temps, ces champs ont été stimulés par l'appui de bailleurs de fonds qui ne souhaitaient qu'une chose: savoir quel volume de fonds il fallait à l'Afrique pour assurer son développement. Chaque spécialisation s'évertuait à élaborer des théories particulières fondées sur les spécificités locales africaines. Les sciences sociales pouvaient alors être discriminatoires; il y avait celles du monde développé et celles du monde sous-développé. Ces spécialistes portaient alors le titre glorieux d'africanistes. On trouvera une bonne psychanalyse des trois dernières décennies de sciences sociales en langue française chez Choquet *et al.* (1993).[2]

Leurs thèses ont certes été un apport non négligeable dans la compréhension du phénomène complexe qu'est le développement africain. Mais les chocs liés à la crise de l'endettement et leurs ondes ont amené d'autres chercheurs à se poser de nouvelles questions axées certes sur des variables endogènes mais aussi sur des déterminants exogènes non parfaitement expliqués. C'est ainsi que, toujours par rapport à la question de l'aptitude des économies africaines à rembourser la dette qu'elles doivent aux créanciers bilatéraux et multilatéraux, une abondante littérature a vu le jour sur la question des politiques d'ajustement structurel (PAS). Par le biais des PAS, on part de préoccupations économiques pour entrer dans les débats sur l'autoritarisme, la violence, la culture, la démocratie et les futurs possibles pour l'Afrique (Gibbon *et al.* 1992).

Réfléchir aujourd'hui sur les perspectives et les axes de recherches prioritaires pour les années à venir pourrait donc se faire selon plusieurs modalités.

On pourrait d'abord recenser tous les axes de recherche déjà éclairés par des documents de travail afin d'indiquer ensuite toutes les pistes encore obscures vers lesquelles il conviendrait que les chercheurs s'orientent. Dans une telle perspective, la meilleure source serait la nomenclature élaborée par *l'American Economic Association* qui est constamment publiée dans le *Journal of Economic Literature* ou dans l'*American Economic Review*. Cette démarche bien que stimulante sur le plan de la recherche en sciences économiques tend à oublier de toute évidence les autres domaines de la théorie sociale, à moins que l'on ne fasse la même chose pour la sociologie,

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2    Les auteurs de cet ouvrage conseillent vivement aux lecteurs anglophones la lecture d'une version anglaise dans *L'European Journal of Development Research*, Vol. 3, No. 2, December 1991, sous le titre *The Old and New Trends in Francophone Development Research* Ed. Frank Cass, London.

l'anthropologie, la science politique, l'histoire, la philosophie, etc. Ce n'est pas cette optique qui est adoptée dans ce texte car la contrainte à laquelle il faut sacrifier est la multi-, la pluri- ou l'interdisciplinarité des axes de recherches, d'autant plus que le CODESRIA se présente «comme une auberge espagnole parce qu'on y privilégie non ce qu'on y trouve mais ce qu'on y apporte» (Choquet *et al.* 1993: 219).[3]

Une autre manière de procéder serait de recenser les préoccupations de tous les chercheurs membres du CODESRIA, de les hiérarchiser, de les ordonner et d'appuyer leur réalisation. Dans ce cas, de vastes champs pourraient être couverts mais sous une contrainte de financement qui devrait alors être manipulable. Les ressources du CODESRIA sont-elles illimitées? Si c'est le cas, il faudrait alors adapter des critères de sélection de projets et de disciplines dans une telle optique. Ce texte perd alors son objet, car personne n'est mieux placé que les équipes de recherche elles-mêmes pour déterminer les axes de recherche les plus importants à leurs yeux. Or, cette communication doit avoir une justification.

Il existe ainsi plusieurs autres manières de déterminer les axes de recherche prioritaires pour les années à venir. Ce texte n'a donc pas pour intention de figer une vérité et des certitudes quant à ce qui mériterait d'être fait. L'auteur n'a ni de telles prétentions, ni la compétence nécessaire pour atteindre de tels objectifs.

Il s'agit, plus modestement, d'attirer l'attention du lecteur sur quelques enjeux politico-économiques des débats actuels sur l'Afrique noire et, en fonction de ceux-ci, de souligner quelques questions qui vont immédiatement se poser aux chercheurs en sciences sociales. Comme cela est prévisible, la présentation de tels enjeux ne peut être que problématique. C'est pourquoi la progression de cette réflexion se fera sous la forme de plusieurs étapes qui aboutiront à une thèse. La première étape de cette démarche nous conduira à admettre l'idée que nous vivons dans un monde de déséquilibres et d'instabilités. Cette hypothèse, évidente aujourd'hui pour la plupart des chercheurs, servira à introduire en réalité la seconde étape dans laquelle nous soutiendrons que les politiques économiques fondées sur les macro-analyses abordent mal ces déséquilibres et ces instabilités. Dans cette étape, il sera présenté plusieurs raisons qui devraient militer en faveur, non pas de thèmes nouveaux et révolutionnaires, mais de méthodes nouvelles et évolutionnaires.

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3    Ces auteurs caractérisaient à leur façon l'idée que le GEMDEV, leur groupement d'intérêt scientifique, était un carrefour intellectuel qui s'efforçait d'échapper aux effets de mode et aux diktats de centres de décision internationaux.

## Nous vivons dans un univers de déséquilibres et d'instabilités

Les politiques économiques appliquées en Afrique aujourd'hui sont autant un défi à l'action qu'à la réflexion et concernent donc aussi bien les hommes politiques que les chercheurs, surtout, les spécialistes en sciences sociales. Les déséquilibres économiques, sociaux et politiques que l'on combat aujourd'hui sont présentés comme des déséquilibres conjoncturels alors qu'ils mettent à l'épreuve toutes les structures.

### Qu'est-ce donc qu'un déséquilibre?

Le déséquilibre est une situation de rupture entre l'offre et la demande lorsque les prix sont rigides ou lorsqu'il n'y a pas de système de prix capable de transmettre les informations correctes. En Afrique, les systèmes de prix, du fait de la désorganisation ou de la trop forte réglementation du marché, ne peuvent pas véhiculer les informations nécessaires aux échangistes. Or seuls les échangistes, c'est-à-dire les hommes, peuvent être en déséquilibre et ressentir des insatisfactions et des déceptions.

Les économistes depuis Hayek (1973:33-54) ont montré que l'ingrédient essentiel de la décision était l'information. Cette information permet aux agents individuels la connaissance des faits, des choses, des idées. La connaissance individuelle elle-même provient toujours de situation de confrontation à un problème. En effet, face à une difficulté, l'individu, centre autonome de décision, est tenu par la nature de la situation d'identifier son problème, d'apprécier ses capacités et l'environnement afin d'élaborer un cadre ou un schéma de solution.

Identifier le problème signifie mettre en balance les objectifs de l'action du centre de décision et ses moyens. Cette identification conduit en fait à établir une relation entre les moyens et les fins. L'appréciation qui suit l'identification doit alors mettre en relation les schémas de décisions de l'agent, les circonstances et les institutions les plus adaptées à leur optimisation. Le cadre de la solution conduit enfin l'agent à savoir s'il faut maximiser, minimiser, simuler, bloquer ou non ses désirs.

La décision qui est consubstantielle à l'action humaine exige alors nécessairement de la connaissance et donc de l'information. Cette information toutefois, contrairement à ce que les économistes néoclassiques ont avancé, n'est ni pure, ni parfaite, ni gratuite. Cette information n'est pas donnée à priori, elle exige de la recherche, de l'apprentissage et des erreurs de la part de ceux qui prennent les décisions, à moins que l'on ne les présuppose omniscients. «Or aucun homme n'est omniscient». Lorsque dans le temps, les variables et les ingrédients qu'exige la prise de décision changent, les erreurs commises par le passé servent à apprécier le présent et à corriger l'avenir. Le processus d'apprentissage devient une donnée fondamentale, lorsque le cadre de décision dans lequel les agents se meuvent leur impose d'interpréter des messages extérieurs alors que les stimuli

changent en permanence. L'action humaine en définitive est donc stimulée par la recherche et l'interprétation des messages émis par l'interaction sociale. C'est par l'exploitation de ces occasions informationnelles que certains corrigent plus facilement leurs erreurs que d'autres. Les interactions sociales, qui dérivent du fait que l'homme est un animal social et que personne n'est une île, imposent à tous et à chacun de communiquer avec les autres. Cette communication n'est qu'une transmission, un échange d'informations. Par quelles voies opèrent ces échanges?

La théorie économique a identifié, que les principaux canaux de transmission de l'information dans les interactions sociales sont les prix et les institutions.

Les prix signalent aux échangistes dans un système social les degrés de rareté des choses faisant l'objet d'échange entre elles. Les prix indiquent les degrés de rareté relative des biens et des services car ils déterminent leur coût relatif. C'est en fonction de ces coûts, pour la plupart subjectifs, que les gens s'adaptent aux situations en prenant les décisions qu'ils jugent meilleures de leur point de vue. On peut lire sur ces questions les différentes publications de Kirzner (1982). Cela ne signifie pas que les prix doivent être égaux à un certain prix idéal normatif extérieur et fixé à priori de façon standard. Les prix peuvent être incorrects, anormaux, injustes, etc; mais ce qui importe, c'est que ces prix sont toujours des vecteurs de transmission de l'information. La théorie économique autrichienne montre aussi très clairement que les prix, lorsqu'ils sont des prix de marché libres, transmettent plus d'informations que ceux de toute autre situation (Hayek 1948). Les prix transmettent des informations aux centres de décisions et révèlent par la même occasion les décisions inconséquentes, les mauvaises coordinations, les déséquilibres, les espérances déçues et les heureux hasards. Les prix servent ainsi à communiquer les informations, à découvrir les opportunités, à préciser les occasions les meilleures et à donner les moyens de lutte contre les incertitudes.

Lorsque dans une situation donnée le système des prix se trouve bloqué ou non utilisé, les agents prennent les décisions selon des procédures qui contiennent peu d'informations et véhiculent des connaissances archaïques. Lorsque le système des prix qui dénoue les échanges dans la société est biaisé par des réglementations diverses, la qualité et la quantité d'informations transmises se détériorent et les décisions qui sont prises se révèlent être de moindre qualité que celles qui dérivent du marché libre. Il ne s'agit pas ici de dire que dans un système de marché libre les déséquilibres n'existeraient pas, mais simplement que, bien au contraire, le déséquilibre est inhérent au système de marché libre, qui est en réalité une procédure de découverte et d'apprentissage permanent (Kirzner 1979 et Lachmann 1976). Dans ce schéma, cela signifie qu'en véhiculant le plus d'informations et des informations de bonne qualité, la liberté du marché et

celle du contrat donnent les signaux qui permettent une plus grande adaptabilité des systèmes sociaux et des économies. Le déséquilibre est la raison de l'action humaine. La rareté est la base du déséquilibre et le marché libre est la solution la meilleure, non pas pour éviter les déséquilibres, mais pour rendre les populations capables de s'adapter aux déséquilibres, et cela à moindres coûts relatifs.

En Afrique, nous vivons, comme dans toute l'économie mondiale, dans des univers de déséquilibres généralisés. L'offre de travail n'est pas compatible avec la création d'emplois. L'offre de produits alimentaires est insuffisante face à la demande de nourriture. L'offre des services de santé ne répond pas aux besoins des populations. L'offre de devises monétaires est incapable de satisfaire la demande de moyens de paiements internationaux. L'offre d'épargne est insignifiante face à la demande d'investissement. Les revenus sont maigres face aux besoins. La demande de démocratie des populations rencontre la méfiance des gouvernements autocratiques. Le désir de liberté se voit brimé par l'excès d'autoritarisme. On pourrait citer plusieurs autres formes de déséquilibres qui ne seraient d'ailleurs pas propres à l'Afrique. Tous ces déséquilibres dénoncent toujours et partout soit des excédents inutiles, soit des déficits coûteux.

En Afrique, les déséquilibres sont aussi bien internes qu'extérieurs. Ils sont également politiques, économiques, sociaux et culturels. Le problème est moins dans leur existence que dans la capacité des populations africaines à s'adapter à moindre coût. Les solutions face aux déséquilibres en Afrique témoignent des connaissances archaïques, des informations centralisées et mal partagées, des communications de moindre performance et donc des compétences faibles face au traitement à adopter. Tout cela parce que les marchés ne sont pas libérés, les prix ne sont pas des prix de marché. Comment expliquer donc que les Africains aient eu si peu de respect pour la liberté des marchés et des contrats?

Pour véhiculer des informations et de la connaissance, les institutions s'appuient sur des habitudes et des comportements routiniers. Elles transmettent des informations selon deux conceptions différentes mais complémentaires.

D'abord, dans les interactions sociales une personne seule, n'a pas nécessairement besoin de tout savoir sur tout pour décider. Elle n'a pas besoin d'avoir la globalité des informations sur tous les marchés pour l'ensemble des contrats, sur tous les agents, dans tous les pays et tous les jours en toutes circonstances. Ces informations, d'une part ne sont pas gratuites et d'autre part, demanderaient tellement de temps qu'elles deviendraient caduques. Les institutions, par la régularité des règles qu'elles établissent, garantissent à chacun qu'il peut se contenter d'une part infime d'information du savoir total pour prendre ses décisions. Le code de la route par exemple est une institution qui assure à chaque individu, ayant un

véhicule ou non, qu'il peut circuler dans certaines conditions sans encourir le risque de se faire tuer par quelqu'un d'autre. Ne pas respecter ce code signifie que l'on trahit la confiance que les autres ont dans la liberté de circulation. Connaître le code de la route devrait suffire pour circuler. Dans ce cas nous n'avons plus besoin de savoir ni combien d'automobilistes ou de piétons nous croiserons, ni combien de feux rouges ou verts. Il nous suffit de savoir que quand le feu est rouge il faut s'arrêter et quand il est vert, il faut repartir pour ne pas provoquer d'accident ou obstruer le passage. Dans tous ces cas, l'information que l'institution nous transmet nous indique simplement quel degré de confiance nous pouvons avoir dans le comportement des autres dans la vie en société. Dans ce cas, l'institution est une règle qui nous épargne du superflu. Il nous suffit de connaître la règle et de la partager. Un autre exemple serait l'information dans une ville sur les différents services à notre disposition. Lorsque nous nous déplaçons pour aller à une réunion à Dakar, nous n'avons pas besoin de connaître à priori toutes les adresses de tous les services qui peuvent être à notre disposition dans cette ville: les hôpitaux, les pharmacies, les marchés, les hôtels, les banques, les librairies, les bibliothèques, les commissariats de police, les écoles, les facultés, l'adresse de nos collègues chercheurs ou celles des bailleurs de fonds. Nous avons de bonnes raisons d'avoir ces informations importantes pour rendre notre séjour agréable mais rarement nous essayons de les obtenir à priori. Il nous suffit de connaître le numéro de téléphone du service des renseignements ou l'adresse de l'office du tourisme ou simplement de consulter un annuaire téléphonique. L'institution nous assure que la coopération sociale peut se réaliser dans la confiance (Sowell 1980:8-11).

Cependant, dans un autre sens, on peut dire que les institutions convoient de l'information et que certaines d'entre elles sont meilleures que d'autres selon les problèmes à traiter. Les mécaniciens connaissent bien cette question. Pour dévisser un boulon de 12 l'on ne peut utiliser qu'une clé de 12. Ni la clé de 8, ni la clé de 15 n'en seraient capables. Cela ne veut pas dire que les clés de 8 et de 15 sont de mauvaises clés. Cela signifie simplement que pour chaque type de boulon, il faut la clé adaptée. Toutes les clés sont bonnes, mais chacune a sa propre utilité. Chaque problème a sa clé. Il n'y a pas de clé universelle mais plutôt une boîte à clés que les mécaniciens adoptent et adaptent.

De même, dans le domaine des sciences sociales, les institutions s'adaptent à l'environnement qui change. Dans une société de liberté des individus dans les interactions sociales,

> *les institutions qui se révèlent inaptes à promouvoir la coopération sociale dans la poursuite des objectifs individuels disparaissent, soit parce qu'elles sont abandonnées par les groupes où elles s'étaient développées, soit parce que ces groupes déclinent par rapport aux*

*sociétés auxquelles les hasards de l'évolution ont donné des institutions plus efficaces* (Hayek 1944). *Plus tard, l'auteur reprendra cette idée en la présentant sous la forme d'un processus darwinien de sélection naturelle des institutions* (1973).

Cette idée de la sélection des institutions selon leur efficacité relative ne doit pas faire oublier le fait que, dans le domaine des sciences sociales, l'on ne peut procéder comme le ferait un mécanicien. Dans la théorie sociale, des combinaisons institutionnelles sont possibles non pas en procédant par révolution mais généralement en corrigeant les institutions défaillantes pour les faire évoluer. Le processus institutionnel de transmission de l'information est donc évolutionnaire et procédural. Les institutions, les règles et les prix assurent la coordination entre des gens ayant des objectifs différents, antagonistes, complémentaires, qu'ils peuvent vivre humainement et en toute confiance. Cela ne veut pas dire qu'il n'y aura pas de *«free rider»*, de tricheur, de prédateur ou de criminel, mais le rôle des institutions et des prix est justement de faire assumer aux prédateurs les coûts de leurs crimes. Dans les économies, lorsque les institutions, qu'elles soient des règles ou des ordres, sont violées impunément, alors les hommes perdent leurs libertés. Lorsqu'il n'y a pas d'institutions crédibles auxquelles les gens peuvent se fier, alors la confiance se perd et la coopération sociale est abandonnée aux caprices des hors-la-loi et des brigands. Les institutions ne valent que par rapport au respect et à la considération que les gens leur accordent. Dans une économie où le code de la route n'est pas respecté par la plupart des automobilistes, les accidents se multiplient et la circulation devient un réel défi à la mort. Il existe de nombreuses formes d'institutions sociales: la monnaie, la constitution politique, le mariage, l'entreprise, la loi, le droit, etc. Ces institutions sont-elles respectées en Afrique? Quel degré de confiance leur accorde-t-on?

En Afrique, la violation des règles, de l'ordre, du droit, de la loi, donc de nombreuses institutions, est systématique et représente la règle générale; l'exception étant leur respect. Or violer des institutions peut conduire les hommes à nuire à la personne et aux biens d'autrui. Il s'agit d'actes criminels envers autrui. Dans les conditions de violation systématique des institutions et des réglementations abusives des marchés et des prix, comment peut-on assurer la confiance dans la coopération sociale et la prise de conscience des déséquilibres qui pourtant existent partout? Si les institutions et les prix ne produisent pas des informations dans lesquelles nous pouvons avoir confiance, comment pouvons-nous prendre conscience de l'ampleur et de la portée des déséquilibres en vue de les combattre, les corriger, ou même être aptes à les résoudre par adaptation de nos us et coutumes? Tel semble être le premier défi que les économies africaines affrontent aujourd'hui. Tel semble être le premier défi que la théorie sociale devrait relever. Comment analyser nos institutions? Quelles réformes de nos

marchés et de nos institutions seraient nécessaires? Est-il d'abord vrai que nos marchés et nos institutions sont défaillantes? Les institutions tracent le cadre des actions de chacun d'entre nous, même lorsque nous quittons notre autarcie individuelle pour entrer en interaction avec nos semblables. Toutes les actions que nous menons ont des coûts qui nous incombent ou incombent à la société en général. Comment améliorer notre compréhension de ces phénomènes et de ces processus?

Le fond du débat se trouve dans les valeurs que nous mettons en avant. Or la plupart des valeurs sociales sont subjectives. Alors se pose la question de la subjectivité de la valeur et de la connaissance.

L'argument selon lequel les déséquilibres sont dans la nature des choses, mais que les institutions et les marchés mériteraient plus d'attention que les déséquilibres eux-mêmes peut conduire à jeter le doute sur les manières habituelles d'aborder la question des déséquilibres et des crises (O'Driscoll *et al.* 1985: 25).

### Nous abordons souvent très mal ces questions

Si l'idée est acceptée que les déséquilibres ne sont que les conséquences des distorsions réglementaires, institutionnelles et structurelles, alors l'analyse des institutions et des prix devient une priorité. Malheureusement très souvent, pour ce qui concerne l'Afrique, l'analyse des déséquilibres eux-mêmes, leur description, leur évolution, ont pris le pas sur leurs fondements institutionnels et structurels.

Dans la mise en application des politiques économiques, sociales et culturelles, il semble que l'on aborde assez mal la question des déséquilibres. L'on pourrait donner plusieurs guides de lecture qui fourniraient des arguments nécessaires comme preuves. Nous nous contenterons ici de présenter quelques domaines, certes insuffisants, mais qui pourraient être très stimulants pour la discussion. Dans le désordre:

- on peut soutenir que la question de la dette a toujours été mal traitée en Afrique par le jeu des programmes d'ajustement structurel et les rééchelonnements alors qu'il existe des solutions de marché qui ont été négligées sans explication convaincante;

- on peut soutenir que la bonne gouvernance qui, depuis la fin des années 80, est devenue une conditionnalité de l'accès au financement public international, n'est rien d'autre qu'une substitution de l'autoritarisme technocratique à la dictature autocratique, et que ni l'une ni l'autre ne peuvent conduire à la démocratie libérale sans porter atteinte aux PAS;

- on peut expliquer que contrairement à l'idée d'un ajustement culturel, l'on pourrait défendre très clairement l'hypothèse d'une liberté culturelle fondée sur les traits culturels des populations africaines que

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l'on dit communautaires, alors qu'elles ne sont que très peu marquées par un altruisme généralisé;

• on peut démontrer que la coopération entre Etats qui guide les schémas d'intégration est source de rivalités entre technocratie et autocratie alors que l'on pourrait compter sur la coopération entre les peuples sur fonds de concurrence entre hommes;

• enfin, on peut mettre en doute les grands chantiers de prospective en Afrique en montrant qu'ils exigent de l'omniscience de la part des prospectivistes et des charlatans détenteurs de boules de cristal opaques. Tentons l'exercice.

### Le mauvais traitement de la question de la dette par les PAS

Depuis la fin des années 1970 et l'installation progressive des économies africaines dans la crise de l'endettement, la seule et meilleure solution que l'on a pu conseiller aux pays débiteurs semble avoir été le programme d'ajustement structurel. Dans ces programmes, les pays débiteurs s'engagent devant les institutions monétaires de Bretton Woods à appliquer un certain nombre de mesures qui pourraient les rendre aptes à rembourser la dette. Les solutions concertées entre créanciers et débiteurs sont négociées en les mettant face à face au Club de Paris ou au Club de Londres, mais sous la surveillance et avec la bénédiction du Fonds monétaire international. Toute solution d'allégement concertée de la dette pour réduire les risques de répudiation, passe ainsi par la mise en place de politiques volontaristes de la part des institutions financières internationales, qui présentent chaque pays comme un cas à part. Les institutions financières internationales sont supposées ici assister le pays débiteur dans l'élaboration, la mise en application et le suivi de nouvelles politiques macroéconomiques globales ou sectorielles. Le pays débiteur, après avoir obtenu un accord avec ces institutions à la tête desquelles se trouve le FMI, s'engage, contre l'apport d'argent frais et de nouveaux crédits, à mettre en place des politiques vigoureuses de stabilisation des finances publiques et d'ajustement des balances extérieures. Cet accord obtenu avec le FMI permet aux créanciers réunis soit au Club de Paris, soit au Club de Londres, de rééchelonner le service de la dette du pays débiteur afin de pallier le manque de devises à court terme.

Ainsi, depuis 1980 et jusqu'à ce jour, la plupart des pays africains sont passés par ce traitement politique de la crise de l'endettement. Ce traitement est politique au sens où ce sont des hommes politiques qui décident de son organisation, de son calendrier, qui le négocient et le mettent en application. Le PAS est un engagement des Etats sur un programme de politiques économiques des gouvernements des pays débiteurs. Le PAS est encouragé et assisté au Club de Paris ou de Londres avec la bénédiction de hauts fonctionnaires d'Etats créanciers et débiteurs qui encadrent à leur façon les

Etats créanciers, leurs banques et leurs populations. Les PAS ne sont mis en application et ne reçoivent des financements qu'après que l'aristocratie de la fonction publique internationale regroupée au FMI et à la Banque mondiale ait donné son accord. Les considérations politiques dominent les PAS parce qu'il s'agit d'appliquer des politiques macroéconomiques sur les populations des pays débiteurs sans que leurs contribuables n'aient leur mot à dire. Le PAS relève d'un diktat politico-financier.

Cette première manière de traiter la crise de la dette en Afrique depuis bientôt quinze ans a relevé pourtant, dès les premiers instants, des insuffisances car l'ajustement et la stabilisation en comprimant à l'extrême les possibilités matérielles des populations des pays débiteurs, se sont avérés violents, antisociaux et antidémocratiques, donc insoutenables. La première phase des PAS qui consiste à stabiliser les comptes internes et extérieurs des Etats s'est avérée la plupart du temps tellement violente pour les consommateurs, les producteurs, les investisseurs et les épargnants, que les secondes phases de relance de la croissance économique sont toujours restées des vœux pieux.

En plus de leur incapacité à stabiliser les comptes de l'Etat, les PAS se sont jumelés à de fortes réductions du niveau de vie des populations, au point de faire admettre par les institutions financières internationales des programmes complémentaires de traitement des conséquences sociales des PAS.

Malgré tous ces efforts de traitement de la question de la dette par la fonction publique internationale, l'on n'a pas constaté, en Afrique, une réduction du stock de la dette, ni même une amélioration des capacités de remboursement des économies surendettées de ce continent. Bien au contraire, on s'aperçoit qu'entre l'époque des premiers PAS et 1993, les dons gratuits ont évincé les investissements directs et les prêts privés au profit des emprunts publics, dans les pays africains. La dette n'a pas été remboursée, mais elle a changé de nature; elle est devenue encore plus politique pour cacher les échecs des PAS. Les différents plans de traitement politique de la dette initiés par Baker, Brady ou John Major ont jusqu'à présent obtenu, pour ce qui concerne les économies africaines, des effets très limités.

Cependant, s'il est vrai que la question de la dette est une question importante, pourquoi faut-il nécessairement lui réserver un traitement politique alors qu'il existe des solutions de marché que les Africains généralement n'appliquent jamais, ou très peu.

Les solutions de marché désignent «toute solution de réduction de la dette qui comporte un accord volontaire entre les créanciers et leurs débiteurs, sans qu'il soit nécessaire de faire intervenir un mécanisme de coordination ou une quelconque coercition de la part des gouvernements ou des institutions financières multilatérales» (Berthelemy, Girardin 1991). Les économies africaines n'ont généralement pas adopté ce mode de traitement

de la dette. Elles ont toujours préféré les solutions qui passent par la coerci-
tion, la coordination et l'intermédiation des institutions de Bretton Woods.
La situation pour les pays africains de la zone Franc est encore plus
particulière car elle impose à ceux-ci des accords, certes avec le FMI et la
BIRD, mais aussi avec la Banque de France et le trésor public français.

Il est toujours possible de combiner les solutions de marché et les solu-
tions politiques mais généralement on a préféré pour l'Afrique les solutions
exclusivement politiques. Pourquoi toutes les questions importantes et/ou
secondaires sont-elles généralement traitées politiquement en Afrique?

Les solutions de marchés peuvent se présenter sous plusieurs formes
selon le type de dette, sa maturité et les conditions institutionnelles
rencontrées.

Le rachat de la dette sur le marché secondaire est une solution de marché
qui peut se faire en un coup ou être échelonnée dans le temps. Le prix que le
marché secondaire fixe et auquel le pays opère le rachat détermine la valeur
moyenne de la dette. A ce prix, les créanciers et les débiteurs sont informés
du coût financier qu'il devraient supporter pour l'effacement d'une partie de
la dette. Cette valeur moyenne de la dette peut être comparée à l'économie
que ferait le débiteur sur le paiement futur des charges de sa dette au cas où
il ne la rachèterait pas. Il s'agit de la valeur marginale de la dette qui est
généralement inférieure à la valeur moyenne et qui incite créancier et
débiteur à accepter une transaction qui écarte le défaut de paiement à terme,
ou le risque de défaillance. Ce type d'arrangement ne nécessite pas la
présence d'institutions internationales coercitives ou de programmes
d'ajustement autoritaires. En outre, le rachat de la dette sur le marché secon-
daire avec une décote peut être avantageux aussi bien pour le créancier que
pour le débiteur. Il convient de souligner que les gains que l'on peut attendre
de ce type de solution résultent de l'information plus ou moins transparente
des marchés financiers (*Association of African Central Bank* 1992).

Comme solution de marché il est également possible de citer les
échanges de dette contre cession de capitaux propres nationaux. Cet échange
équivaut à une opération de rachat de dette doublée d'un investissement
direct, ou d'achat d'actions ou de titres de propriétés sur le marché financier
national du pays débiteur (Krugman 1989).[4]

Les effets macroéconomiques des procédures de rachat de dettes contre
actifs peuvent être aussi bien inflationnistes que contraignants pour les
finances publiques. Le résultat final dépend de l'origine des moyens que
l'Etat utilisera pour racheter sa dette. S'il crée un supplément de monnaie, il
y aura en retour de l'inflation. Et s'il lance un emprunt public local, il y aura

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4    On peut porter des critiques à toutes ces solutions de marché, mais en aucun cas leurs
     implications macroéconomiques ne pourraient être aussi désastreuses que celles des PAS.

substitution de dette intérieure à la dette extérieure. Le rachat de dette impose donc pour réussir de vraies politiques de privatisation du patrimoine national confisqué depuis toujours et partout par les hommes de l'Etat. Cette privatisation devrait alors concerner aussi bien l'industrie, le commerce, la politique que la propriété foncière et les terres agricoles et urbaines.

Enfin, on peut noter que la titrisation par le biais duquel un pays rachète sa dette à un prix qui peut descendre jusqu'à sa valeur marginale plutôt qu'à sa valeur moyenne par émission de bons de sortie, est aussi une solution de marché. Dans cette optique, les titres de créance bancaire qui sont décotés seront échangés contre des obligations bénéficiant d'une meilleure garantie de remboursement. Ici aussi de nombreuses difficultés peuvent survenir, surtout si, dans l'économie en question, le libre marché, la libre entreprise, les privatisations ne sont pas encouragés (Berthelemy, Girardin 1991:573).

### Démocratisation: liberté politique et/ou multipartisme

De même que l'on n'a pas adopté en Afrique des solutions de marché pour la dette, de même pour la démocratisation, on a substitué à la liberté politique le multipartisme. La démocratie libérale ne pourrait se concevoir sans libéralisme. Or, en Afrique, on voudrait établir des démocraties libérales sous l'égide et le contrôle des bailleurs de fonds et des technocrates. Le libéralisme est une manière de voir l'homme en société même s'il existe plusieurs familles libérales; on retiendra qu'il s'agit d'un acte de foi dans l'individu, d'une philosophie de l'échange et d'une conception du droit.

En tant que philosophie de l'homme et de l'individu, le libéralisme admet que chaque homme est unique et rationnellement ignorant. Les calculs faits *ex-ante* sont susceptibles d'être différents des décisions *ex-post* en fonction des informations innées et acquises. Aucune solution n'est alors prédéterminée fatalement.

Dans cet univers d'ignorance, l'homme reste rationnel. Il ne s'agit pas de la rationalité cartésienne ou kantienne absolue. Il s'agit d'une rationalité limitée et critique qui reconnaît que l'homme ne peut accéder ni à toute l'information ni à l'information parfaite. L'homme ne peut accéder à la vérité absolue même s'il est capable d'identifier ce qui n'est pas ajusté à la vérité. Ce libéralisme est moins glorieux, mais plus réaliste et il se préoccupe des erreurs du passé afin de les utiliser pour corriger humblement les espoirs du futur. Dans le libéralisme, l'homme est unique et irremplaçable. Aristote et Saint Thomas d'Aquin sont appelés au secours (Popper 1934).

En tant que philosophie de l'échange, le libéralisme conçoit que l'individu n'est pas isolé. La philosophie libérale se fonde sur la communication. L'individu est un être extraverti, ouvert sur les autres (Becker 1976). Le libéralisme refuse la société fermée et close. Il se détermine par le biais de la société ouverte, la dispersion du savoir, l'interdépendance sociale, la solidarité volontaire.

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Comme philosophie du droit, le libéralisme suppose que l'Etat de droit ne signifie pas naïvement gouvernement issu d'élections démocratiques. L'Etat de droit s'interprète comme une situation, un Etat où le droit est la seule institution qui s'impose à tous. L'Etat de droit se comprend alors comme on entend «l'état d'ivresse» ou «l'état d'apesanteur». Dans cet Etat, les règles émergent pour corriger les désordres. Le libéralisme admet que les droits sont individuels et qu'ils permettent de sélectionner les normes sociales.

L'existence de régles pour garantir le jeu de l'interdépendance sociale construit la toile de fond des règles qui s'imposent à tout homme. Il s'agit donc de droits de l'homme. Dans le libéralisme, la liberté et la propriété de chacun doivent être respectées. C'est le respect de la propriété de chacun qui assure le respect de la vie de chaque homme. Les droits de l'homme sont donc, de ce fait, des droits de propriété individuelle et, selon le libéralisme, aucune volonté humaine ne peut nous priver de ces droits individuels qui s'imposent aussi bien aux princes, aux législateurs, qu'à l'Etat et à ses hommes. De ce point de vue, en Afrique, la loi forgée par le législateur et les majorités politiques ne saurait être le droit et s'imposer à celui-ci. Dans la démocratie libérale, nul n'est censé connaître les bonnes règles sociales, mais chacun reste vigilant quant à la découverte et à la dénonciation des règles qui violent la liberté individuelle et personnelle.

Les normes sociales, contrairement à ce que suggéraient les philosophes de la Révolution française, ne pourraient être construites par la raison d'un homme ou celle de quelques hommes. La norme sociale doit se fonder sur le droit et les règles de droit ont, dans la philosophie libérale, trois caractéristiques:

- elles sont impersonnelles: les mêmes pour tous;
- elles sont générales: tous sont soumis au droit;
- elles sont intemporelles: stables, ne pouvant changer au gré des majorités politiques.

Comment apparaissent les règles de droit selon le système libéral?

Dans la tradition de Montesquieu, la norme juridique émerge à travers un processus de sélection historique. L'histoire n'a pas de sens, mais est le fruit de notre apprentissage (Popper 1979).

Les règles de droit peuvent provenir aussi bien du législateur que du juge. Le législateur est un producteur de lois, soit il propose des lois lui-même, soit il adopte les projets de lois du gouvernement. Théoriquement, c'est au nom du peuple que le législateur produit les lois, mais dans la réalité le peuple n'est pas le souverain et le mandat qu'il donne aux élus peut être détourné par ceux-ci. C'est pour cela que pour assurer un contrôle efficace des institutions politiques, Montesquieu imaginait la séparation des pouvoirs. En Afrique, tous ces éléments de la philosophie libérale sont

oubliés et/ou négligés. La plupart du temps, les gouvernements, les technocrates et même de nombreux juristes de la tradition du droit positif admettent qu'un texte de loi est bon dans la mesure où il respecte ou est conforme à la constitution. Or, le pouvoir totalitaire lui-même peut se constitutionnaliser. Les Africains, sans admettre la philosophie du libéralisme, suggèrent la plupart du temps qu'il vaudrait mieux avoir une mauvaise constitution que pas de constitution du tout. Les pyramides juridiques que l'on découvre en Afrique constituent-elles du droit? La réflexion et la recherche ont de nombreux défis à relever sur ce terrain. Car pour le moment, il semble que les règles de droit, les lois et les constitutions en Afrique ne sont ni impersonnelles, car elles servent à redistribuer des privilèges à des chercheurs de rente prédateurs, ni générales puisqu'à tout moment, selon les intérêts et les opportunités de corruption que l'on peut avoir, il devient aisé de se mettre hors-la-loi sans qu'aucune sanction ne survienne. Les règles en Afrique ne sont par ailleurs pas stables par le fait même que l'instabilité politique a été jumelée à la rigidité politique et institutionnelle. Stabilité ne signifie pas rigidité.

Par ailleurs en Afrique au Sud du Sahara, le juge qui, en principe, dans la philosophie libérale du droit, devrait être un applicateur du droit, est souvent amené à interpréter le droit selon les désirs des gouvernements, de façon peu impartiale, pour gérer lui-même sa propre carrière. Le juge fonctionnaire est soumis aux caprices et à la volonté de ceux qui lui assurent son avenir professionnel. Comment peut-on, dans ces conditions, présenter les turbulences actuelles sur les marchés politiques africains, comme étant des efforts de transition vers la démocratie libérale?

Les défis sur ce terrain sont aussi cruciaux que ceux soulignés précédemment au sujet du traitement de la dette. La théorie sociale est mise au défi de préciser ce qu'est une démocratie libérale et ce que représente, en réalité, la bonne gouvernance face aux enjeux de la démocratie politique en Afrique. Les chercheurs en sciences sociales devraient pouvoir répondre à la question du contrôle des hommes politiques par les populations. Quel mécanisme serait susceptible de permettre à des populations analphabètes et sans propriétés privées de prendre part à la vie de la société? Comment faire de sorte que la démocratie ne s'arrête pas à la caricature du multipartisme bon teint des «intellocrates» africains?

Comment la responsabilisation des populations pourrait-elle se faire si celles-ci n'ont pas accès à la propriété privée et au libre échange? Comment le marché politique africain est-il organisé? Comment les activités de *«rent-seeking»* et de prédation minent-elles les activités politiques? La philosophie libérale est-elle compatible avec les transitions politiques africaines?

### Le nouveau régionalisme et l'intégration africaine

Dans la même optique, on pourrait remettre sur la table des débats scientifiques, la compatibilité des efforts du nouveau régionalisme à

l'échelle mondiale et la place qui sera réservée à l'Afrique. Dans le continent, une bataille semble être engagée entre les thèses de l'intégration verticale de l'Afrique à l'Europe et celle de l'intégration horizontale des économies africaines au-delà des frontières héritées de la période coloniale.

De nombreux chercheurs en Europe et en Afrique défendent l'idée selon laquelle notre continent pourrait s'intégrer à l'Europe de Maastricht (Guillaumont 1987, 1988; Hugon 1990) en acceptant comme préalable l'élargissement du système de la zone franc à toute l'Afrique et en conditionnant l'accès à l'aide européenne à cette soumission. Qu'en pensent les chercheurs africains? Un nouveau traité de coopération qui prépare cette Afrique de Maastricht sera bientôt ratifié par les Etats africains de la zone franc. Quelles pourraient être les conséquences pour les autres organisations d'intégration du continent africain: OUA, CEDEAO...?

Les pays africains de la zone franc viennent de suspendre le rachat de francs CFA sortis «frauduleusement» de leur zone monétaire. Quelles seraient les conséquences d'une telle décision pour les économies riveraines de la zone franc?

Une thèse semble dire qu'il s'agissait de raréfier les francs CFA pour montrer leur importance aux africains non encore membres, quelles analyses proposeraient les chercheurs sur ces thèmes de l'intégration? Ces défis rejoignent les précédents et centrent la réflexion sur les formes et les modalités de la contribution de l'Afrique au système mondial des échanges. Il faut se rappeler que l'esclavage, la colonisation, la décolonisation, la néocolonisation, l'ajustement structurel et l'intégration euro-africaine pourraient relever de la même logique: celle de l'échange que les africains envisagent d'effectuer avec le reste du monde. Qui est souverain pour décider de ces questions? Les chefs d'Etat? Les populations? Les intellectuels? Comment mesurer le consentement collectif? Quel principe de subsidiarité nous faut-il?

### La culture: quelle analyse?
Au-delà de toutes ces questions de la dette, de la démocratie, de l'intégration, c'est à la culture elle-même que plusieurs questions se posent. Les traits culturels africains sont-ils aptes à assumer la modernité? Faut-il abandonner les cultures africaines? Qu'est-ce que la culture? Quels liens la culture peut-elle avoir avec la liberté et la propriété privée? «L'Afrique refuse-t-elle le développement?» «L'Afrique a-t-elle besoin d'un ajustement culturel» (Kabou 1991, Etounga-Manguelle 1991). Les enjeux ici sont de taille et imposent au-delà des thèmes de réflexion, la question des méthodes des sciences sociales en Afrique.

Le holisme méthodologique a-t-il été appliqué à l'analyse des questions sociales en Afrique? Quels ont été les résultats de cette méthode de recherche? Avons-nous des satisfactions? Ou des déceptions? Peut-on envisager l'application aux questions sociales africaines de l'individualisme

méthodologique? Peut-on comparer les performances relatives de ces différentes méthodes d'approche des questions sociales? (O'Hara 1993).

Ces questions méthodologiques sont au coeur de toute recherche en sciences sociales; ne pas vouloir les régler conduit à envisager des catalogues de thèmes de recherche sans que l'on ne garantisse des résultats compatibles ou comparables. La philosophie des sciences comporte aussi bien une structure des révolutions scientifiques (Kuhn 1970) qu'une logique de la découverte scientifique (Popper 1934, Lakatos 1970).

Ces questions méthodologiques appellent de nouvelles ambitions de lecture du futur de l'Afrique. En effet, partout, sous la supervision des bailleurs de fonds, de nombreux chercheurs se sont engagés dans des tentatives de construction de l'Afrique de demain. Les «*National Long Term Prospectives Studies*» financées par le PNUD et la Banque mondiale disputent le champ aux «*West African Long Term Prospective Studies*» financées par la Communauté européenne, la Banque mondiale et la BAD.

Comment lire l'avenir de l'Afrique? La science procède-t-elle par le biais de la boule de cristal?

Quelle méthode scientifique permet aux économistes, sociologues, historiens, politologues et autres spécialistes des sciences sociales, de prédire ce que sera l'Afrique dans les vingt-cinq ou trente prochaines années?

Peut-on partir de la rétrospective des trente dernières années pour lire l'avenir des trois prochaines décennies? L'expérience de ces trente dernières années est-elle plus significative que celle des cinquante ou soixante dernières années de l'histoire de l'Afrique? La technique de la prospective est-elle une technique scientifique?

Ces questions se posent et nous interpellent sur nos choix méthodologiques lorsque nous discutons des questions sociales à venir.

> *notre premier argument et dérivé de la démonstration de Karl Popper selon laquelle il est impossible à un individu de prédire sa propre connaissance future... Parce que les actions sont basées sur les stocks individuels de connaissance, s'il n'est pas en mesure de prédire sa connaissance future, il ne pourra pas non plus prédire ses décisions futures* (Gerald et al., 1985:25).

**Conclusion**

Il était question de discuter dans ce texte de quelques axes futurs de réflexion pour la recherche en sciences sociales dans des instituts et centres de recherche en Afrique. Tous les domaines en Afrique sont prioritaires. On pourrait lancer des programmes multisectoriels qui porteraient sur la santé, l'agriculture, les femmes, les enfants, le chômage, la prévoyance sociale, l'environnement, le développement durable, l'ethnicité, la guerre tribale, les coups d'Etat, etc.

Cela semblait être trop compliqué pour nous. Nous avons donc cherché une autre voie: celle qui consiste à souligner quelques défis majeurs et immédiats qui se posent à la politique économique. Ces défis nous ont conduit à insister sur les enjeux qu'ils révèlent à la recherche et ce sont ces enjeux qui ont été présentés aux chercheurs en leur laissant le soin selon les discipline et spécialisation de préciser leurs champs.

Nous avons dans cette optique commencé par soutenir que nous vivons dans un univers de déséquilibres, de rareté, d'incertitudes et de risques. La question n'est pas de faire disparaître les déséquilibres ou de les nier. Il s'agit, nous semble-t-il, de rendre les populations, les institutions capables de s'adapter et corriger au moindre coût les déséquilibres ambiants.

Malheureusement, il nous a semblé que nos manières d'aborder les déséquilibres en Afrique s'attaquent plus aux conséquences qu'aux causes. Pour lutter contre la pauvreté on tente vainement d'identifier les pauvres comme des gens mal logés, mal soignés, mal éduqués et mal nourris. Mais l'ennui, c'est que le logement, la santé, l'éducation, l'alimentation, lorsqu'ils sont de mauvaise qualité ne sont que des résultantes de la pauvreté. Peut-on guérir la pauvreté en soignant les effets de cette pauvreté?

Il en est de même pour les autres formes de déséquilibre. La solution semble être d'assister les populations plutôt que de leur délier les mains, les consciences et les patrimoines pour les rendre aptes par l'échange libre à s'assumer elles-mêmes.

Quel que soit le thème que nous abordons, il se pose un réel problème de méthodologie de la recherche. La méthode nous lance un défi. Serons-nous capables de relever ce défi afin de nous lancer à la conquête des domaines de la connaissance des problèmes africains?

Une suggestion est faite en faveur de l'individualisme méthodologique qui pose comme principe de base que toutes nos théories sociales devraient être centrées sur l'homme, sur l'individu en action dans la société. L'individu par son action doit permettre de comprendre le groupe. L'étude de différents problèmes importe, mais la méthode est un préalable.

Il doit se poser aujourd'hui aux chercheurs des questions sur la pertinence des paradigmes méthodologiques qu'ils ont eu l'habitude d'utiliser: le holisme méthodologique. Peut-on continuer à analyser les sociétés africaines avec une telle méthodologie? A quel prix pouvons-nous le faire? Avons-nous des alternatives? Les défis qui se présentent aujourd'hui peuvent-ils être abordés avec cette méthodologie?

Dans ce texte, nous avons voulu attirer l'attention du lecteur sur les faiblesses méthodologiques aussi bien dans la définition des déséquilibres que dans nos manières de les aborder. Nous oublions trop souvent l'homme, l'individu, au profit du peuple, de la communauté, de la société, du groupe. Les africains peuvent-ils être étudiés uniquement comme s'il ne s'agissait que d'êtres vivants soit dans un parc zoologique soit dans une jungle? Les

analystes de l'Afrique sont-ils capables de s'émanciper du holisme méthodologique pour répondre à toutes les questions que leur posent les enjeux futurs?

Terminons par ces propos d'Achille Mbembe:

> *Ce qui m'irrite le plus dans tout ceci c'est que l'autre, parce qu'il a des moyens que je n'ai pas, s'autorise à me renvoyer à la figure une image qu'il a fabriquée de moi, sans que je lui aie demandé quoi que ce soit. Et, sachant bien que je n'ai guère les moyens de ne pas l'écouter, il me dit «Voici qui tu es». Il veut m'obliger à me convaincre que «je suis vraiment à l'image de ce qu'il a fabriqué»(...). Face à la crise que traverse le continent africain nous avons des tâches plus urgentes qui nous sollicitent* (Mbembe 1993:282).

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# The Woman Artist in Africa Today:
## A Critical Commentary

Micere Mugo*

### A Definitive Introductory Anecdote

Once upon a time, when I was about ten years old, a paternal uncle came to our home one early evening. My father and a teacher colleague of his who was visiting us, had gone out. My mother and a paternal aunt, a great friend of hers were in the house. A group of us, children, was outside, playing. After greeting the children and the women, my uncle proceeded to ask: *Hï! Kaï andü matarï kuo güükü ümüüthï?* Literal translation: 'I say! Are people not here today?'

A telling pause followed the question and then, in a matter of fact fashion, mother answered, *Moimïïte kü? To ng'oombe na mbüri ici üroona!* Translation: 'Where would they (people) come from? There are only the goats and cows that you see'.

Not permitted to laugh at grown-ups, we the children, simply took to our heels and ran to the back of the house where we rolled on the grass and giggled ourselves silly. We missed the rest of the drama.

This story introduces the underlying concern behind the paper's focus on the woman artist in Africa. The paper is both a statement as well as a re-statement of a problem that women continue to pose even as we speak now: why is it that criticism has paid such scanty attention to our women's artistic productivity? Why the imposed invisibility, in the face of so much harvest all around us?

### Intention and Scope

Given the forbidding size of the African continent, the particularity of detail will have to suffer under broad generalizations, even though these should apply without falsifying the former. Similarly, under the constraints of time and space, the myriads of rainbows of artistic expressions produced by African women will have to wait while we narrow ourselves to the concerns of orature and literature.

The paper opens with a recapitulation, or if you like, a reiteration, of the question already posed and comes in the form of articulations by a selected group of women artists and critics. The articulations are followed by a review of critics who have addressed African women's creativity, mostly

concerned with the written tradition. The presentation then proceeds to ex-
amine women artists creating in the orature tradition. Following this, the
paper looks at statements by African women writers, revealing how they
view their art and its role in society. Finally, the conclusion attempts to link
some of the issues raised by the paper to reflections on the tasks and chal-
lenges that face CODESRIA, twenty years since inception.

## Gender Discrimination and Women's Artistic Creativity

A number of critical commentaries on African women's writing have iden-
tified gender discrimination as the primary problem affecting women's
creativity and the nature of discourse surrounding it.

Jessie Sagawa (1984:164) of Malawi argued as follows:

*The discussion of African Literature usually centres on the male writer
and character. If the critic is concerned with women, it is mostly her
significance to the style of the author that interests him. Rarely has the
role of the woman in fiction been of serious interest to the critic of
African Literature. And the female writer finds herself in similar
circumstances. While most of the male African writers have received
wide coverage, the female writer has, until recently, tended to be
neglected.*

Sagawa goes on to argue that the woman critic has not, on the whole, done
much more than her male counterpart to redress the imbalance, pointing to
sexist indoctrination as the problem behind the marginalization of and bias
against women's writing and female depiction in African literature as a
whole. She provides overwhelming evidence to support the case she is
making and one so often made by other women before, as well as after her.

In similar vein, discussing problems faced by women artists, a paper en-
titled 'Women Writers' (Mugo 1984:162-205) explores the question of
female writing and publishing, posing a related question: 'Why is it that the
written tradition appears to have pushed the African woman to the back-
waters of literary achievement?' To answer the question, the discussion
takes us back to the history of writing in the West where patriarchal tenden-
cies had led to the appropriation of the art by males to the extent that certain
women writers were forced to assume masculine names in order to be pub-
lished at all. The paper then traces African women's creativity through
colonization and colonial education to the current oppressive neo-colonial
realities. All these environments are shown as not only promoting patriarchal
subjugation of the African woman, but as actively militating against her
potential artistic productivity, while she struggles to remain at the centre of
the creative process.

Penina Mlama (1990:86) comments on the discriminatory treatment of
women artists in Tanzania, further re-enforcing the arguments under labour

and thus demonstrating the universality of the experiences encountered by members of her gender. She observes:

> *I think there are very good women artists. If you look at the traditional performances the women are some of the best performers. But when it comes to writing it is the men who are given prominence. If you look at the village, who are the best storytellers? It is the women. Who are the dancers? It is the women. So I think that, on the one hand, there is a deliberate attempt not to give prominence to women writers. I don't think this trend is confined to Africa alone, because I think this happened in Europe in the past. In many cases men do not like challenge from women.*

Ama Ata Aidoo (1985) pushes the debate further. In characteristic articulateness, she denounces a whole line of male critics, both African and Western, for negligence, discrimination and callous condescension towards African women writers, punctuating her extended argument with classic illustrations, including what she terms, 'a personal detail'. The 'personal detail' reveals how Robert Fraser once went as far as accusing her of borrowing the title *No Sweetness Here* from Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, published in 1973, whereas her short story 'No Sweetness Here' had come out as early as 1962 and her collection of stories bearing that title, in 1970. Having, further, detailed the 'abuse' of other African women writers by a world of literary criticism, dominated by men, Aidoo (1985:117) observes:

> *In fact, the whole question of what attention has been paid or not paid to African women is so tragic, sometimes one wonders what desperation keeps us writing. Because for sure, no one cares. To have blundered our way into one more exclusively male sphere of activity can be forgiven. After all, clumsiness is a human failing. We all make mistakes. What is almost pathetic is to have persisted in staying there in the face of such resistance and sometimes resentment. Some of us believe that for writers and other creative persons any critical attention is better than none at all.*

Beyond the question of negligence, there are other problems. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, for instance, finds men, as critics of women's writing, 'usually patronizing and legislative', further arguing that: 'many feel the concerns of women are not serious enough since they are about the area of emotions and the private life'. She wonders 'how we got the idea in colonized societies that only political themes are respectable?' And argues that, in fact, 'Great literature has always been about emotions and the actions which spring from them', citing from Soviet literature to illustrate the case she is making (Ogundipe-Leslie 1990:72).

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Under interrogation here is the authenticity of gender biased criticism that assesses women's writing using patriarchal values, standards and paradigms. Indeed, Adeola James' book, *In Their Own Voices*, where Ogundipe-Leslie makes these observations, is full of statements by most African women writers interviewed, echoing the sentiments expressed above. The writers include: Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Rebeka Njau, Asenath Odaga, Penina Mlama and others. Historically then, African women writers have not only been sidelined by the application of patriarchal measurements of what is success and what is failure, but through downright sabotage, viewed by women as a ploy to insure male domination. Adeola James (1990:2) summarizes the debate in her introduction to the work mentioned above. These are her words:

> *To say that the creative contribution of African women writers has not always been recognized is to put the case mildly. In fact, the woman's voice is generally subsumed under the massive humming and bustling of her male counterpart, who has been brought up to take the women for granted.*

In *The Collector of Treasures*, Bessie Head (1990:5) blames this male superiority syndrome on erring ancestors. These are her words:

> *The ancestors made so many errors and one of the bitter things was that they relegated to men a superior position in the tribe, while women were regarded in a congenital sense as being an inferior form of human life. To this day, women still suffer from all the calamities that befall an inferior form of human life.*

One can only agree that Bessie Head manages to point one of her fingers in one of the directions where at the root cause of our problems is situated — patriarchal false consciousness. In this respect we do well to remind ourselves that even as we respond to Amilcar Cabral's call and 'return to the source', our journey must be one of search: a critical retracing of ancestral footsteps, avoiding those that would lead to pitfalls instead of to a celebration of self-knowledge. In other words, the perpetuation of patriarchal values that undermine women's creativity must be addressed with uncompromising frankness. Unless this is done we will be condoning oppressive cultural practices designed for the purposes of creating islands of power in the midst of oceans of powerlessness. One is arguing that societies should nurture creative beings and not slaves of fettering traditions. With this understanding in mind, critics at whose hands women artists suffer should be perceived as undesirable intellectual power brokers whose empires and monopoly enclaves must be challenged. The structures that negate women's creativity are indeed a version of those found at the macro societal level. Ama Ata

Aidoo (1990:12) makes a graphic representation of this reality when she observes:

> *Women writers are just receiving the writer's version of the general neglect and disregard that women in the larger society receive ... You know that the assessment of a writer's work is in the hands of critics and it is the critics who put people on the pedestals or sweep them under the carpet, or put them in a cupboard, lock the door and throw the key away. I feel that, wittingly or unwitting, people may be doing this to African women writers.*

Of course the whole of the foregoing debate would be incomplete unless contextualized within the societal, cultural, political and economic formations against which the contradictions highlighted take place. For, it is these that shape the consciousness, or false consciousness that are in a clash as we observe the interplay between the various subjects engaged in the conflict. Indeed, it needs to be argued that the seeming line between males and females, lumped in two generalized opposing camps, cannot stand the rigours of a pointed analysis. Socialization, indoctrination and internalization of the kind of sexist, patriarchal values that deny the female artist her proper place/role and status in society, often cut across this assumed line. The systems and institutions that breed the unjust conditions, as well as the 'myths' and 'lies' that reinforce the false constructions under challenge apply to both men and women, even though to men more so than to their sisters. In this respect, of course African women writers are not the only victims. We hear other women, particularly those from the southern hemisphere and discriminated against groups, complain about similar marginalization and belittlement. Demonstrative cases in point are highlighted in such works as: *Caribbean Women Writers* (Cudjoe 1990). *The Sexual Mountain and Black Women Writers* (Hernton 1987) *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspective on Black Women Writers* (Christian 1985), *Black Women Writers* (Evans 1984) and others.

## Cult of the Giants and Celebrities

Another patriarchal construction that has adversely affected women's writing is what might be described as the 'cult of the giants and the celebrities'. This is to say that there is a tendency in literary criticism to exclusively focus on the works of already well established authors (read male writers). Why this 'cult of the giants and celebrities'? Can these literary heavyweights be so fascinating that we can see nothing in other writers? Could it be a need, on the part of the critics, to remain on safe grounds, beaten as these might be? Is it fear of the unknown, the unfamiliar and the unsung? Is it the kind of laziness that shies away from innovativeness? Is it loyalties to personal friendship, ethnic connections, nationalist bonds, ideological camaraderie? Is it careerist calculations that dictate patronage to celebrities so that they can

bring us closer to the limelight in which they bask? Or could it be that we are afraid of touching women writers because of the sensitive gender issues raised by their works? These questions need to be wrestled with, for better or for worse. A celebration of giants is okay, but fascination with them to the point of fixation is wrong. Mesmerization can only lead to a freezing of possible extended action.

One is saying that African literary critics need to immunize themselves from the personality worship syndrome, which is one of the problems in Africa's larger democratization project. In the same way, if the works of women writers are to compete in the book market, as they should, the publishers and their distributors have to rise above the 'big buck' syndrome. More than this, the academicians need to convince us that they are more than professional merchants who are only interested in promoting big names for what they can get out of them professionally. This may well be too much to ask in these days of IMF and World Bank maladjusting economics.

Worse off under this unfortunate contest of the big and the small; the powerful and the powerless, is the plight of women artists working within the orature tradition. Whereas women writers are correct in demanding the critics' attention and calling 'foul' at the way the sexist game is played in criticism, looking at the orature tradition, the class factor becomes just as problematic as the power equation. Women working in the latter tradition have all together been ignored as individual artists, being lumped under broad generalizations encompassing orature composers. Of individual talent and creativity, nothing has been really said. Generally, then, the written word boasts weightier currency than the spoken and under this equation, the woman writer becomes a 'giant' while her sister remains a nonentity.

## A Broad Categorization of Critics

At this junction, it is imperative that we focus on the character of critics briefly, because their response to literature can influence creativity either positively, or negatively. More than this, they often shape the direction that the latter assumes. Critics also play a major part in molding the consciousness of the audience to whom creative writing is aimed. Taking into account the debate generated in the previous sections, the first question that we need to ask here is: are *all* critics of African women writers as negligent, biased, arrogant, condescending and sexist as they have been made out to be? Secondly, what about female critics of women writers: are they free of these blindspots? The answer to these questions is obvious. Male or female, critics are not a homogeneous fellowship of identicals. They come in all types, shapes, shades, voices and class positions. At the risk of generalizing, it might be useful to place them in three broad categories: the conservative, the liberal and the progressive. These categories are neither static nor sealed from interference by all forms of social dynamics and dialectics. The point

under labour, however, is that in discussing the role of critics and their in-
fluence on women's writing, we need to move beyond lumping them
together if we are to pinpoint the source of the problem before us. In other
words, conservative critics are likely to do more damage to women's
creativity than liberal critics, for instance. On the other hand, if women
writers were to call a round table conference to discuss the dismemberment
of their creative products and imaginative wholesomeness, they would be
making the most progress sitting down with the third category of critics.
These distinctions are important in differentiating between creative and
destructive criticism.

## A Review of Selected Criticism

We now move back to a question raised earlier, namely: has criticism on
African women writers been as drastic as articulated? Whereas in the last
ten years there have been efforts, some of them more than determined, to
address the existing dry land of commentaries, sporting thorn bushes and
shrivelled shrubs, the situation still leaves a lot to be desired. A condensed
survey of the literary scene will have to suffice. What follows is really an
abridged review and update of the discourse initiated by Ama Ata Aidoo's
paper, 'To Be a Woman Writer — An Overview and a Detail', in 1985.

Up until the eighties, criticism on African women artists appeared in way
of book reviews, conference papers, journal articles and book chapters. Per-
haps the most consistent of the journals in soliciting submissions on
women's work has been *African Literature Today* (Jones *et al* 1987),
originally edited by Professor Eldred Jones of Fourah Bay College and now
co-produced by him with Professor Eustace Palmer and Majorie Jones as
Associate Editors. *OKIKE*, edited by Chinua Achebe, has had a similar
policy and has featured women both as critics and as writers. Hans Zell's *A
New Readers Guide to African Literature* and *Presence Africaine* (Paris)
have also included coverage on women. As intimated, there are a number of
undergraduate and graduate theses out there, inside and outside Africa, a few
of which I have personally supervised, devoted to women writers and writ-
ing. Indeed, individual critics, both male and female, have been persistent in
their insistence that African women's creativity be brought to the fore for
serious, extensive discussion.

It was not until the nineteen eighties, however, that full scale published
studies on women's writing started to emerge. In 1984, Oladele Taiwo pub-
lished the first volume of work devoted to African women writers, under the
title, *Female Novelists of Modern Africa* (1984). In 1985 the Zimbabwe In-
ternational Book Fair focused on Women and Books and devoted the
workshop to discourse on women, creativity, publication and related issues.
The proceedings, including presentations by outstanding African artists such
as Ama Ata Aidoo, Nawal El Saadawi, Flora Nwapa, Barbara Makhalisa

Nkala, and others, were an overwhelming experience. Unfortunately, up to now, it would appear that the proceedings do not yet exist in printed form. 1987 saw the publication of a whole issue of *African Literature To-Day* (1987) devoted to African women writers. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie's essay on 'The Female Writer and Her Commitment', an excellent piece of criticism in that issue, has been widely debated since then. In the meantime, Adeola James was busy compiling her research, embracing fifteen African women writers, featured discussing literature, criticism and their own creativity. The work came out in 1990 under the title *In Their Own Voices*. Currently, a full scale study of Ama Ata Aidoo's works, compiled by Vincent Odamtten, is ready for publication. There is, of course, a lot more going on, especially in those parts of Africa which the Berlin Conference's partition removes from one's historically censured eye. Still, other than the forthcoming publication on Ama Ata Aidoo, we are generally speaking of 'small scale', not 'intensive', or 'large scale' criticism.

Hence, dissatisfaction still remains with what is obviously such a tiny drop in the sea of creative productivity on the continent. Perhaps the greater challenge is on women intellectuals themselves to get on with the task of generating criticism, in the interest of self-representation. For, other than Adeola James' *In Their Own Voices* and Rudo Gaidzanwa's (1985) *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature*, the thinness of women's own publication record of full blown volumes of criticism is on the carpet.

This challenge is real and obviously urgent, considering the fact that women writers are obviously not amused by some of the voices of their male critics. This, for instance, is what Ama Ata Aidoo (1984) has to say about Oladela Taiwo's work:

> *In 1984, Oladela Taiwo published 'Female Novelists of Modern Africa', a book whose publishers blurbed it (sic.) 'as an important study' and for which the author himself claimed in the preface that it is a 'celebration' of the literary activities of female novelists in modern Africa. For any writing woman, reading that 'important study' should be a fairly sobering experience ... he virtually treats those African women writers whose novels he discusses (and short stories when the spirit moves him) as though they were his co-wives to whom he dishes out his whimsical favours. He constantly remarks on their intelligence or story-telling capabilities in the best 'dancing dog' tradition, or as if they were a bunch of precocious six-year olds who had demonstrated some special abilities to the headteacher.*

The angered writer leaves Taiwo there, to rest in pieces!

**Women Artists in the Orature Tradition**

First of all, why orature and not oral literature?

During the last three decades, some areas of the African Academy have demonstrated a very productive response to Amilcar Cabral's call for African societies to 'return to the source' as part of the agenda for cultural emancipation, which this intellectual, freedom fighter, rightly perceived as a necessary revolutionary act in the struggle for eco-political independence. Scholarship in African orature has been one such area, the term orature itself being an innovative coinage on the part of the East African School, best articulated by Austin Bukenya and the late Pio Zirimu (1977). The coinage liberated the heritage from the begging posture that the term 'oral literature' tends to subject it to as scholars debate whether or not the African creative tradition can be taken as seriously as literature. Orature has achieved much needed independence as a result of this coinage, standing as a defined heritage on its own terms.

*So, How do we Define Orature?*

African orature is an art form that uses language to create artistic verbal compositions. The verbal art culminates in dramatized utterance, oration, recitation and performance. It has its distinct set of ethics, aesthetics, values and a philosophy that distinguish it as a unique heritage which has existed in the African world since time immemorial and which is still consumed by the majority of Africa's population up to this day. In this respect, it should be understood that African orature continues to be created and consumed, even as we speak now. It also continues to influence creativity in written drama, poetry, fiction, music, song and other forms of artistic expression. As Africa's indigenous popular art form, it is dynamic and is still evolving, continuing to define itself alongside current trends in econo-political development and underdevelopment.

There is, for instance, a difference between the way orature is generated in a rural set up as opposed to an urban setup. There is also a difference in the way the various social classes preserve, consume and generate the art, with the affluent hardly having any use for it except for 'decorative' and expedient purposes, while the masses use it on an active basis. Further, it is possible to distinguish between progressive orature and reactionary orature. Orature that celebrates patriarchal values of domination, all forms of injustice and the silencing of the powerless in any society, is negative. On the other hand, orature that affirms life, growth, self realization, human rights, self-determination and so on, is progressive.

**Women Orature Artists**

African women have always dominated the African orature tradition as cultural workers, storytellers, singers, dancers, riddleposers, dramatists and

so on. As creators, educators, guidance counsellor and often, as the family historians (which is a common arrangement in horizontal social formations), women artists become, so to speak, the collective memory and stream of consciousness that links a specific social unit from one generation to the other. This role, the woman artist doubles with those of mother, aunt, grandmother and at times, big sister. The woman artist sits at the heart of a community's well being and fans the fire at the hearth of its imaginative furnaces, especially those of its youth. But, let us not fall into the trap of either idealizing or generalizing, for, as intimated, like all other artists and culturalists, women creators in orature have never constituted a uniform group.

It is nonetheless, safe to generalize and say that of their own free will and given a choice, most women artists will belong to the positive orature tradition. Political coercion and enforcement under neo-colonial military and so-called civilian governments have, however, exploited the negative aspects of orature to notorious levels, abusing the powerlessness and vulnerability of women as performing artists in the worst possible manner. Witness the arrival of African dictators at airports, often following trips during which they have either squandered national resources through extravagant shopping sprees abroad, or brought back foreign aid packages with all kinds of strings attached (once, ironically, mistakenly referred to as 'AIDS' by a peasant woman). On such occasions, women are rounded up, often in their thousands, to dance and ululate for the returning 'heroes'.

Wearing prints overwhelmed by humongous images of these ugly neo-colonial rulers, the poor women carry — on their backs, on their stomachs, across their chests and upon their heads — the weight of these symbols of Africa's betrayal and oppression. Roasting in the sun, dancing themselves lame, they sing praise poetry and ululate these dictators as they swell with flattery, the lies caressing their ears. This coerced 'waheshimiwa' orature is part of what may be termed neo-colonial 'ululation culture' and not people's authentic orature.

A few years ago, a crowd of such 'ululation culture' artists actually referred to a senile octogenarian dictator as 'a man in his prime, full of youth, vitality and virility!' The subject of praise waved back his fly whisk in self-appreciation. Now, whereas one may not be in possession of personal details that could possibly testify to this octogenarian's 'virility', it is clear that, physically, he cannot possibly be so agile. Some days following this praise song, it became evident that the subject of the song was far too old to even climb down an insignificant flight of stairs. When he tried to do so, the results were disastrous. He went plunging down, causing commotion in a capacity filled conference centre.

Another notorious dictator, under whom children and youth have been so impoverished that their plights will leave a telling scar on the future of the

land to which they belong due to the extent of their dispossession, thrives as
a national father figure. Even after fifteen years of economic mismanage-
ment, repressive rule and sheer police terrorism, coerced teams of 'ululation
culture' artists continue to poetize him in song, dance and orations as
'mtukutu raise', (almighty president) and worse still as 'baba wa taifa',
father of the nation and particularly, father of the children. Imagine these
economically exploited and socially deprived mothers referring to this man,
as the father of their children! The creative imagination of Africa's orature
tradition is under serious abuse and the result is what East Africans calls a
*kasuku* culture (parrot culture) in Kiswahili. The abduction of orature
through state patronage is a very serious cultural coup in the hands of to-
day's African ruling classes.

Luckily, alongside this 'waheshimiwa' orature, the resistance tradition of
*mapinduzi* orature is being created in the mines, the factories, the *matatus*,
on the farms, in homes and other arenas of productive democratic praxis. In
this connection, it needs to be noted that it is during peoples' historical
struggles that human beings have created positive orature in volumes. In this
undertaking a lot of African women combatants and sheroes have been ac-
tive creators. Slave narratives, dramas, protest poetry and songs were com-
posed as much by men as by women across the middle passage and in the
lands of enslavement. These creations conscientized, uplifted and spurred
victims of unspoken atrocities and dehumanization to not only defy oppres-
sion but to overthrow it. *Mapinduzi*, orature inspired liberation struggles in
Algeria, Kenya, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Guinea Bissau, Namibia
and others places, producing a body of creative compositions that continues
to influence the direction of art in these countries up to this day. *Mapinduzi*
orature artists have nurtured the collective memories of their communities.
They have exposed and decried the abuse of human rights and have been
active participants, mobilizing for democratic change. They have played the
role of articulators of the people's collective vision, even as the collective
group searches for more humane alternatives of defining who they are. They
have created orature that affirms not only the resiliency of the human being,
but one that asserts people's humanity and capacity to defy oppression,
while rising and lifting heads high, in order to show the true face of
humanity.

It is no wonder that dictatorships have panicked whenever *Mapinduzi*
orature has mushroomed amidst oppressed groups in our societies. The panic
has worsened when the creators and participants have happened to be
women. The example of Kamiriithu, near Limuru in Kenya, demonstrates
this:

> *In 1982, when the Kenya government banned the drama activities of the*
> *Kamiriithu Community Centre, near Limuru and later, sadistically*
> *proceeded to raze the structure of the open air theatre that the workers*

> *and peasants had built to the ground, the Kiambu District Commissioner gave a speech in which he specifically singled out women for admonition. He ridiculed them for having participated in the drama production, deriding them for spending time idling and jumping around the stage, like children, instead of working in their homes and cultivating their shambas, as all 'respectable' married and old mothers do* (Aidoo and Mugo 1984:87-8)..

Clearly, *Mapinduzi* orature women artists are a threat to neo-colonial dictatorships where *kasuku* and 'ululation culture' producers are used not only to ensure the validation of the dictators, but to promote escapism, tourist entertainment and false conscientization. As Laura A Finke argues, '... we must understand utterance as an ideological construct produced through conflict and struggle within a specific historical and social context' (Finke 1992:3). Utterance by women orature artists, who are a part of the oppressed world, becomes an 'ideological construct' that interrogates the agents of enslaving systems and structures which negate their existence and this is threatening to the status quo.

Paulo Freire argues that utterance of the 'authentic word' is a liberating act. This is so because true utterance leads to reflection and possible action. Meaningful action impacts on structures of oppression and threatens to change them. Thus for as long as *Mapinduzi* orature women artists continue to struggle to transform the stifling reality around them, they remain a threat to the systems that create the injustice they fight. Consequently, they become agents of development. One does not need to be a soothsayer to predict that this kind of people-based, people-generated orature will far outlive neo-colonial 'ululation culture', composed in praise of *waheshimiwas*, their fly whisks, *fimbos* and guns.

## Women Writers Speaking for Themselves

Self-articulation and self-definition are very important processes on the journey of attempted self-determination, which then enables an individual to become a full participant in collective social human development. For this reason, it is crucial to listen to women writers sharing and analyzing their experiences in creativity. As we have seen in previous sections of this paper, most writers are not in the least bit satisfied with what the world of criticism has done with their creativity. In this concluding section, pronouncements by some of the writers will be commented and elaborated upon, in an attempt to show their relevance to African and human development. The main sources of the ideas summarized here are Adeola James' (1990) *In Their Own*

*Voices*, Jane Wilkinson's (1990) *Talking with African Writers*, *African Literature To-Day*, No. 15 (1987) and the 'Writers' Workshop', 1985 Zimbabwe International Book Fair.[1]

So, what do African women writers have to say about their writing? What they write about? Why they write? And how they write.

In August 1985, the Zimbabwe International Book Fair had as its theme of focus, 'Women and Books'. Among the women writers who were gathered at the Book Fair were: Ama Ata Aidoo, Nawal El Saadawi, Flora Nwapa, Barbara Nkala, Bertha Musora, Freedom Nyamumbaya, Christine Rungano, Asenath Odaga, this writer and others. Bessie Head could not be brought, at the last moment. In the keynote address, 'Women and Books', since then published in a number of sources, this writer had highlighted the concern that 'book apartheid' had tended to exclude women from among the masses as creators. Later on in the workshop, a hushed audience listened to a sad story from a Zimbabwean primary school teacher who had laboured on a manuscript for years and then had suffered the pain of seeing her husband shred it to bits before throwing it into the fire. Re-living a part of the hurt, she had remarked something to the effect: 'he had torn up so many years of my life and set them on fire'! At the same forum, Nawal El Saadawi and Flora Nwapa had described writing as a part of themselves, arguing that those who shared their lives would have to accept 'the writer' in them as a vital part of 'the person' to whom they were united. Buchi Emecheta once referred to her books as her children and she too has a sad tale about another shredded manuscript. Tsitsi Dangarebga has stated, 'I write to save myself ... I really believe that's the only valid reason for writing' (Wilkinson 1990:193). What sobering pronouncements!

These writers are speaking about what is obviously a very shared need by women in the profession. Writing and creativity are lifelines, as far as African woman writers are concerned. They are means of achieving what Okelo Oculi once described as 'explosion of silences', a neat poetic conception which I have since then expanded on to read, 'explosion of negative silences', seeing that silence can be positive or negative. Negative silence is imposed: positive silence is self-willed.[2] Women are indeed sinking under the weight of mountains of negative silences that need to be exploded. Some of the stories that the woman writer has to explode silence over defy narration. The torture that Bessie Head narrates in *A Question of Power* (date) is

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1 The writer of this paper presented the keynote address at the workshop which focused on 'Women and Books', as well as attended most of the sessions. Her oral evidence here will have to suffice, given the absence of written information.

2 See preface to Mugo, Micere Githae, *My Mother's Poem and Other Songs*, forthcoming, East African Book Publishers.

not just a work of imagination: the harrowing nightmares there are real. Ellen Kuzwayo, similarly, tells of the years of pain and suffering that she had carried as heavy baggage until she sat down to write *Call Me Woman*:

> *I want to tell you that previously I lived with my emotional pain: the tensions of my first marriage that broke up, the tensions of the son that was taken away from me, the tensions of when my aunt sent me away from home, all these I lived with and sometimes I didn't want to talk about them. I was shutting them up inside me because I felt people might laugh at me. Then suddenly I wrote, and when I was writing the tension floated onto the pen and it has released me. Today I discuss every aspect of my life with no question and no shame.*

In a lot of societies, African women are socialized to believe that suffering in silence is a virtue. Among the Gikũyũ of Kenya, a married woman is, in fact, known as *mũtumia*, literally meaning, the one who keeps her mouth shut. At marriage ceremonies, almost every woman is reminded that one of the ways of ensuring a lasting marriage is to shut up, to be a *mũtumia*. It is a real wonder that mental asylums are not bursting with occupation by women! The tragic storyline of silences that need to be exploded stretches between here and the beginnings of history, under all kinds of terrorizing experiences: patriarchal oppression, slavery, colonization, imperialism, war, etc. Women writers are attempting to break some of these silences. But, as Molara Ogundipe-Leslie has argued in her essay 'The Female Writer and Her Commitment' (Jones *et al* 1987:13), these explosions will have to occur outside the present conventional structures and means of naming women's oppression. Women will have to 'invent themselves' as Maya Angelu has argued time and again. Only such self-inventions will release stories and tragedies such as rape, abuse, enforced self-bashing and others that women have been coerced to bury in their sub-conscious. Women will have to 'remember' and 'articulate'. Luckily, such stories have had beginnings in works such as El Saadawi's (1975) *Woman At Point Zero'* Kuzwayo's (1980) *Call Me Woman*, Ken Bugul's (1991) *The Abandoned Baobab* (its, ideologically, problematic areas notwithstanding) and others. The shame of humiliation will need to give way to the 'utterance of the liberating word' (Finke and Freire). In this respect, it is relevant to point out that biographical and autobiographical writing will provide key sources in helping us under-stand the strength, spirit and imagination that keep women going in the face of a rejecting world. In this respect too, it is absolutely essential that African women network with other women of African origin in sharing the proposed forms of action that African women have to turn to in order to ensure a lasting explosion of silences. This is one of the forms of commitment that Ogundipe-Leslie discusses in 'The Female Writer and Her Commitment'. 'The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action' which the late

Audre Lorde (1980:18-23) so articulately discussed in an article under that title, is of utmost importance here.

Another statement that emerges from most of the fifteen women writers interviewed by Adeola James is that creative writing is empowering. In fact this is perhaps the answer to the rhetorical question raised by Ama Ata Aidoo, in a quotation made earlier, where she wonders what kind of insistence it is that has kept women writing under the trying circumstances that she outlines. Concern with the need for empowerment partly explains why a lot of women writers not only insist on writing, in spite of the great odds that face them; but more than this, the reason why they have created such strong women characters in their writing, an issue that clearly emerges in Adeola James' interviews. Ama Ata Aidoo (James 1990:12) says, at one point:

> ... *If I write about strong women, it means that I see them around. People have always assumed that to be feminine is to be silly and to be sweet. But I disagree. I hope that in being a woman writer, I have been faithful to the image of women as I see them around, strong women, women who are viable in their own right.*

This compelling need on the part of the woman writer to empower not just herself but other women symbolized by the female fictional characters in her writing, comes out clearly in Ellen Kuzwayo's (1980:53) *Call Me Woman* which is more than a personal autobiography: It is the life story of a whole line of South African sheroes. She says:

> *I was challenged by the lives of so many, many women, who have made such tremendous contribution to the development and growth of our country, in particular to the development of the Black woman (sic) ... In fact, when the publishing process of the book was coming to an end, I noticed that the publishers had edited so many women out. I had to tell them to push me out of my book and put the women in because those were the people who inspired me to write.*

Empowerment must be a key issue here, or we would not be dealing with the kind of violent reactions to women's creativity earlier discussed: the shredding of manuscripts, the imposition of 'book apartheid' on women from the masses and the ridiculing of underprivileged women when they participate in artistic creations/productions. Indeed, *In Their Own Voices* reports women asserting that being women writers has enhanced their statuses both within the family and in society at large. A number of the writers interviewed, for instance, say that their children express special pride in them as writers, over and above everything else that their motherhoods symbolize.

Indeed, on the question of empowerment, Buchi Emecheta makes it categorically clear that to her, writing is power. Describing her young days in the village, she says:

> ... *Some women will* (sic) *sit for hours just peeling egusi (melon seed) or tying the edge of cloth or plaiting hair. Some will be telling stories, and not to young children. I saw it and I used to sit with them. I liked the power these women commanded as storytellers. Since then, I thought I would like to be a storyteller myself* (sic) (James 1990:47)

This leads us to the third point consistently made by women writers: the fact that they have been influenced by the mothers, aunts, grandmothers, or older sisters who told them orature stories. (Interestingly, none of them claims to have been influenced by male orature artists). There is, therefore, not just a connection but a bond between many women writers and the orature on which they were nurtured. There is no doubt that part of the strength in the voice of the female writer draws from the attributes of what I have earlier identified as positive orature, including the following: the conception of 'my story' as 'our story'; collective s/heroism; refrain from enigmatism; re-definitions of notions such as strength, courage and achievement; preoccupations with human rights for the powerless and so on. The concern with human rights is of special relevance when we look at the effects of war, famine, refugee existence, the fate of the African child and everything else that this paper cannot even begin looking at. In *African Orature and Human Rights* (Mugo 1991), the present writer has tried to touch on some of the ways in which connections with orature might provide us with a set of ethics and aesthetics that we have come to either disregard or belittle, centered as we are in Euro-ethics. The woman writer has an important role to play in all this. Indeed, a lot of women writers are creating their works, drawing from positive orature frameworks of reference.

Another woman writer who defines orature as a major influence upon her and her writing is Tsitsi Dangarebga. She observes:

> *Another very significant experience was in fact the 1980 independence celebrations. I heard the most beautiful poem I've ever heard being recited, and of course it was in Shona. It brought back to me that* (sic) *we have an oral language here. It isn't written, it's oral, and when it is reproduced in the medium in which it is meant to be, it is absolutely astounding* (Wilkinson 1990:195).

Brief as it is, this discussion on the bonding between orature and women writers would be incomplete without a look at the work of Penina Muhando, a playwright who has: i) created all her ten plus works in Kiswahili; ii) deliberately written in Kiswahili in order to address her local audience; iii) consciously researched in the ethics and creative forms of orature in order to

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explore her themes, as well as evolve her aesthetics; and iv) spent a good
part of her theatre career operating in the community theatre mode, as a
means of applying her art to the reality that her works address. She is a true
popular artist in the Brechtian sense of the term, as well as literally being
extremely popular and admired in Tanzania. How many people have heard
of this artist in the conference halls that discuss language, community
theatre and popular culture? What about this as a case, in illustration, of the
'giants-celebrities' syndrome? In the following space, I will deliberately let
Penina confront us with her arguments, making as few interruptions as
possible, to avoid watering down the impact of what she has to say to us:

> *I have been using the Tanzanian traditional forms like songs and
> storytelling, dance and recitation, so as to come up with plays which
> will appeal to the Tanzanian cultural identity* (James 1990:77).
> *We use theatre as a means through which people can discuss and
> analyze their problems, put them into a theatrical performance, show it
> to the audience and then discuss what the solutions should be. When we
> first started working on the popular theatre movement, we-did not
> design it deliberately to engage 'the women issue' as such. But as soon
> as we started working, the women issue always came up whichever
> problem we dealt with at the village level* (James 1990:83).

Above, Penina Mlama demonstrates the way the type of community theatre
she is engaged in has tapped orature creativity, using performance to provide
a people's platform for naming the problems facing their communities and
then dramatizing them, in an effort to find solutions. She also shows how,
over time, these performances have provided space for addressing sexism
and the women question in society. On the issue of women as performing
artists, she has this to say:

> *In the area of drama, it is even more serious because many people still
> feel that women should not be performers. It is seen as profession which
> is despised, therefore respectable women should not be performing on
> the stage. This is a big contradiction because in a society like Tanzania,
> if you go to the village, our mothers are the dancers and the
> storytellers. Why is it that when you come to the city and a woman
> stands on the stage performing she becomes cheap? There are all these
> contradictions which really don't make sense and they have all
> contributed towards making the woman writer remain unrecognized
> compared to the man* (James 1990:86).

Mlama's statement takes us back to the debate on women censorship as
creators, artists and performers. She demonstrates that in Tanzania, com-
munity theatre is an area of contention for women artists — a regrettable
fact — seeing the potential that performance offers, combining, as it does,

orature and the written tradition. We are once more reminded that women artists are continuously being stifled by patriarchal conscription and prejudice, even as they struggle to remain creative.

It is not possible to exhaust the discussion on what women see themselves as contributing to society through their art in the limited space allowed by this paper. As intimated, the subject has been quite extensively covered by the sources cited at the beginning of this section and in particular, by Ama Ata Aidoo (1985) and Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie (1990). The paper's objective was to facilitate access to more voices and to highlight some of the concerns seen as being key to the promotion or negation of women's creativity.

In conclusion, let us summarize the issues raised by this paper in a poetic statement that is both an elaboration of the role of the African woman artist in society and a celebration of her undaunted determination to remain at the Centre of history and human development:

### Prosaic Poem

*In commemoration of those moments*
*when we make prosaic statements*
*that end up sounding poetic and then*
*we are reminded that ordinary human*
*dialogue is often punctuated with poetry.*

### Refrain: One Day!

One day, we shall rescue our lives from precarious peripheral hanging on and assume the centre of historical action. We shall explore every avenue that runs through our lives and create life roads that know no dead ends, extending them to the limits of human destination. We shall put an angry full-stop to the negation of our human rights.

### One day!

One day, we shall undertake a second journey along the bushy path of denied human development, chasing away the wild beasts that prowl the route of our narrow survival lest they make a complete jungle of our already beastialized lives. We shall then cultivate a huge global garden and plant it with the seed of true humanity.

### One day!

One day, we shall emerge from the wings and occupy the centre stage in full visibility, refusing to be observers and understudies who wait behind the curtain of living drama. We shall liberate the word and become its utterers, no longer cheer crowds or ululators who spur on and applaud the molesters of our affirmative speech.

*One day!*

One day, we shall explode the negative silences and paralyzing terror imposed upon us by the tyranny of dominating cultures and their languages of conquest. We shall discover the authentic voices of our self-naming and re-naming, reclaiming our role as composers, speaking for ourselves, because we too have tongues, you know!

*One day!*

One day, we shall make a bonfire of currently dismantling and maladjusting economic structural adjustment programmes, then engage in the restructuring process, producing coherence around our scattered daily existence till it is full to bursting. We shall stop at nothing short of holding the sun to a standstill until the job is complete.

*One day!*

One day, we shall move the sun of our existence so that it truly rises from the east of our lives, reaching its noon at the centre of our needs. We shall then release it to set in the west of our perverted and dominated history, never to rise again until it learns to shine upon the masses of global being, not only Islands of pirated living.

*One day!*

One day, we shall exterminate the short distance between the kitchen and bedroom of our lives, storm out of the suffocating space between the factory and the overseer of our exploited creative labour, paving a path that leads to the buried mines of our suppressed human potential. We shall walk it if it stretches unto eternity.

*One day!*

One day, we shall celebrate this earth as our home, standing tall and short, boasting of the abundance and multifariousness of our fulfilled human visions. We shall not look to the sky waiting for unfilled prophecies. We shall upturn the very rocks of our enforced stony existence, converting them into fluvial banks of life sustenance.

*One day!* (Mugo 1991:89-90).

## Conclusion

Although contextualized in the creative arts and centered on women's artistic production, this paper has direct and indirect relevance to the deliberations on CODESRIA and its achievements during the last twenty years. The concerns and problems articulated by women artists complement many of the goals that CODESRIA has set for itself as a centre for research and human development. The conclusion summarizes the key issues in the form of statements, followed by questions.

1) Domination of the woman artist by her male counterpart
   Does CODESRIA share a similar experience in terms of women versus male researchers? If so, what is being done to address the contradiction?

2) Negligence of women's issues and concerns
   Are women's issues at the centre of CODESRIA's research agenda? If this is not the case, what is CODESRIA doing to focus special attention on these, given the simple fact of a majority female population on the African continent?

3) The giants/ celebrities syndrome
   It is important and necessary that we celebrate the giants who symbolize collective achievements and communal goals. However, it is equally important not to do this at the expense of 'unsung sheroes'. What has CODESRIA done to highlight and promote contribution by the rank and file of unknown academics on the African scene, especially the younger generation of scholars?

4) The 'Return to the Source' call
   How accessible to the ordinary people is the research knowledge and information generated by CODESRIA? To what extent has the research contributed to the solution of their problems? Has CODESRIA made any contribution towards the affirmation, preservation, promotion and generation of people's 'indigenous knowledge'?

5) Collaboration between the Arts and Social Sciences
   Has CODESRIA done enough to create networks between the arts, the humanities and the social sciences? As an observer once remarked, what most people know about Africa has mainly come from the literature works that they have read and the films they have viewed about the continent. Literature and film leave one in a dilemma as to where art ends and where social science begins.

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# Social Science Research and Policy-making in Africa: Status, Issues and Prospects

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## Introduction

The importance of this conference on Social Sciences in Post-Independent Africa, especially at this time of persistent socioeconomic crisis which have been aggravated by the poor choice of policy instruments and decisions in many African countries, cannot be overemphasized. To this extent, I believe that it is the responsibility of African social science researchers to provide the inputs, based on sound and objective scientific research, which could form the basis of the policies which are formulated to promote socio-economic development and transformation in Africa.

There is no doubt that the pace of economic transformation depends partly on the state of the knowledge of research endeavour in the social sciences and the ability of policy-makers and technocrats in transferring that knowledge into specific policy packages, national development programmes and projects. In order to have the greatest, desirable and positive impact on the socio-economic development of African countries, social scientists must direct their research efforts to the challenging issues and problems of national and subregional development in Africa.

The need for this approach to research, has become more and more evident because of the relatively small size of the social science community in many African countries. In fact, despite the considerable sums of money which have been used in funding social sciences research in many African countries, the impact of research output on policy-making and national development has been minimal if not negligible. As a result, there has been the repeated charge that social science researchers and scholars in African countries confine themselves to their ivory towers and there is, therefore, need for their research to be more relevant to national development issues and problems.

In view of the extreme importance of social science research for policy-making, execution and monitoring in Africa, the purpose of this paper is two fold. First, it is to demonstrate the lack of co-ordination between social science research and policy-making in African countries. Second, it is to

illustrate the importance of social science research as a foundation of sound public policy, particularly in African countries where economic and social development indicators are crude, faulty and unreliable.

The necessity to address this problem, particularly in the context of African countries arises from the fact that research provides all bases for government policies in any political system. Whether the researcher should participate in policy-making is a debatable issue since decision-making is not itself part of research. Not debatable, however, is the need for researchers to propose alternative instruments of government policies and to examine the consequences of the use of the instruments on the target population.

Certainly, one important and necessary condition for the success of government decision-makers in any society is their ability to understand the economic, political, cultural and social problems of the masses; and to anticipate their needs and aspirations. At the same time, decision-makers must be able to anticipate whether or not the possible means of satisfying those needs are adequate. In this regard, social science research has an important role of analyzing the important and strategic factors which influence the formulation of government policies in general, and the choices of decision-makers in particular.

## The Status and Problems of Social Science Research and Policy-making in Africa

Social science research as a tool of sound government policy has not been given adequate attention and support in many African countries. In particular, very few attempts have been made to support research endeavour and to utilize the results of social science research in order to ascertain the current state of affairs, indicate future economic, political, cultural and social prospects and advocate what corrective measures, if any, may be needed.

Because there is often very little or no coordination between research endeavour and the government policies many of the latter have tended to fail or are inadequate. For example, consideration is not often given to the fact that the preparation and execution of a government annual budget rests in part on an analysis of the needs and desires of the people and the availability of the resources to meet those expectations. Consequently, national annual budget estimates are often based on false or unrealistic assumptions. Equally important, is the initiation of development programmes, which are intended to alleviate the economic, political, social and cultural problems of African countries — the plight of the peasant, the problems of small businesses, etc., without due reference to the beneficiaries.

Since few attempts are often made to undertake social science research on these types of socioeconomic problems, the result has been the initiation of many policies which have hardly been successful. This is true of cases

where wrong policy instruments have been chosen to achieve a particular development goal or objective and also of situations where existing policy instruments have not been properly analyzed to determine whether or not their utilization could ensure or lead to the achievement of the socioeconomic goals that are being pursued.

This is true of those African countries where many para-public institutions have been created without examining the existing ones, with a view to determining whether or not there are potential duplications of objectives and functions; why the existing ones have partially or totally failed in their mission; and what the potential advantages of the new institutions over the existing ones are. Rather than undertake this invaluable and important exercise before introducing new policies, many para-public bodies have been created in many African countries with the objective of providing jobs to political favourites, notwithstanding the duplication of objectives and functions between the existing institutions and the new ones.

Furthermore, the failure to use the results of social science research as inputs for policy-making in many African countries is due to the absence of adequate financial and material support for researchers. Very often, African social research institutions hardly ever carry out their research functions. Instead, many of the research institutions waste time on administrative procedures, setting up committees and holding numerous meetings which produce little or no results. In fact, many of the pronouncements on the importance of social science research for policy-making are hardly translated into reality.

Most disturbing is the fact that financial requests for the support of social science research in many African countries are generally met with administrative red-tape. As a consequence, many researchers, who carry out research on political, social and cultural issues and problems, are compelled to turn to international institutions for financial support which is very often hard to come by. This can be explained partly by the keen international competition for research funds and partly by the wider financial commitments as well as the specific research interests of the funding institutions.

Concerning the relationship between African policy-makers and university/research and training institutions, it should be pointed out that the relationship has oscillated between different phases of consent, mutual suspicion, confrontation and impasse. Putting this in a rough historical context, it has been observed that the 1960s were a decade of euphoria and consensus; 1970s were marked by hostility and conflict; 1980s by impasse, where interaction was stunted.

However, the 1990s hold the promise of a turning point — a situation which has been made possible by a combination of transition to democratic systems of political governance and market-oriented economic reforms. Yet,

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the promise of the 1990s as a turning point in the relationship between the academics and government policy-makers has to be carefully nurtured.

At the present time, Africa has over 200 regional, national or sub-regional research institutions most of which depend on foreign financial support. Though foreign funding has appeared to assure these regional research centres of autonomy from interference from the respective African govern-ments, it has made them particularly vulnerable to sudden changes in donor funding policy and research interests.

Furthermore, African research institutions have been beset by a myriad of problems, notably: poor communications facilities, inadequate infrastruc-ture and the bureaucratic impediments of host governments. In order for these national, regional or sub-regional research institutions to effectively play their role, it is necessary to enhance their viability, among other things, by providing them with sufficient financial support and effective dissemina-tion of their research results.

An examination of some country experiences reveals that many African countries can be broadly categorized into those with formal institutional structures for policy interface between policy-makers and policy researchers, and others without such structures. The categorization is not watertight; rather some institutions do display dominant features of institutionalization of policy interface, while others display ad hoc interface arrangements. There also exist other research organizations at the regional and international levels which provide policy advice to African Governments on a regular basis.

Some of the country experiences in policy interface include Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania and Cameroon. In this regard, it should be pointed out that the Special Action Programme in Administration and Management for African Regional Project (SAPAM) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in 1992 commissioned studies on policy interface experiences of five of these countries, namely; Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Tanzania. These case studies reveal that policy interac-tive mechanisms consist of research and consultancy assignments to policy experts, membership of government task forces and committees and con-ferences.

Most importantly, some country experiences have shown that little interface has been tolerated or practised in the core area of policy decision-making. However, there are countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon and Tanzania with formal structures for interface between policy-makers and researchers. Here, research institutions have either been attached to universities or set up as parastatal arms of government. In these cases, Boards of Directors and principal officials of the institutes which are appointed by government, have provided the link between the research institutes and policy-makers. However, a large number of the institutes are

not multi-disciplinary and do not cooperate with similar institutes domestically or internationally. A few institutes do combine training with multi-disciplinary social research.

Where government does not give specific research assignments, research findings and recommendations are not sometimes considered as inputs into the policy-making process. However, in cases where research assignments are contracted out to research institutes by government, the results are generally accepted and implemented. In those countries with formal institutional structures for interface, research and consulting assignments are contracted outside the normal structures. Considerations of friendship generally induce the assignment of research contracts to private companies and individuals. Such contracts are very often either unsuccessfully completed, sometimes abandoned, or poorly done.

The second group of African countries which include Kenya, and Senegal, lack formal institutional structures for promoting interface between policy-makers and researchers. In these countries, research institutes are attached to universities but are not normally required to provide inputs into the policy-making process. Governments give out research assignments to individual scholars, and a large part of the interface takes the form of organization of specialized workshops and seminars by researchers for policy-makers. A trend observed in recent years in some African countries has been the secondment of experienced researchers from universities to high-level administrative and policy positions in government. Almost invariably, such researchers who are redeployed never return to the universities and research institutions. In the long-run, this practice has weakened their capacity to undertake objective research.

Some important groups of research institutions and associations operating in Africa are those organized by regional organizations. Examples of such institutions are African Institute for Development and Planning (IDEP), African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD), Association of Arab Economists, Nigerian Economic Society, West African Economic Association, etc; which are largely engaged in research, training and the organization of conferences and seminars.

Many international financial institutions, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have, particularly since the 1980s, increased their influence on policy-making in African countries, particularly in the formulation and implementation of structural adjustment and stabilization programmes. Officials, researchers and consultants who are hired by these organizations regularly visit African countries to assess ongoing adjustment programmes and to suggest alternative economic policy management frameworks.

Generally, those African countries which have established formal institutional structures for interface and in which researchers are actively involved in the policy-making process do derive benefits from them. First, ministries and parastatal utilize research findings carried out by the universities and research institutes. Since these ministries are not adequately endowed with the required expertise to carry out such studies, the policy-making process has to some extent improved.

Second, the active participation of researchers in different committees set up by government has made it possible for the considerable scientific experience of African researchers to be placed at the disposal of policy-makers on a confidential basis. On the one hand, the participation of researchers in government committees has exposed them to the practical side of their disciplines as well as enhanced their research and teaching capabilities. However, where decision-makers have been distrustful of researchers, hostility, dislike and antagonism have abound. As a result, researchers have been deliberately kept out of the policy-making process and their research findings and recommendations underutilized.

Countries which lack formal institutional structures for interface between policy-makers and researchers have suffered from a number of shortcomings. In some cases, the relationships between policy-makers and researchers have been characterized by ad hoc actions whose impact has been limited to specific sectors and few projects. In addition, such countries have failed to develop a reliable and comprehensive data base which is necessary for proper decision-making, implementation and monitoring.

Some regional research centres have over the years accumulated considerable experience which is useful to government decision-making in the areas of development planning, research, conferences and technical training for high-level policy-making. In spite of their expertise and competence, the existing interface mechanisms have not facilitated the utilization of their considerable experience in policy formulation.

Many international financial institutions have been quite successful at producing detailed studies of the socioeconomic performance of those African countries implementing structural adjustment and stabilization programmes. In particular, they have utilized their role as creditor institutions to influence macro-economic policy frameworks in many debtor African countries. On the basis of the foregoing analysis of the status of research and policy-making in Africa, five dilemmas can be identified which have to be addressed in promoting interface. These are:

(i) The dilemma between supply-driven consultancy and research versus demand driven consultancy and research;

(ii) The dilemma of appropriate balance in use of local versus foreign experts in policy-formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;

(iii) The dilemma of autonomy versus dependence in determination of research/consultancy priorities;

(iv) The dilemma of insufficient use of local experts in research institutions and their assimilation in government policy-making process and bureaucracy; and

(v) The dilemma of determining the phase at which the policy cycle requires the advice of social research scientists.

On the other hand, several impediments to interface can be identified. From the perspective of the research and training institutions, the following have been the key impediments:

(i) The General Tardiness of the Civil service: There is a certain tardiness that the researcher finds when he goes to government policy-making institutions. In general, he observes remarkable disinterestedness over public concerns. Meetings duly scheduled scarcely take place on time. Indeed, the outsiders are more punctual than the government officials who do arrange such meetings.

(ii) Lack of Organized Information: The important role of management information systems in rational decision-making has often been recognized by government policy-makers in speeches and conference papers, but in practical terms, inadequate steps have been taken for their impact to be discerned.

(iii) Lack of Transparency: Government public policy-making process has tended to be amenable to outside influence. In particular, the core of policy management (namely policy formulation) has been kept in the hands of government policy-makers mainly for reasons of secrecy.

(iv) Tendency of Politicians to use Outputs for Political Ends: Ironically, there has been occasions when policy-makers have been too solicitous and patronizing for the comfort of the researchers. Instances of such occasions are when the policy-makers expect researchers to come out with findings or conclusions that support positions already taken by the former. This has often compromised the researchers integrity and professionalism in the process. Naturally, social science researchers have tended to resent such advances and have risked being branded as anti-government and therefore by-passed when lucrative consultancy opportunities arise.

(v) Bureaucratic Conservatism: Another problem generally encountered in the interaction between researchers and the public policy-makers is what the former consider to be nonchalant, conservative approach to doing things. This has been particularly true of top career officials in the civil

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service, who either satisfied with the old methods and approaches or too lazy to adopt brain-cracking scientific systems, are resistant to change, innovation and experimentation. These are the greatest enemies of policy analysis.

Unfortunately, sometimes there is justification for their skepticism and antipathy against rigorous examination of policy alternatives; in that having been in the service for a considerable length of time, they have seen several instances of carefully devised development plans and strategies being set aside under political pressures, especially following a change of regimes. Under such circumstances, social science researchers, who insist on rigour and analysis, have been made to feel too theoretical, unrealistic and their views have been considered to be of no relevance to practical socioeconomic problems facing the policy-makers on the ground. As a result, African policy-makers have tended to favour advice from Western donor agencies and the international financial institutions, and thus neglecting that from experienced and dedicated national experts.

(vi) Low Remuneration and Discriminatory Pay Practices: Sometimes the interaction runs into difficulties when the expectations, especially, in financial terms, do not materialize. As has been pointed out earlier, when researchers and consultants undertake commissioned studies for the government, they are expected to be paid, and paid well too. Consequently, they see no justification for being remunerated less than expatriate consultants for doing similar work.

Experience has shown that African researchers and consultants who have been involved in the government policy-making process have always been poorly paid, the norm in places like Ghana being less than 10% of what their expatriate counterparts generally receive. Ingenious but unimpressive arguments have been marshalled to justify the government's low rate of remuneration, including the fact that researchers as public servants are not to be compensated for offering additional services to the State.

(vii) Reluctance to Associate with Autocratic Regimes: Poor interaction has also been explained in terms of political instability and its antecedents. For example, the autocratic tendencies of the political leadership has given rise to political instability which the typical African social science researchers abhor. The latter, having been brought up in democratic tradition of liberalism believe in the freedom of the press, independent judiciary and the due process of law, freedom of association, free elections and so on.

Unfortunately, however, some African governments have tended to maintain their position by the barrel of the gun and by so doing have trampled on the liberties of their people. Under such circumstances, some researchers prefer

to have nothing to do with such African governments. They feel uncomfortable in the company of politicians and consider doing business with such governments amounting to selling their conscience.

(viii) Lack of Effective Exposure about Potentials of Training Institutions: Government departments in many African countries tend to be unaware of the potential for research institutions. This has led to the neglect of research results as inputs in the policy-making process.

(ix) Obsession with Foreign Experts: Obsession with foreign experts has been cited as a hindrance to the use of indigenous experts and researchers who are in local universities and research institutes. This problem has been discussed more often among the researchers than by government policy-makers who generally deny its existence.

(x) Lack of Resources by Government Institutions: In some cases, government departments lack the financial resources to engage the services of African consultants from the university institutions and research institutes.

Policy-makers also believe that there are problems on the part of the university and research institutions, which have prevented fruitful interaction. Some of the problems identified include:

(i) Inadequate Consultancy Capacity: The social science researchers in many African countries are scarcely up to date in their areas of specialization and research. Libraries are thin and several years behind in terms of the acquisition of current academic journals and other publications. Researchers can hardly boast of well-equipped laboratories to enable them undertake break-through investigations. In short, researchers generally do not always possess the knowledge and skills required by the policy-makers for their ambitious development projects and programmes. This has been the argument for the continuous reliance on foreign experts and consultants.

(ii) Confidence and Loyalty Gap: The problem of confidence and loyalty gap has been also real. Can the policy-makers always be assured of dedicated service on the part of a researcher or adviser who may not even come from his tribe? Some government officials do have their doubts, and this has tended to work against their requesting African researchers to carry out consultancy for them. Many African governments are even more apprehensive, when lecturers and researchers are known to be vocal and outspoken. Can they, therefore, be relied upon to keep the confidentiality of unresolved policy issues? All these doubts have destroyed the basis for useful interaction between policy-makers and African social scientists.

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(iii) General Mistrust: Serious antagonism has developed between policy-makers and university based researchers in some African countries. This has been the case in Ghana and Nigeria where public officials generally do not approve of national experts and researchers being paid "fantastic sums". Instead, they prefer consultancy contracts involving large sums of money to be awarded to expatriates or to the mushrooming local consultancy firms which operate outside the research and university institutions.

As a concluding note to this section of the paper, it should be pointed out that the consequences of this regrettable situation, regarding the absence of effective collaboration between social science research institutions and policy-making entities in African countries, are obvious. By neglecting the use of social science research as the basis of sound government policy, policy-makers have failed to objectively address the socioeconomic problems facing many African countries today. As a result, wrong and inappropriate policy instruments have been applied at the wrong time and very often to the wrong problems. The outcome is that difficulties have been encountered in the process of implementing and monitoring the chosen policy instruments.

Furthermore, the prevailing situation has led to enormous waste of time, energy, manpower and financial resources which are scarce in many African countries. Certainly, the absence of financial support for social science research projects initiated by indigenous researchers has led to frustration. This has tended to force researchers more and more to design projects which largely reflect the research priorities of international development organizations and foundations and not those of the African countries.

Such a situation if left unchecked will eventually deprive African countries of their skilled manpower since many of the specialists may in the long-run want to take up permanent research positions in those international organizations. In order to alleviate this unfortunate situation, it is absolutely necessary that African policy-makers and research institutions recognize the importance and relevance of social science research as an input in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring.

There is an important role, in this regard, for social science research as a facilitator of policy formulation in African countries. Achieving this objective requires that African social science researchers undertake research, using appropriate methodologies to ensure their credibility, and for policy-makers to use such findings to facilitate the formulation of national development policies. In many African countries, however, this collaboration between social science research and policy-makers has been totally absent.

In order for social science research to serve as facilitator of government policy, three conditions must be met:

- Social science research should investigate social, economic, political and cultural policy issues, problems and phenomena;

- Social science should offer prescriptions of the public policy issues analyzed,

- And it should make predictions about the future evolution of events to guide public policies. '

The limited impact of social science research in many African countries can be explained partly by the failure to meet these conditions, and partly by the failure of governments to seriously consider policy advice that emanates from the results of social science research. In order to deal with these problems, it is suggested that the public policy objectives in any given area or sector be defined so as to identify the kind of research problems which are needed to serve as vital inputs to policy-making.

It is preposterous to prescribe fixed modalities concerning the relationship between policy-makers and researchers, regardless of the special circumstances of each African country. What is needed is to have continuous and sustained dialogue through the creation of appropriate forums or mechanisms for interface. In this regard, it is possible to make a new start with the hope of establishing a new consensus within the framework of the optimism of the 1990s. Various sub-regional and regional research and training institutions such as CAFRAD, ESAURP and IDEP have played, and will continue to play a critical role in promoting-interface between policy-makers and research institutions.

**The Importance of Social Science Research as a Tool of Policy-making**

As a tool of policy formulation, social science research has three distinct phases of operation which are closely related to each other. Firstly, social science research involves the investigation of the economic, political, cultural and social structures of the country in question. This calls for the continuous gathering of data (both quantitative and qualitative) on the size and nature of the system under investigation.

The Institute of Human Sciences of Cameroon, for example, undertook studies on the socioeconomic impact of the co-operative societies in the North West Province. The studies were designed to determine the effectiveness of these societies and to see how it can be adopted by, if not adapted to other parts of the country. The findings and recommendations became invaluable to the Cameroon government as inputs to the decisions to support cooperative societies which were examples of collective efforts of preserving and consolidating sustained national development in the country.

The Institute also undertook extensive studies on demographic shifts in Cameroon; notably on rural-urban migration of youths. Data collected as a result of these studies enabled the Cameroon government to reappraise and

reinforce its socioeconomic development policies. In addition, agro-economists from the Institute also carried out studies directed at examining the effectiveness of "development missions. Sociologists, on the other hand, examined the impact of the "disenclavement" effort on the local population. There is no doubt that these economic and sociological studies were intended to serve as a "fed-back" to the Cameroon government decision-makers and to enable them reexamine their policies in these problem areas.

The second stage of social science research involves diagnosis. This calls for the description, with the aid of the available data, of the events that are taking or have taken place in the system, an analysis of the forces which have accounted for such events. They may include, for example, such day-to-day developments in the socioeconomic system as changes in population, employment level and the general price levels.

The final phase of social science research involves the prediction of future trends and patterns of developments in the socioeconomic system under study. This is the most difficult and interesting stage, especially as many uncontrollable but strategic factors do come into play during the process of making such predictions. In a nutshell then, social science research involves the investigation of the economic, political, social and cultural system of the country in question with a view to obtaining the relevant socioeconomic data which can assist researchers in making predictions about the future trend of events.

On the other hand, what does government policy mean and what does it involve? Government policy, refers to government efforts to look after the "general interest" either by changing certain qualitative aspects of the existing system (for example the creation of a Customs Union, a para-public corporation, nationalization of foreign industry, etc.), or by changes within the qualitative framework of the given economic, political, cultural and social structure, some parameters or instruments of policy (for example, the personal income tax rate, the interest rate, the exchange rate, etc.)

Given the individual preference indicators of the citizens, the objective of government policy is:

(a) to fix a collective or social preference indicator (such as the national economic development plan) which spells out the broad development goals;

(b) to choose the relevant and adequate instruments of policy for the realization of those goals; and

(c) to formulate the relationship between the goals and policy instruments on the one hand and the socioeconomic system on the other.

Thus, policy formulation, like social science research, involves three closely related phases: an indication of the goals to be attained, the choice of the

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relevant policy instruments, and the specification of the relationship between the stated goals, the chosen policy instruments and the socioeconomic structure.

Certainly, any sound government policy requires objective social science research on many counts. Firstly, the establishment of a collective or social preference function, necessarily requires a complete knowledge, if possible, of the socioeconomic behaviour of the individuals in the society and the various development indicators of the socioeconomic system. This information can only be obtained through an objective investigation of the relevant economic, social, political and cultural system, the absence of which, the formulation of the social preference function can hardly be carried out on a rational basis.

Second, an analysis of the date (or any aspect of the structure of the country), which reveals certain changes in the system including how and why they have taken place; enables the policy-maker to identify the various problems and issues which call for government action and to select the appropriate goals, including the relevant policy instruments which can be utilized to achieve those goals.

Finally, the specification of the relationship between the policy goals and instruments of policy requires the application of the knowledge of social science research techniques. This is necessary because the establishment of such a relationship could enable the policy-maker, for example, to find out what the impact of a selected policy instrument or set of policy instruments would be on a particular goal or set of goals during a specified period of time.

For purposes of illustration, if an increase in tariff barriers is advocated as a means of improving conditions in some domestic industries, it is generally possible to gauge in advance the effect on these industries and on the national economy as a whole of such a measure. It is also possible to estimate with some reliability the extent to which the importation of foreign products would be reduced, for specific increases in the tariff rates. All these exercises require an adequate knowledge of prediction techniques; the application of which is even more challenging in African countries which have been experiencing rapid economic, political, social, cultural and structural changes for sometime now.

In concluding this section of the paper, it should be pointed out that any successful government policy would require continuous and effective collaboration between African  social science researchers and decision-makers and those national institutions responsible for guiding the economic, political and social destiny of the masses of the people in the African countries. Such collaboration could take the form of frequent exchange of views between the social science community and government decision-makers on national development problems and issues.

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Furthermore, the usefulness of social science research depends largely on the manner in which the research results are presented and subsequently used by policy-makers as vital inputs into the decision-making process. For example, in Cameroon, unlike in many African countries, social science researchers had up to 1991 been provided with adequate institutional, structural and financial means to enable them carry out research on some socioeconomic development problems which have been affecting the day-to-day survival of the people. It has, therefore, been a challenge to the Cameroonian social science community to ensure that their research is objective, and reflects the basic needs of government ministries, state corporations and other users of such results.

Unfortunately, however, by the end of 1991 these expectations were never fulfilled despite the fact that the Institute of Human Sciences was created in 1980 with the main objective of providing the necessary research inputs into national policy-making process. The reasons for this sad experience range from the incompetence of many researchers, weak research methodology and analytical techniques, lack of self-confidence and appreciation of rigours of social research on the part of some researches, to the absence of effective communication between policy-makers and researchers, administrative red tapes, bureaucracy and poor vulgarization of research results; just to mention a few.

The socioeconomic crisis in Cameroon resulted in a gradual but considerable reduction of funds for social research programmes and operations in the Institute. This situation finally led to the closing down of the Institute by the Government in October 1991. Needless to emphasize, it is hoped that other African countries can draw on the Cameroon experience with a view to avoiding the sad and expensive mistakes which were made in the case of the former Institute of Human Sciences of Cameroon.

It is, therefore, in view of the Cameroon experience in particular and the issues relating to the interface between policy-makers and research and training institutions in Africa in general, that the final section of this paper has been devoted to making some recommendations which are aimed at enhancing policy dialogue and interface between these two actors in the development process.

## Recommendations and Conclusions

In view of the importance of social science research as a tool of policy-formulation as well as the implementation and monitoring of government programmes, the following recommendations have been made in respect of (a) the guidelines for enhancing interface or dialogue between government policy-makers and research/training institutions; and (b) sustaining the process of promoting more effective interface, through

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national, regional and international research networks, between policy-makers and research/training institutions in Africa.

On the role and responsibility of African governments, it is recommended that:

- governments should strive to provide formal institutional framework to support co-operation between researchers and policy-makers;

- african countries should organize workshops and seminars at which researchers and policy-makers could interact and discuss policy issues and problems;

- the responsibility for establishing specific interface mechanisms should be left to African national and regional institutions;

- the interface between policy-makers and research and training institutions should be backed by appropriate data base;

- different avenues for effecting contacts between policy-makers and researchers should be explored;

- in countries where many research institutions exist, an independent central coordinating organ should be established to monitor and collate research findings, provide forum for discussion of problems and promote policy consensus;

- in order to promote national development by local consultancy capacity and provide local consultants with reasonable remunerations that they would not regard as discriminatory, governments should formulate guidelines for fair compensation of national experts;

- to ensure that research institutions are involved and contribute effectively to the development process, governments should provide adequate funding for research;

- to ensure the rationale and effective utilization of existing indigenous skills and resources, governments should encourage the development of data bank of experts;

- governments should keep research institutions informed of their policy and national development priorities;

- where governments directly assume the role of appointing directors of research institutions, it is recommended that they make such appointments on the basis of merit;

- governments should create institutional arrangements that would provide for regular interaction with national research institutions;

- governments should recognize the fact that university research and training institutions have important roles to play in the training of highly skilled personnel and in the improvement of management

capacity. In this context, government should create an enabling environment for meaningful exchange of ideas towards national development process;

- governments are encouraged to develop policy analysis units in sector ministries and departments. This will help to avoid piece-meal policies that have not been subjected to critical examination and study.

As concerns the role and responsibility of universities and research organizations in the enhancement of dialogue and interface, it is recommended as follows:

- liaison offices staffed with competent officers be established by the universities and research institutions. These offices should be designed to act as interaction channels with policy-making centres. Through these arrangements, universities and research institutions could inform the policy centres of their on-going research and the findings of their completed research, together with annotated synopsis of their policy implications;

- research institutions and universities should aim at excellence by improving upon the quality of their research. This calls for a rigorous internal self-assessment in the areas of research designing, data collection, report writing and report packaging. The credibility and, therefore, continuous acceptance of the relevance of these institutions will to a large extent depend upon the quality of the outputs they deliver;

- to win the confidence of policy-makers, universities and research institutions should establish sound internal management and administrative procedures. Their financial administration and other management systems should be transparent;

- universities and research institutes must be proactive in outlook by keeping pace with the thinking of governments on national development issues and problems.

In order for the proposed collaboration and interface to be enduring and self-sustaining, definite strategies will have to be marshalled, deployed, monitored and constantly evaluated to guarantee their effectiveness. In this regard, there must be the adoption of a regional research policy — at the African level — with the establishment of national implementation strategies. This should be accompanied by the establishment of national and international networks with technical and infrastructural support. An important requirement thereafter should be the adoption of action plans which emphasize national development priorities with the view to orienting research towards the satisfaction of socioeconomic and political needs.

Human resource development and effective utilization for both policy-makers and researchers constitute an essential component of the package of policy measures required to sustain a durable interface. There is no doubt that the presence of a crop of professionally qualified and practically experienced staff on both sides could enhance the efforts towards meaningful dialogue and collaboration. Specific steps should therefore be taken to make appropriate regular and systematic training available to both researchers and policy-makers.

As the interface between policy-makers and research and training institutions can best thrive in an environment characterized by peace, stability, transparency, tolerance of ideas and one that has established mechanisms for resolving policy differences, public policy should be approached as an open system and accommodate the various view points of the different actors in the system. To ensure sustained dialogue between the two actors, efforts should be made to remove legal and other restrictive regulations that may hinder effective interface.

Sustained and effective interface can be achieved only in circumstances where the capacity for such an interface exists on both sides. To improve and enhance the capacity for interaction, it is important at the initial stage to take an inventory of what exists. To this effect, it is recommended that directories of training institutions, research institutions, funding sources, publishing houses, professional associations be compiled in order to sustain, constantly upgrade and strengthen existing capacity to resolve policy issues and problems and avail decision-makers of the information needed for effective policy-making.

Additionally, it is recommended that some modalities for sustained interface and promotion of dialogue between the government policy-makers and university research and training institutions be spelt out. These modalities are that:

- a national forum be created for dialogue between prominent policy-makers and academics/researchers;

- research and training institutions should give more visibility to their activities;

- special seminars and workshops should be conducted for senior policy-makers on policy-making and policy analysis;

- governments should make increased use of indigenous consultants/researchers for the analysis/evaluation of policy issues;

- governments should encourage access to policy relevant data by academics and researchers.

Since governments can benefit from the detached objectivity and familiarity with scientific process and evaluation methodology, it is recommended that

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**they** involve academics and researchers in the monitoring and evaluation of public policies. It is also strongly recommended that all policy analysis activities be institutionalized. To this extent, a catalytic group conversant with policy analysis/policy methodology and close to the organizational leadership be constituted to provide a forum for meaningful dialogue between researchers and policy-makers. Furthermore, a mechanism for the enrichment of experience be provided so as to enable researchers and academics to work in policy-making roles and practitioners to spend some time in research institutions reflecting on their experience and interacting with researchers.

In view of the usefulness of disseminating knowledge and information on policy issues and other issues relevant to the interface, it is recommended that books, journals, special bulletins and research reports of importance to policy matters be published and widely disseminated. Efforts should be made to mobilize funding from donors, the private sector and other sources. Attempts should be made to supplement the shrinking research funding caused by the economic crisis being experienced by many African countries.

It should be pointed out that in spite of the shrinking funding base, it is still possible to generate additional resources provided it can be shown that the research activities would be useful to the State, the private sector or the society at large. Viable and well-focused research programmes, properly packaged and presented could stand a good chance of funding.

While it is recognized that many activities which are aimed at enhancing interface may not require additional funding as most of the basic infrastructure may already be in place, it is nevertheless recommended that additional resources be tapped from the actors in the interface process. To this extent, it is recommended that national focal points be established to initiate action and also act as catalysts and monitoring units in the sustaining process.

Finally, CODESRIA is urged to initiate action at the regional level by approaching African governments through its established research channels to institutionalize measures aimed at sustainable policy interface. In this regard, it is recommended that CODESRIA should organize regional seminars aimed at getting the above initiatives underway. The seminars could then be used to launch national focal points constituted from senior government policy-makers and social science researchers. Finally CODESRIA should indicate its willingness to assist those African countries interested in participating in this important initiative.

As a concluding note to this paper, there is no doubt that the effective utilization of Africa's human resources can play a major role in stimulating their economies and putting the continent back to recovery and sustained growth and development. This is extremely important because Africa's track record of tapping existing resources in the Universities and research institutions for policy development (analysis, formulation, implementation

and evaluation) as clearly demonstrated in paper, has not been very encouraging.

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# Social Sciences and Policy Making in Africa: A Critical Review

## Sadig Rasheed*[1]

## Introduction

A number of social scientists and organizations have, over the years, reflected on the evolution and problems of the social sciences (Mkandawire 1989; Ake 1983; Oyugi 1989; Katorobo 1985; Jinadu 1985; Amin et al 1978) and the relationship between the social sciences and development in Africa.[2] However, the need for an appropriate understanding of the relationship between social sciences and policy making in Africa and the prevailing crisis in the state of this relationship make it more urgent than ever before that the social science community in Africa should reflect collectively, in a more systematic and critical manner, on this particular problematique and on its ramifications and future implications.

This paper is intended to stimulate the debate within the aforementioned frame by providing an assessment of the state of the interface between social science and policy making in Africa and offering some perspectives on how this relationship should be perceived, evolve and be deliberately changed in the 1990s and beyond.

## Why and What Social Science Research for Policy Making in Africa?

In approaching the subject of the relationship between social science and policy making, one is obviously and painfully aware that the mission of social science research ought not to be predominantly restricted to policy making aspects. Social sciences are to advance the quality and, stock of

1   The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author and should not be attributed to the UN Economic Commission for Africa or the United Nations.
2   CODESRIA has been in the forefront of addressing this issue. CODESRIA and DSRC of Khartoum University organized a conference on 'Social Science, Research and National Development' in Africa in Khartoum in 1978. CODESRIA, inter-alia, also organized several colloquia on the role of social sciences in Africa. Recently, the Public Administration, Human Resources and Social Development Division of the UN Economic Commission for Africa organized a workshop in Rabat in September 1992 on the theme 'Enhancing the Interface between Government Policy Making Entities, and Universities and Research Institutions in support of Economic Reform and Development in Africa.

knowledge as well as inform and facilitate action. It does not pay to argue in either or terms. Generally, however, it has been the former role which has tended to be espoused more readily and argued and defended more vigorously by many critics and observers.[3]

Yet, in a continent as impoverished and beset by a host of serious interlocking economic, political and social problems as Africa, the latter aspect ought to take on special significance. In attempting to deal with the daunting challenges of improving human conditions, facilitating, bringing about and managing economic recovery and development; dealing with unfolding processes of social and political transition; and facing a myriad of other political, social and economic problems, governments and decision-makers at large can ill afford to ignore their indigenous social science expertise and 'think-tanks' or neglect to take advantage of indigenous research efforts in making informed judgements and decisions. Conversely, Africa's social scientists cannot afford to stay aloof from the realm of policy making and the possibility of employing the tools and analysis of their trade to offer pragmatic contributions on how to deal with societal problems and challenges.

The majority of African countries are currently mired in serious interrelated economic, political and social crises and it could well be argued that the way out of these crises and the way forward with the tasks of achieving human-centred development, democratization, nation building and economic revitalization can only be based on an understanding of the problems and application of appropriate policies within a context that is grounded in African realities, heritage and potentials. Herein, indeed, lies the need for and urgency of utilizing social science research in a more effective and systematic manner for the purposes of policy making as well as creating opportunities for more effective interface between researchers and policy makers.

Yet, social science research for policy making purposes has come to be viewed by many in less than favourable terms. Some authors have conveniently ignored the issue altogether, others have warned of the danger of putting too much emphasis on it while a few have even judged it as a factor

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3    Consider for example this definition of social sciences 'The purpose of the social sciences is to describe, analyze, explain and predict social phenomena..... It goes without saying that just as aeronautical engineers have a mission to make sure that planes fly safely in the skies, social scientists also have a mission to make sure that people do have some good understanding of the social processes in which they are involved and the implications that the changes that occur in such process have on the lives of people.

responsible for undermining the future of research and teaching in African universities.[4] These views have prevailed for some time now for a variety of reasons, but often as a result of associating research for policy making purposes largely with the use of short-term consultancies for the same purpose. This is particularly so since consultancies have often tended to lead some social scientists to confine themselves to searching for solutions to problems within a predetermined policy frame, propose 'quick-fix' solutions without giving due consideration to the long-term aspects of problems and produce results based on shoddy data, analysis and tools.

However, this is a very limiting view and definition of policy-oriented research, and it would not be fair or useful to restrict it to this particular function. Policy making should essentially be perceived as a process through which informed decisions are made and implemented. Viewed as such, it then becomes essential for the policy maker to assimilate the complex inter-related aspects and factors having a bearing on a particular decision, weigh the various options that are open for her or him as well as the limitations, possibilities and implications thereof; appreciate the opportunities and costs of alternative options; consider the forces that are likely to resist or facilitate the adoption or implementation of alternative options; take into account the long-term implications of alternative options; create the conditions necessary for the successful implementation of the chosen option; and monitor and assess the progress made in and impact of the implementing of the decision.

If the process of policy making is perceived as such, it becomes apparent that the domain of policy-oriented research is much broader than what is often assumed to be the case and that definitely there is much more to policy-oriented research than consultancy work. Hence, policy research should not be looked down upon as an inferior type of research.

A second implication of the foregoing is that for social science research to be meaningful for policy making purposes or for it to be 'consumed' by a decision-maker, it does not have to be initiated or even commissioned by the latter. This is particularly true of that phase of the policy making process where policy makers need to gain knowledge of, understand and take stock of the underlying factors that have a bearing on a potential decision. But it is equally true of research which is relevant to other phases of the policy making process. In many instances, self-driven and self-motivated policy-oriented researchers and organizations have been able to make contributions, which proved to be particularly useful for policy making purposes, without these having been commissioned or initiated by decision-makers.

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4   The prevailing view during the 1970s and 1980s among many social scientists and leading research organizations in Africa was essentially one of scepticism of the value of the so-called 'instrumentalist' or 'developmental' social sciences.

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Thirdly, while governments and the public sector remain the main con-
sumers of policy research, they should not certainly be the sole clients. So-
cial science research ought to equally have meaning and utility for decision-
makers in the business community, politicians and organizations of civil
society at large. Conspicuously, the role of social sciences in the non-
governmental context has unwarrantedly been neglected in the hitherto
debate.

Fourthly, policy-oriented research on the one hand and basic and applied
research on the other hand could well and should be mutually reinforcing. If
undertaken properly, policy-oriented research should require the rigorous ap-
plication of the same tools used in research intended to advance knowledge
and should also build on and borrow from such basic or empirical research.
Conversely, the opportunities offered by policy-oriented research - in terms
of access to classified and often difficult to obtain data and information -
should be invaluable for enhancing the quality of all social science research
in general.

If all these factors are taken into account, there ought to be better ap-
preciation of the nature and utility of social science research for policy
making purposes. This, however, is not to imply that policy-oriented re-
search in Africa has been free from problems and pitfalls. The tendency to
link such research endeavours to forecasting and predictions, to unduly in-
fluence and manipulate research results and to concentrate on the immediate
and short-runs has been ominously present and has often been detrimental to
the reputation of research and researchers as well as to the credibility and
transparency of policy makers. Nevertheless, on the whole and particularly
at this juncture of Africa's history and the evolution of the social sciences in
Africa, policy-oriented research should, in spite of obvious deficiencies in
current practices, receive due attention and enhanced status and relevance.

### Interface Between Social Science and Policy Making: The Formative Years of the 1960s and Early 1970s

The nature of the interface between social science research and policy
making in Africa has evidently varied from one country to another.
However, overall and through the years, this relationship can at best be
described as turbulent and paradoxical.

In the early post-independence years, African governments adopted
rather enthusiastic and positive attitudes towards institutions of higher
learning and the research community in general. They considered it as a
necessity[5] as well as matter of national pride and consolidation and

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5    In 1958 total enrolment in African universities was only 10,000 students, 65 per cent of
     whom were from Ghana and Nigeria. In 1960 only a handful of countries had inherited

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assertiveness of the newly won independence to expand and establish new institutions of higher learning and also to encourage indigenous research in the social sciences. Indeed, throughout the 1960s, institutions of higher learning were expected to perform the urgent task of producing and training the manpower needed to Africanise the civil service as well as development and other aspects of nation building. Together with this, governments also sought to encourage a more active interface between the academic community and the policy making establishment and welcomed and solicited inputs from the former for the purposes of policy formulation and implementation.

Furthermore, the late 1960s and early 1970s also witnessed vigorous attempts on the part of institutions of higher learning — obviously with the blessing of governments — to establish specialized institutions that were predominantly of a policy-oriented nature. Thus, research and/or training institutions such as the Development Studies and Research Centre (DSRC) (1976), University of Khartoum; the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) (1965) University of Nairobi; the Bureau of Resource Assessment and Land Use Planning (BRALUP) (1967) and Economic Research Bureau (ERB) (1965), University of Dar-es-Salaam; Centre for Social and Economic Research (CSER), (1973) Zaria; Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) (1969) University of Ghana; Centre Ivorien de Recherches Economiques et Sociales (CIRES) (1971) University of Abidjan; the Institute of Development Research (IDS) (1972) Addis Ababa University and others came into being. The statutes of these institutions clearly reflected the bias towards policy making in their operations. In some instances, as in the case of the DSRC of the University of Khartoum, the link between the university and the development effort was explicitly enacted in the statutes of some institutions.[6] A number of development centres, which had already been in existence, such as the Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research NISER (1950) and Makerere Institute of Social Research (1948) in Uganda, became more actively involved in policy research and advice.

More reinforcing to this trend had been direct actions by a large number of African governments which went out of their way to establish semi-independent institutions, outside the framework of higher learning institutions, to produce policy-oriented social science research and serve as fora for policy

university colleges in British colonies. There was not a single university in French territories, aside from two emerging institutions in Zaire (UNDP 1993).

6    The following was emphasized as the mission of the DSRC: 'The Centre will lay particular emphasis in its interdisciplinary programme on high-priority issues of socio-economic development with a view to leaving, whenever possible, direct impact on policy making and policy implementation'.

debate. Some of these were established as national research councils or in-
stitutes e.g. the Economic and Social Research Council in Sudan (1970);
Institute of National Planning in Egypt (1960); and Centre de Recherches
Economiques Appliquees (CREA) (1975) in Algeria. In other cases, research
institutions were established as affiliates of government ministries e.g. In-
stitut d'Economie Quantitative (1968), Ministry of Planning Tunisia; and In-
stitut National de Statistique et d'Economie Appliquee (INSEA) (1961),
Planning and Regional Development Secretariat in Morocco.

Most of these centres concentrated their activities on socio-economic and
development research. Nevertheless, many did deal with other aspects of
social science research. A larger number of what is commonly known as
NIPAs, (national institutes of public administration) were also established
during that period in almost every African country. These were usually
founded outside the frame of government ministries, but were overseen by
and had strong links with a parent ministry or department usually dealing
with issues of administrative reform. While their main function was the
training of civil servants, they were also expected to contribute policy-
oriented studies in the areas of public administration and management,
decentralization, local government and administrative reform.

Most of the social science research generated by the main stream univer-
sity departments and faculties during this period was of a basic, investigative
and occasionally creative nature. Nevertheless, main stream academicians
did contribute as well to research which could be characterized as being of
an applied and policy-oriented nature. Researchers dealing with economic
and public administration issues generally had better access to and rapport
with policy makers and had also succeeded in producing a lot of policy
research in these fields.[7]

The specialized development and social science centres were actively
engaged and did a reasonably good job in producing research that was
directly relevant to policy making purposes during that period. Many in-
stitutes and researchers in these institutes came to be actively associated
with the preparation of national development plans which became quite
fashionable during that period of time (Rasheed 1978; Senga and Migot
1978).

On the whole, the 1960s and early 1970s could be characterized as a
period of mutual tolerance and amicable cooperation between the academic
community and the policy making entities. Funding, although sometimes
limited, continued to flow from and views of academicians were solicited by
the latter, while the former readily obliged and often took pride in being

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7    See for example various papers of the following two publications: Oyugi 1989; Katorobo
     1985; Jinadu 1985.

associated with the honour of contributing to the crafting of national policies and exposure to the lime light as a result thereof.

This, however, is not to infer that this period was free from attempts by some governments to utilize research to justify predetermined ends and to legitimize their rule, or that opportunism on the part of some researchers to align themselves with discredited regimes did not exist. Indeed, an intense debate ensued in the 1970s on 'establishment oriented and supported social sciences' and 'critical social science', the relationship of the former to the deteriorating socio-economic conditions on the continent and the possible contributions of the latter to the amelioration of the situation.[8]

While this might be true in some instances, the relationship between the two sides was, remarkably enough, characterized by mutual accommodation and willful cooperation. The then prevailing perception that both the academicians and decision makers were on the same side of the struggle for nation building and indigenization of governance and development policies helped to smooth the relationship and encourage cooperation.

*The Regional Dimension*

It is important to recognize that already during this period, social science research did not confine itself to national borders. That same period saw the proliferation of regional and sub-regional social science organizations and associations acting as networking and umbrella structures to bring together researchers at the national level and foster the advancement of social sciences in general and/or in particular fields. Examples of this were the establishment of the Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) (1973); The African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) (1971); and The African Association of Political Scientists AAPS (1973). While these organizations and associations mainly co-ordinated, solicited, encouraged and published research of a general and basic nature in their respective fields, a great deal of their activities favoured policy-oriented type of research.

What is often blatantly neglected in dealing with the subject of social science research and policy making in Africa is the fact that a significant body of policy-oriented research has been generated by a number of African regional organizations, particularly the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the African Development Bank (ADB). Although these efforts have become

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8    These issues were vigorously debated at CODESRIA/DSRC conference on the theme *Social Science, Research and National Development in Africa* referred to earlier. Selected papers from that conference appeared in a special issue of Africa Development, Vol III, No. 4 1978. During the 1970s CODESRIA strongly advocated the need for and supported 'critical social science' in Africa (Bujra and Kameir 1992).

more intensive in recent years, they already started to assume importance during the early 1970s.

Many background studies of ECA in the early 1970s seeking solutions to Africa's development problems culminated in the adoption of pathbreaking decisions by the legislative bodies of ECA and OAU. These have in turn further intensified the search for appropriate policies to deal with social and development problems and challenges. One could recall in this regard 'Africa's Strategy for Development in the 1970s' adopted by the ECA Conference of Ministers in February 1971 and the 'African Declaration on Co-operation, Development and Economic Independence' which was adopted by the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 1973. The work which perhaps triggered a lot of subsequent policy research on the need for indigenous development was the 'Revised Framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa', which was adopted by the Executive Committee of the ECA Conference of Ministers in May 1976. This document argued forcefully for the need for national and collective self-reliance as a basis of self-sustaining and internal-ly generated development and economic growth and the deliberate estab-lishment of local industries to utilize the available agricultural and mineral resources as well as produce producer goods for industry, agriculture transport etc. (Rasheed and Sarr 1991).

Equally significant, and also often unrecognized, have been the initiatives which ECA took to establish a host of training and research institutions, among them social science institutions, in a deliberate effort to create indigenous African thought and capacity in major fields. Among these one ought to mention the African Institute for Development and Planning (IDEP); the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW); the African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD); Eastern and Southern African Management Institute (ESAMI); Institut de formation et de recherche demographique (IFORD); and the Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS). Some of these institutions have, on their part, made valuable contributions to indigenous research, including policy-oriented research.

## The Crisis of the 1980s: Retreat from Indigenity

Beginning with the second half of the 1970s and until the present, readiness to solicit and use social science research for policy making purposes has waned progressively and almost ceased to exist as related to certain areas. Indeed, the amicable relationship and attitude of mutual tolerance which characterized the interface between academia and bureaucracy in the imme-diate post-independence era has soured badly and has given way to increas-ingly strained relationships of suspicion, mistrust, antagonism and sterile

lack of cooperation. A number of reasons have been responsible for this state of affairs.

1. As the economic and social crises deepened and as governance in the majority of African countries came to take on an autarchic, undemocratic, repressive and often militarist nature, many social scientists found themselves, as it were, on the other side of the fence. They chose to openly criticize governments and public policies and to offer alternative views on policy issues and solutions to socio-economic and political problems, which have not been favoured by the latter. Many governments could not tolerate this criticism. They neglected and declined to actively solicit the views and research inputs of national think-tanks, particularly as related to the primary areas of policy setting or policy prescriptions. While a number of social scientists have continued to produce research that was relevant to policy making purposes, such efforts have often been willfully ignored. Where research has produced divergent views, it has usually been considered as subversive. Evidence has also indicated that even when solicited by governments, the rate of adoption of recommendations made by social scientists was dismal (ECA 1992). Only ad hoc consultancy work has had a better chance of being more readily accepted by governments and policy makers. Indeed, social scientists have been accused of having failed to influence change in Africa. However, the reasons for this are not so simple and the fault is normally not totally that of the social scientist.

2. The illegitimate, undemocratic and corrupt nature of many regimes and the manner, in which they have practised repression, stifled opposition, mismanaged the economic and political affairs of their countries and often appropriated the financial and natural resources of their nations have caused social scientists to become more active and vocal critics of their governments and the policies thereof. As one expert observed:

   *Attainment of independence accelerated processes of social differentiation, intensified the struggle for economic and political power and generally exposed the irreconcilable divergences in interests that had been concealed by the nationalist imperative of unity against the common enemy* (Mkandawire 1989).

   Many governments have not tolerated what they readily saw as unacceptable criticism and undisguised opposition. They sought to quell this through restriction of academic freedom, stifling of dissent and resort to the intimidation, expulsion, detention and even liquidation of the staff

of academic and research institutions.[9] These trends, together with the frequent closures of academic institutions have soured the relationship between academia and bureaucracy badly and has further contributed to the creation of a climate of mutual intolerance and mistrust.[10]

3. Freedom of research has come to be more frequently curtailed. In many countries measures have been instituted to intimidate researchers and to condition and control research. In some countries it would not be possible to undertake research without prior clearance from the state and, at least in one country, from the head of state himself (Maliyamkono 1992; Oyugi 1989).

4. With the intensification of the economic crisis and the cuts in educational budgets, and particularly research budgets and subventions, which became a standard component of the adjustment recipe, many think-tanks have been starved of resources. Furthermore, governments have not been particularly eager to fund research the results of which could well prove to be critical of governments policy directions and orientation. This has, in turn, adversely affected the productivity of researchers and research institutions, both in terms of the quantum and quality of policy research. A great deal of research and policy research in particular has been made possible through external support. While many donors have refrained from influencing research efforts, this has not generally been the case.

5. The drastic fall in the real earnings of academic staff and researchers in many countries, as a result of the spiralling inflation and massive repeated devaluations, has virtually caused academicians to join the ranks of the poor. In many an African university salaries of academicians are well below a dollar a day, which is the standard poverty line cut off points. The resultant preoccupation with the immediate problems of survival - through consultancies, extra loads of teaching and sometimes moonlighting outside the domain of the teaching and research vocation -

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9   The threats to academic freedom was the subject of a symposium organized by CODESRIA in Kampala in 1990 on the theme *Academic Freedom, Research and the Social Responsibility of the Intellectual in Africa*. As part of revisiting Kampala Declaration, which was adopted by the participants of the symposium, CODESRIA published long lists of African academics in detention, university closures, African academics dismissed or expelled and shooting and assassination of academics during 1992-1993 in *CODESRIA Bulletin*, No. 3, 1993, pp.3-4.

10  In this regard one author observed: *In many African countries, the state has become increasingly hostile to the discipline of Political Science. In some instances the hostility has assumed paranoid proportions. The study of politics is equated with subversion and opposition, and regarded as a hotbed of political unrest. In many single-party regimes in Africa, the university is viewed suspiciously as the informal opposition party* (Mugyenyi 1989).

have rendered research, and particularly policy research, unattractive to many academicians and have further contributed to the debasement of the quality of research. This has, in turn, served to fuel the criticism, by many governments and policy makers, that indigenous researchers have not been capable of producing good quality research, a criticism which has further helped to affect the morale in research institutions badly and created added tension between the two sides. Only a dwindling number of researchers have continued to produce policy research regardless of the obvious perils and have managed to keep lines of communications open with politicians and decision makers. Commissioned policy research has generally been restricted to requests for the execution of specific consultancy assignments.

This state of sterile interface came to a head with the intensified and widespread adoption by an increasing number of African countries, since the beginning of the second half of the 1970s, of structural adjustment programme (SAPs) enforcing externally formulated development policy frameworks. Significant to recognize during this phase is the fact that as governments came to accept SAPS, the claim of Bretton Woods institutions to superiority of their knowledge over that of Africa's social scientists and African governments as regards Africa's own problems and how to go about solving them has thus received formal acknowledgement. The progressive and eventually comprehensive conditionalities which have been put in place within the framework of these policies, linking resource flows, debt relief and co-financing to SAPS, have ensured that collective pressure, by the Bretton Woods institutions and the donor community, on Africa to adhere to these imported, and presumably superior and more sensible, policy frameworks, would work. With this, the continent has virtually lost its ability to think for itself, and Africa's social science has ceased to influence the policy making process in any meaningful manner.

This, what I would like to call 'Policy making dependence syndrome' has further been reinforced through the ongoing policies and practices of technical assistance and technical cooperation in Africa, which have tended to bypass and undermine the utilization of indigenous expertise and think-tanks and entrench expatriate control over policy advice and policy implementation. Over 75 per cent of an annual expenditure of nearly $4 billion worth of technical assistance in Africa goes towards maintaining over 100,000 so-called expatriate experts who are supposed to advise African governments and assist them with the implementation of development projects.

The stringent cross conditionalities that have been imposed on African countries have further meant that indigenous expertise has deliberately been kept at bay. Donor supported economic reform packages often dictate, and in reality almost always succeed in ensuring, that experts from institutions of

donor countries be used as consultants. Obviously, these expatriates are ex-
pected to and placed there to support the externally generated and donor-
driven policies and policy frameworks, i.e. another dependence reinforcing
factor.

It is particularly disturbing to observe that while the vast knowledge and
expertise of African experts are being ignored, while these indigenous ex-
perts have been vastly underpaid — thus driving them to emigrate or waste
their talent in performing demeaning jobs in an effort to survive — and
while indigenous think-tanks have been starved of funds, each of these resi-
dent foreign experts costs on average of $300,000 annually (UNDP 1993,
245). Imagine what a small share of the personnel and equipment com-
ponents of technical assistance to Africa could do to strengthen and help to
effectively utilize existing capacity in Africa's higher learning and research
institutions. More painful and bordering on the obscene is the fact that a
large number of these so-called experts lack even basic education! In this
regard a UNDP study observed: ·

> *The technical cooperation surveys carried out in Burundi found that 34*
> *per cent of technical assistance personnel in the country were not*
> *university graduates. In areas such as agriculture, these personnel*
> *could have been replaced by nationals because graduates from the*
> *agriculture faculty were beginning to face employment constraints*
> (UNDP 1993, 7).

Although for years the deficiencies of technical assistance, as related to un-
dermining indigenous capacity building and utilization, have been recog-
nized by the donors themselves, no meaningful actions have been taken to
redress this situation. Recently, the record of technical assistance has been
attacked, in no minced terms, by many (UNDP 1993; Jaycox 1993; UN-
PAAERD 1989; Jolly 1989).

Needless to stress is the observation that while many indigenous social
scientists and think-tanks have been extremely concerned about the efficacy
and impact of SAPs and economic reform programmes and have, on their
own initiatives, evaluated and assessed these programmes, rarely have ef-
forts been officially made to associate them with the formulation of these
policies and programmes or the debate thereon. Even with the mounting
evidence exposing the economic inadequacies of SAP and their adverse so-
cial and human impacts, indigenous social scientists and 'think-tanks' have
not been called upon to evaluate the impact of these programmes or par-
ticipate seriously in their modification or the search for appropriate alterna-
tive policy frameworks and strategies. Indeed, local research and researchers
have been shunned even in the case of the formulation of so-called 'home
grown' adjustment and economic reform programmes. Those researchers
who have continued to be vocal in their opposition to and advancement of

alternatives to the standard recipes of SAPs have often been labelled as being out of touch, dirigiste, irrelevant, obstructionists and sometimes even outright subversives.

Thus, on the national scene, the dependence of governments on donor-driven policies and policy frameworks as well as foreign expertise became the hallmarks of the 1980s and early 1990s. Governments did not care much to make extensive use of indigenous social science findings or tap the expertise of indigenous think-tanks. Except for well defined consultancies and self-initiated contributions, policy-oriented research has generally remained unsolicited and underutilized. On the whole, the impact of indigenous research on policy making has been negligible.

Significant as well is the fact that these trends have contributed to the demise of the capacity for policy research within the government structures themselves. Simultaneous with the foundation of development institutes in the 1960s and early 1970s, it was fashionable to establish policy units and research departments in government ministries in Africa. Aside from acting as data gathering and rudimentary policy analysis units, these entities used to interact quite actively with outside researchers and act as convenient and logical links between the research community and bureaucracy. With the wholesale importation of policy frameworks and data from abroad and the demise of long- and medium-term planning, the need for and usage of the services of these policy and research units waned progressively. Many such units were left to die a natural death or have virtually been dismantled.

*The Regional Scene*
The intensification of the economic and social crises on the continent has created a salutary effect on social science research at the regional and sub-regional levels. The search and call for the adoption of alternative development and economic reform measures and governance modes have become more pronounced and intense.

Taking the case of CODESRIA and OSSREA, it is instructive to observe that while their constitutions did not specifically list policy research among the priorities of the activities of these organizations, yet not a small part of their work could conveniently be classified as relevant to policy making. CODESRIA's congresses, multinational and national working groups and colloquia have been particularly instrumental in putting forward useful policy-oriented research of a generally good quality. Both organizations have also kept the debate on the role and content of social science and the need for the indigenization of social sciences in Africa very much alive.

The ECA and OAU have become more vocal and forceful during this latter period in advocating alternative policies to deal with Africa's socio-economic and political crises, both at the regional and national levels. Important initiatives in this regard include the preparation of major strategies such as the Lagos Plan of Action and Final Act of Lagos (1980); the

Khartoum Declaration: Towards a Human Focused Approach to Socio-Economic Recovery and Development in Africa (1987); the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) (1989); the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development (1990); Strategic Agenda for Development Management in Africa in the 1990s and Beyond (1993); and Africa's Human Development Agenda for the 1990s (1992). Most of these strategies were based on background research contributed to not only by the staff of ECA but also and mainly by African social scientists from outside the organization. Much of this work has been published (Adedeji et al 1991a:1991b).

While African governments have formally adopted many of these strategies, they have, in many instances, gone ahead to implement diametrically opposite policies and strategies. Even sectoral strategies, such as contained in the documents of the two Industrial Development Decades for Africa (IDDA) and the UN Transport and Communication Decade for Africa (UNTACDA), have remained largely unimplemented. The reasons for this are varied. However, SAPs, the conditionalities attached to them and the acute need by African countries for the financial resources and debt relief - which could only be forthcoming through the strict adherence to SAPS - have left African countries with little or no room for manoeuvre to implement the policies they themselves have formally adopted! Although the international community, at the level of the UN General Assembly, has also endorsed many of these African-conceived regional strategies - such as the Lagos Plan of Action, the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD) and AAF-SAP, these did not serve as policy frameworks to guide the policies of the international community towards Africa. The following observation on one such African regionally emphasized strategy by a World Bank's staff member could perhaps give a clue as to why this has been the case:

> *Regional integration and cooperation had been a favourite subject of African development thinkers and a key element in the Lagos Plan of Action and several other documents drawn by Africans concerned with development. But the approach to regional integration had found no favour whatsoever in the Bank because it was regarded as going against the principle of international free flow of goods and capital on which the Bretton Woods institutions were founded* (Agarwala et al 1993, 12).

If these attitudes on the part of African countries and Africa's partners alike continue to prevail, even the recently adopted UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) and Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community will likewise remain dead letters.

In the case of Abuja Treaty, indications are already emerging to the effect that Africa's donors are partial to and are more ready to support alternative arrangements and modalities for regional economic co-operation in Africa. These have been more commonly referred to in some cases as the 'variable geometry' approach to regional and sub-regional economic cooperation and integration.

A number of other organizations, institutions and associations which have been established during this period - such as the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa (OSSREA) (1980), the Southern Africa Political Economy Series Project (SAPES) (1987), the Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme (ESAURP) (1977), and the African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies (ACDESS) (1990) have also made important contributions to policy research.

Thus, while there has been no dearth of policy-oriented research at the regional level and while a significant body of research leading to the elaboration of major macro-economic and sectoral development policies, this indigenous research has been largely ignored, for the purposes of policy making and translation into actual policies, by African governments as well as the international community.

Recent developments in the social science research scene, which will definitely have far-reaching implications, are currently unfolding. Increasing efforts are being made to establish donor funded and donor controlled alternative research groupings and think-tanks. The issue here is not only that indigenous capacity is being bypassed, starved of funds and allowed to rut but more seriously it is also the question of the implications of the creation of well-funded and well-paid constituencies to propagate, advocate and support non-indigenously conceived development policy frameworks and the establishment of structures, parallel to already existing ones, to impart policy advice to policy makers.

Significant policy-oriented research in Africa has been generated by international research, UN and other Africa-focused organizations during the past two decades. Two broad trends in this regard are distinguishable. There are those organizations which have tended to utilize the services of local researchers and have generally shied away from attempting to influence the outcome of research and, there are on the opposite side other organizations which have generally preferred to generate the policy research themselves. Sometimes these organizations have hired African counterpart researchers. Nevertheless, they have in these cases often identified the areas of and defined the methodology for research and have also jealously guarded and retained the ultimate shaping of the outcome of such research. The UNDP, ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, DTCD and FAO have usually tended to belong to the first category, while the World Bank is an example of the latter.

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   The World Bank prefers to prepare its economic reform packages, and even its policy reports on Africa, internally without much consultations with or inputs from African social scientists. This attitude, as related to major policy reports which the Bank prepared on Africa, has been described by a Bank's official as follows:

> *The history of the Bank's Africa reports can be traced back to 1979, when the African Governors of the Bank requested the President of the Bank to examine Africa's economic predicament and prepare an appropriate programme to help African countries. Since the initiative came from the Africans, it was expected that the process of report preparation for such a program as well as the report itself would be in empathy with African perspectives. The actual process, however, turned out to be more top-down than participatory. Some inputs were invited from experts, but the content and tone of their contributions were incompatible with the major thrust of the report. As a result, African inputs were largely ignored and not published in any form for the benefit of outside audiences. When the report was nearly finished, it was presented for comment to some select groups in Africa but without expectations that this would lead to any major modification.*

> *..... In 1981, the Bank published Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action, written by Bank staff under the leadership of an external consultant, Elliot Berg.*

> *..... A fairly short report, Sub-Saharan Africa: Progress Report on Development Prospects and Programmes, was done in 1983 largely for an internal Bank audience and to inform the donor community about some of the changes African governments were making in response to their economic crisis.*

> *..... Then, in 1984, famine struck Africa. With the prospect of millions of people dying of starvation, there was a worldwide clamour to help Africa and the Bank was persuaded to prepare another report [Towards Sustained Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Joint Programme for Action (1984)] to reflect on African problems and suggest possible solutions. The report had a tight deadline of six months and there was very little time for consultation with Africans. The consultations that did take place were largely a formality, and no African inputs were reflected in the report.*

> *..... In response to repeated African requests, the Bank decided to prepare a report on the debt problems of Africa. ..... Since external debt is in an area of principal concern to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the focus and thrust of this report was transformed into a general financing proposal and published as Financing Adjustment with Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1986-90 (1986).*

*... Once again, there was very little participation of Africans, and consultations with them were largely pro forma* (Agarwala *et al* 1993:4-7).

In terms of actual impact on policy making, it has been the World Bank, in association with the IMF, which has been vastly successful in influencing policy making and actually virtually dictating policy reform frameworks for the reasons indicated earlier. Indeed, the policy recommendations of organizations such as UNICEF, ILO, UNESCO and UNCTAD, proposing variations of and alternatives to SAPS, have met with little success in African countries and, while the World Bank has been quite sensitive to them, they have had little impact in actually influencing the macro framework of SAPs.

In a break with its normal tradition, the World Bank commissioned - as a result of pressure by the African Governors of the Bank - a number of studies by Africans as part of the preparation of its Long Term Perspective Study (LTPS) 'Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth (World Bank 1989). These views have been taken into account in the final, though not the preliminary, versions of the study and have also been published separately in companion volume. Important however to recall in this regard is the observation that the broader and much welcome approach of the LTPS has not influenced 'new generations' of SAPS, that are currently on ground, in any meaningful manner. It is interesting, in this regard, to note that the foreword of the LTPS states the following:

> *A central theme of the report is that although sound macroeconomic policies and an efficient infrastructure are essential to provide an enabling environment for the productive use of resources, they alone are not sufficient to transform the structure of African economies. At the same time major efforts are needed to build African capacities to produce a better trained, more healthy population and to greatly strengthen the institutional framework within which development can take place. This is why the report strongly supports the call for a human-centred development strategy made by the ECA and UNICEF* (World Bank 1989).

## Perspectives for the 1990s and Beyond

The complexities of the policy making process require that all those who are involved in this process, particularly governments, should appreciate the value of, commission and encourage the flow of high quality policy-oriented research and policy alternatives arrived at independently and objectively outside the framework of governmental structures.

However, as outlined in the preceding section, the hitherto experience of the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s has amply demonstrated that African

governments have virtually abdicated their responsibility for and have also lost control over the process of policy making for development and economic reforms on the one hand, while the indigenous social science community and institutions have largely been denied the opportunity, by the same governments, to contribute to that process. Reinforcing to these patterns has been the tendency by outsiders to create parallel institutions and form alternative research groupings, mainly to buttress the prevailing economic reform paradigm and donor-driven policies, rather than strengthen existing indigenous capacities and support more open-minded and versatile contributions by researchers to policy making.

The implications of these emerging trends are pretty serious, both for the outcome of socio-economic development efforts and the future of indigenous social science for policy making purposes in Africa. Persisting inflexibly with adjustment as an approach to development would only deepen the on-going socio-economic crisis in Africa. At the same time, underutilizing and undermining indigenous social science capacity for policy making tantamounts to setting off a time bomb which would not only cripple that capacity, but could well seriously undermine indigenous capacity for all types of research. These trends would also further deepen the current state of sterile and antagonistic interface between policy makers and the social science community.

The seriousness of these emerging trends and their implications should compel all concerned to think strategically and act strategically in countering and attempting to reverse these trends. Such a strategic approach would, first and foremost, call on the African social science community to re-examine its stance, on the role of social sciences in policy making, in a fundamental and critical manner.

1. To start with, the pitfalls and the disadvantages of policy-oriented research have been over exaggerated and touted for too long in academic works and gatherings across Africa. This attitude ought to be reversed and the flogging of policy research needs to come to an end. What is at stake at present is not the issue of policy-oriented versus 'creative', 'basic' or 'critical' research, but rather the burning issue of indigenous policy-oriented research versus externally generated and externally-driven policy research.

   As mentioned earlier in section II of this paper, academic versus policy research is a false and a non-issue at this particular juncture of time. Academic research is important, but it is not sufficient by itself and is certainly no substitute for policy research. More crucially, African social scientists should not, as it were, vacate the field for outsiders to prescribe policies for Africa's own development and societal change. Therefore, social scientists and social science research institutions should not become inward looking. Indeed, they must strive to address and must

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continue to focus with more vigour on policy-oriented research. In doing so, they must become proactive and should not only wait for research to be commissioned by policy makers. They should initiate policy research on their own volition. These institutions also have responsibilities towards their societies to seek out and exploit opportunities as well as build bridges for cooperation with policy makers in an effort to contribute to and hopefully influence policy making.

2. Perceiving policy research in much broader terms than has hitherto been the case ought to make such research more attractive and meaningful to African social scientists. Policy-oriented research should not only focus on prescriptions of solutions to problems and should, more crucially, go beyond that to lay the foundations for informed decision-making by policy makers (providing the basis for policy making); propose alternative approaches to dealing with policy issues both at the macro and micro levels; explain the implications of these alternatives; evaluate the impact of policies; and analyze the factors making for the failure or success of these policies.

3. African social scientists need to exploit more effectively the opportunities brought about by the pressure to democratize and open up African societies for a greater degree of participation, transparency and accountability in order to make more meaningful contributions to policy making. Important to stress here is that policy-oriented research is not only meaningful for and should not be directed solely to governments. Parliamentarians, people's organizations (trade union, women, youth and grassroots organizations etc.) and NGOs have a great need for policy research not only to help them shape their own policies and decisions, but also to assist them in influencing and evaluating the outcome of the processes of national policy making. Policy research could play a crucial role in strengthening these institutions of civil society and assisting them to carry through their roles as advocates and forces of change. Social scientists must devote greater attention to this hitherto neglected and critical dimension.

4. While it is ultimately the responsibility of institutions of higher learning and governments to provide adequate funding and support to national research centres, the autonomy and degree of freedom that these centres could enjoy do depend, to a great extent, on their ability to generate funds from external sources. Aside from funds which they could mobilize from non-conditionality attaching donors, they should strive to find ways and means to self-fund, recover costs and generate resources from internal sources.
Funds generated from consultancies and commissioned policy research would not only encourage the latter, but could greatly help in supporting

and strengthening basic and empirical research in general. The efficacy of consultancies and commissioned policy oriented research should be re-evaluated and re-defined in this context. The problem here is not the term 'consultancy', but rather the manner in which that assignment is conducted. If carried out properly, consultancies could lead to the preparation of respectable pieces of work.

5. The credibility and utility of indigenous policy research are a function of the quality of that research. While on the whole one could judge the quality of policy research as satisfactory, indigenous research has not been free from problems. Indeed, this has been pointed to in several sources. Commenting on the quality of research undertaken by the winners of research competitions, the Executive Secretary of OSSREA observed:

> *Research has been criticized from various perspectives. It is concluded that besides being insignificant, problems that have been the subject of investigation have generally lacked an adequate theoretical setting. Researchers also poorly design and employ inadequate data analysis procedures* (Ahmed 1993).

Similar remarks have also been made by other observers. Aside from the reasons given above, quality has suffered because many African researchers have concentrated on the quick production of superficial research and reports requested by donors. These have been largely based on predetermined policy framework of these donors. It is important, therefore, that adequate and urgent attention must be given to the quality of policy research, particularly the aspects of intellectual honesty, impartiality and the scholarly nature of the work.[11]

6. High quality and relevant policy research as well as better chances for appreciating, understanding soliciting and applying policy researches by policy-makers are also a function of the education and training that both the would be producers and consumers of policy researches would undergo in preparation for their respective roles. As such, it is of utmost urgency that Africa's institutions of higher learning should give more

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11 Particularly damaging have been the instances where a number of social scientists have abandoned intellectual honesty to legitimize the policies and even the existence of military and undemocratic regimes. K K Prah has graphically described one such instance in the following terms: *The glib acceptance of state ideology as a basis for sociological analysis has its own perils. No better example can be found in contemporary Africa than Ethiopia where during the last three months the ruling regime has changed rhetoric to the possible academic embarrassment of a horde of intellectuals who in the past too faithfully and uncritically accepted state ideology as scientific reality* (Prah 1989).

emphasis in their course offerings and curricula to the aspects of policy research and policy analysis.

7. Africa's regional and sub-regional research organizations and associations, particularly the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Organization of Social Science Research in Eastern Africa (OSSREA), the Southern Africa Political Economy Series (SAPES) and others such as the Third World Forum, the African Academy of Sciences, the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM), the Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme (ESAURP) and the African Association of Political Science (AAPS) etc., have a major responsibility to both encourage and support policy-oriented research.

i) Their role must change qualitatively to give greater importance to policy research and to the dissemination of the results thereof more widely and effectively to policy makers. The record of almost all umbrella organizations in the dissemination of research and interface with policy makers has not been encouraging in this regard (Vylder and Ornäs 1991, 63).

ii) They also need to shift emphasis away from networking activities to a more aggressive approach aimed at forging closer links with national research institutions, not only for the conduct of research but also and more importantly to help build, sustain and ensure the effective utilization of the capacities of these institutions.

iii) A strategic alliance needs to be forged urgently among Africa's regional and sub-regional research consortia and organizations to ensure the primacy of African thought and contributions to social science and the promotion of social science research for policy making purposes. Avoidance of competition, better division of labour, greater coordination in the conduct of research, the effective dissemination of research results, the harmonization of long- and medium-term plans and programmes, events, congresses and meetings and measures designed to control and improve the quality of research should be among the basic cooperation modalities of such an alliance.

It is extremely important for this purpose that an overarching umbrella association should be formed to bring together all Africa's regional and sub-regional research institutions, organizations and associations to achieve the foregoing. Continent-wide congresses could, inter-alia, be organized at reasonable intervals by African organizations and consortia to harmonize work programmes and research plans and reflect strategically on the state of social science research and research for policy making in Africa.

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Africa's intergovernmental regional and sub-regional organizations - such as the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African Development Bank (ADB) - have an historic responsibility to perform and role to play in encouraging and producing indigenous policy-oriented research and advocating the need for the implementation of the results thereof. They also need to support indigenous researchers; strengthen research institutions; advocate to governments the need to recognize the crucial role of national and regional 'think-tanks' and the usefulness and relevance of indigenous research for policy making; and to sensitize donors to the need for them to refrain from creating parallel institutions and capacity and to support the strengthening and effective utilization of existing capacities and institutions.

While many donors have tried to blatantly influence the direction and outcome of research in Africa, a few of them have been reasonably neutral in this regard and have also made significant contributions in support of indigenous policy research and institutions. To cite a few examples, 60 per cent of CODESRIA's budget in the early 1980s and about 35-40 per cent of its budget in the 1990s has been covered by the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries(SAREC). Other major supporters of CODESRIA include the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Ford Foundation and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). Support to particular projects came from the Norwegian government, Rockefeller Foundation, Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), the Dutch government and Friedrich-Ebert Foundation. OSSREA's budget has been mainly covered by the Ford Foundation, IDRC, SAREC, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Friedrich-Ebert Foundation. 92 per cent of SAPES total income in 1991 was in the form of grants received from outside donors, mainly SIDA and Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) but also HIVOs of Holland, the Ford Foundation, SAREC and Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA) (Sawyer *et al* 1993). These and other donors have also provided untied support to national institutions and other regional associations of research. These donors in particular and other donors known for giving fairly unconditional grants for research have now even greater responsibility in further backing indigenous African research for policy making purposes and supporting and strengthening existing institutional capacities at the national and regional levels.

The quantum and quality of policy research depend a great deal on the climate within which research is conducted. In this regard, African governments bear primary responsibility towards creating the conditions that could encourage policy-oriented research and improve the interface and cooperation between policy makers and the research community. The uncooperative and hostile attitudes that have been adopted by the majority of

African governments towards the institutions of higher learning and research must radically change in the years to come. Unless this happens, the damage that has been afflicting indigenous research capacities will have very serious implications in the long run not only for research, but also for the very process aimed at the indigenization and sustainability of socio-economic development and the capacity to understand and cope with social and political change in Africa.

It is one thing to prescribe what ought to be done, and quite another to expect that these prescriptions would be implemented. Obviously, governments must come to realize the importance of taking advantage of and utilizing indigenous research for policy making purposes; turning the ad hoc nature of the interface, dialogue and cooperation between the government and the research community and centres into an institutionalized process; providing adequate funding to research institutions and particularly for policy research; providing adequate remuneration and incentives to researchers; relaxing controls over the institutions of higher learning and research by respecting the freedom of thought and academic freedom; and putting an end to the rife instances of manipulation, intimidation, sacking and persecution of academicians.[12]

Whether these recommendations would be welcomed and adopted by governments depend a great deal on the very nature of the state itself and the interests it represents; the orientation of its developmental, social and political objectives; and the extent to which the state is vulnerable to external pressures by donors and development partners. Obviously, as governance becomes more democratic, representative, transparent and accountable, this should provide a window of opportunity for better interface between the social science community and policy makers and for more effective utilization of indigenous policy research. While, under these circumstances, the climate for indigenous policy research may improve, there is no guarantee that the results of research would actually be utilized if the syndrome of dependence on external sources for policy orientation continues to prevail.

These problems notwithstanding, and indeed because of them, there is now more reason for the indigenous research community, civil society as a whole and African regional and sub-regional organizations, institutions and associations to keep the pressure on governments by addressing policy issues, producing quality research relevant for policy making purposes, strug-

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12  For comprehensive recommendations on how cooperation between governments and the
    academic and research community could be strengthened see ECA (1992). CODESRIA
    has been mounting a tireless effort in defence of academic freedom. The issue was
    recently debated at Kampala Conference on Academic Freedom, 1990 and a declaration
    was adopted by the participants on that occasion.

**gling** for the freedom of thought and academic freedom and contributing to
the restoration of the viability of Africa's institutions of higher learning and
the strengthening of indigenous research capacity.

Equally important is the need to exert continuous pressure on the interna-
tional community, and particularly the international financial institutions, to
loosen their control over the process of development policy making in
Africa, stop the creation of parallel capacity and recognize the value of in-
digenous policy-oriented research and support to indigenous institutions. It is
tantalizing to note in this regard that the shortcomings of current donor
policies have been amply recognized by them and yet no serious steps have
been taken to reverse the situation. The vice-president for Africa Region of
the World Bank has recently stated the following in an address at a con-
ference in Virginia:

> *Now it's my contention that the donors and African governments*
> *together have in effect undermined capacity in Africa; they're*
> *undermining it faster than they are building it, or at least as fast*
> (Jaycox 1993).

He went further to add:

> *People go around saying the World Bank imposes policies. Now this*
> *has got to change because we are not imposing anything. We're*
> *supporting a tiny minority of people in those countries who know what*
> *they're doing and we agree. But the fact is in many countries they're*
> *not capable yet of putting together plans which will solve their*
> *problems. Now that's the fundamental reality, and I say the way we're*
> *going about it is not working either. The idea that we can provide this*
> *from 8,000 or 10,000 miles away is ridiculous. .... We are now insisting*
> *that the governments generate their own economic reform plans. We'll*
> *help, we'll critique, we'll eventually negotiate and we'll support*
> *financially those things which seem to be reasonably making sense, but*
> *we're not going to write these plans. We're not going to say: Here you*
> *are, do this, and we'll give you money. That's out. So for the minsters*
> *and governors here, this is a wake-up call on that. We're not going to*
> *do this any more, but you're going to have to find that domestic*
> *capacity* (Jaycox 1993).

Similarly, many evaluations by the OECD countries and the UN system
have underscored the same concerns and the need to build up and effectively
utilize indigenous capacity.[13] Only time would reveal whether these

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13 See for example UNPAERD Secretariat, UNDP, DAC, World Bank (1989); OECD,
*Development Cooperation - Report of the Chairman of DAC*, DAC 1990; UNDP (1993).

pronouncements will now be translated into serious action. The danger to watch for, however, is whether these initiatives would focus on building up an African constituency to justify, support, back-stop and elaborate policies within the framework of SAPs in particular and donor-conceived and donor-driven policies in general; and there is no telling or guarantee that this would not be the case. The African countries have been challenged to take ownership of their economic reform programmes and development strategies. If they are to do so in any genuine manner, there is no alternative for them but to tap on and enhance internal capacities for research, policy analysis and policy formulation within governmental structures as well as in institutions of higher learning and research at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

## Conclusion

It is inevitable that African social science, grounded on African experience and reality, should contribute to the continent's advancement and solutions of its manifold socio-economic and political problems. Indeed, without this contribution, it is highly improbable that appropriate policies and strategies capable of achieving these objectives will ever be devised. From how to achieve economic recovery, sustainable development, effectively manage the economy to enhancing national reconciliation, fostering the democratic process, strengthening the institutions of civil society and strengthening popular participation in the economy, polity, society and governance there is no viable alternative to indigenous social science. It is bad enough that African countries lack certain critical skills, but it is utterly intolerable, un-explainable and unjustifiable that governments do not tap on whatever meagre resources that exist and put them to judicious use. There is a grow-ing consensus that sustainable development and socio-economic transforma-tion cannot take place in Africa without indigenization of the development process and investment in self-reliance. The contribution of indigenous so-cial science research to these strategic objectives is crucial and indispen-sable.

At this critical juncture of Africa's history when the continent has lost, to a large degree, both the ability and initiative to think for itself and shape its destiny; when many governments — because of the poverty of their nations — have chosen or were constrained to adopt reform programmes and political and economic conditionalities of dubious basis and often disastrous consequences; when the wisdom and expertise of indigenous think-tanks, researchers and experts are being willfully ignored; when the existing indigenous capacities for policy research and policy analysis are being

bypassed, allowed to rut and, on occasion, dismantled; when parallel institutions and research organizations are being created and financially buttressed by outsiders to influence thinking and research and orient them to particular directions; when all of this is happening, Africa's research community, institutions and organizations have an historic responsibility to think and act strategically to encourage policy-oriented research and enhance the chances for its utilization by governments, the business community and civil society as a whole as well as to loosen the stranglehold of outsiders on research and minimize their influence on policy making.

In the years to come, the African social science community and institutions must venture — more aggressively — into those fields and areas of research that are of direct and pragmatic impact on and meaning for the lives of the majority of the people in Africa. Focus ought to be shifted to policy-oriented research that would help, inter-alia, to imaginatively devise policies that would combine the need for adjustment with the need for the transformation of the continent's economic, social and political structures, improve the quality of the lives of the people, alleviate poverty, better manage the African economies and assert the primacy of human development, structural transformation of the African economies, popular participation in development, democratization of polity, society and the economy, the establishment of peace, security and stability, dealing with the problems of the transition to democracy and the achievement of regional and sub-regional economic cooperation and integration.

Of late, there has been much decrying of how marginalized a continent Africa has become. A sure recipe for cementing that calamity over the long-run is the marginalization of indigenous research, researchers and structures of research. The challenge ahead can hardly be spelt in more clearer terms.

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# Whither Social Science Institutions in Africa: A Prognosis

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## Introduction

The basic thrust of this paper is to analyze the historical evolutions of social science institutions during the last three decades, identify the main actors involved in this evolution and the major trends emerging towards the future. We conclude by attempting a prognosis of what is the most likely evolution during the next two decades and therefore what are the challenges and options open to a strategic institution such as CODESRIA. Briefly we will argue that:

1. Social science institutions and the production of social knowledge in Africa during the last 30 years have been shaped by the socio-economic and political contexts in which they were operating as well as by a number of critical actors, namely:

    •  the national governments;

    •  the students and professors;

    •  the middle class as the most important sector of civil society;

    •  the external donor community.

2. Social science institutions are of various types and should be differentiated by their formal and effective ownership as well as by the different roles they play in a country/sub-region or the continent; the two elements — ownership and function of institutions — are important factors in their specific evolution;

3. The externally imposed 'solutions' to the economic and political crises of African countries during the 80s, and the dramatic changes in the international environment in this half of the 90s, has led to:

- the intellectual domination of the African social science, by the neoclassic school of economics as represented by the Bretton Woods institutions — the World Bank (WB) and IMF.[1]

- such domination is reinforced by the creation of new parallel research and training centers focusing exclusively on policy analysis and economic management; some old universities are recuperated by donor support focusing on the same program at the expense of others.

4. While most of the traditional universities and the UN supported regional institutions are in the process of being restructured and perhaps of withering away, the new parallel institutions and some of the old universities with WB programmes are expected to dominate the social science scene in Africa for the rest of this decade and the next.

5. While CODESRIA and other similar social science institutions have played an important role in the 70s and 80s as critiques of developmentalism and received conventional social science, they do now and will in the near future, face a more difficult and challenging situation. What should their long-term strategy be for facing the coming future?

In the first half of the paper I will focus on the most important social science institutions — those 'owned' by the national governments; namely universities and other higher level training and research institutions in the different fields of social science. The second half of the paper will deal with the other types of social science institutions — those regional institutions owned by the UN System, the coordinating African institutions (the NGOs)

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1    The Bretton Woods institutions' 'school' of economic growth and development is part of the neoclassical movement which considers market prices as the key instrument for bringing about economic growth, and eventually general social development. The WB/IMF operationalise their 'development thinking' through the SAPs. The free market economics during the Thatcher/Reagan rule in the late 70s and the 80s dominated the 'development thinking' in the USA and the UK. This widely publicized school of economics had an important place in the conventional social science of Europe and North America during this period and consequently became influential, if not dominant in Africa in both the universities and governments, through the SAPs. More important, the donor community under the coordination of the WB, began to link (in their conditionalities SAPs and other form aid), the introduction of the liberal multi-party political systems in African countries. The argument behind this linkage (which is doubted by many scholars), is that economic growth in African countries, at this stage of their development, can only take place under a multi-party political system. Thus the WB/IMF 'school' of economic growth was not only linked to the technicalities of SAPs, but extended to the arena of the political system and 'governance' and to such other areas as poverty ('Poverty Alleviation'), to social problems ('Social Dimension of Adjustment' (SDA ), to economic analysis and economic management ('Capacity Building') etc. In effect the WB/IMF 'thinking' extends — through the totality of their projects and programmes — to the entire traditional area of social science i.e. economy, society and politics.

at the sub-regional/regional level and owned by the social science community; and those new institutions and programmes owned and sponsored by the donor community (coordinated by the WB). The paper will end with a prognosis of the trends and the coming challenges about to face the researcher's institutions and the need for them to develop new strategies.

To make sense of the many different types of social science institutions, I will classify them into five broad categories — basically in terms of the 'ownership' of the institutions. These are:-

    (i) Government Led National Institutions

    (ii) UNECA/Inter-Governmental Led Institutions

    (iii) Social Science Community Led Institutions

    (iv) Donor Community Led Institutions

Let us quickly go over these different types of institutions and briefly look at their histories and the context of their operations before we discuss the emerging trends at the end of the paper.

## Government Led National Institutions

### *The* Raison d'Etre *of Universities and Research Institutes*

These are mainly higher level training and research institutions created, financed and monitored by national governments. Most important of these institutions are the universities, research institutes such as those of African or Development Studies or Administration and Management training institutes and various types of teacher training colleges. In some countries there may be additional other institutions such as diplomacy training centers or foreign affairs think tank type of institution etc. There may also be other more specialized institutions in languages, history, literature etc. with focus on the local and the traditional. But on the whole the number and range of these institutions in medium and small countries is limited to 1 or 2 universities and 4 or 5 institutes. The few larger countries such as Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, have from 5 to 20 universities and many smaller institutes.

In the majority of African countries (i.e. medium and small countries), the 'core' of the social science institutions are one university and two or three institutes, which were created around or just after independence, during the first half of the sixties. Others were added on as needed — mainly during the seventies.

The primary and formal functions of these institutions were and still are:-

(a) to train high level human resources for governments and its parastatal institutions, as well as for the private sector;

(b) to carry out research especially on the country's economy in order to help the governments in their efforts to 'develop' the countries;

(c) to carry out research on the histories and cultures of the different people
    . of the respective countries in order to revive African culture per se and to
    develop 'national' culture as perceived by the governments.

Clearly these institutions were and still are critical to both governments and
countries. As an 'industry', they produce:

(i) the social knowledge of the countries — information, knowledge and
    ideologies required by and essential to the governments, the private
    sector, and the ruling groups;

(ii) the immediate and next generations of leaders for the governments, the
    private sector and the countries;

(iii) the skilled cadre needed to run the vast machinery of governments,
    parastatals, and the private sector.

In order to ensure that these institutions produced the 'right product', their
control was thus essential for both the national governments and their sup-
porters inside and outside the countries. If the 'products' of these institutions
somehow had 'inappropriate' skills, knowledge and ideologies, they could
hamper the running of the governmental system and could create opposition
to the governments and division within the countries. These would be un-
desirable developments which neither the nationalist governments nor their
supporters wanted. Hence African governments viewed these institutions as
being critical to their own security and survival and put in place elaborate
mechanism for their effective control and monitoring.

If these institutions were and still are politically important to the govern-
ments, they were also of great social and intellectual significance to the
society as a whole. A differentiation took place amongst the institutions of
most countries, with the early 'core' institutions amongst them acquiring
social prestige and over time became dominated by the higher echelon of the
elite groups. They thus became the producers of the elite of the countries
and the children of the elite.

Just before and immediately after independence, these 'core' institutions
were built by the governments with some support from the ex-colonial
powers. As government created institutions, and as the most prestigious in-
stitutions in the country, the government invested heavily in them- both
financially and politically. During this early stage of institutional develop-
ment, the ex-colonial powers provided important financial and personal sup-
port as well as the backup technical support in the diploma/examination sys-
tem, libraries, text books etc., as well as administrative support. Thus during
the early phase of independence, the governments and the ex-colonial
powers were the basic 'owners' of these semi-autonomous institutions,
which in form and content were modelled on their metropolitan counterparts,

but with stricter control and monitoring mechanism by the national government. However by the mid-sixties the Americans were well on the way to establishing themselves in certain 'key' (for the Americans) countries, providing all kinds of support — 'institutions-building', scholarships, personnel, and undertaking extensive research in the fields of political science, sociology/anthropology and economics. The strong resource and organizational base of the Americans progressively began to make the American 'presence' more visible in particular countries.

The Canadians and 'non-colonial' European powers (the Scandinavians, but including Holland and West Germany!) began to enter the field of providing support to social science institutions during the early 70s. Their entry effectively widened the sources of funding for individual researchers and institutions in certain countries.[2]

These national institutions started largely as important investments by the African governments who financed a substantial part of the early stage of their development and maintenance. Progressively however, the contribution of external donors became more important, particularly during the late 70s and the 80s when countries were undergoing the SAP regime and therefore had to drastically reduce their contribution to these institutions. Clearly these national social science institutions are the most important within each country and continentally. To understand their evolution and eventually identify the major trends within these institution, we need to look at the impact on them of the internal evolution of the countries themselves as well as the changing external environment. These national institutions passed through three broad phases which I will now discuss.

### The Evolutions of the Institutions: The Socio-Economic and Political Contexts

#### The Decade of the 1960s: The Phase of Consensus
The institutions during this phase had the following general characteristics:-

(a) emphases on training;

(b) smaller student's body;

(c) high social status;

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2   For further discussion on the role of external finance in social science in Africa, see Bujra's 'Foreign Financing of Research and the Development of African Social Science', paper presented at the CODESRIA symposium on Academic Freedom, Kampala, 26-29 november, 1990.

(d) strong multiple ties with ex-colonial institutions, the latter moulding the early development of the former. Later in the sixties the Americans also played a similar important role in some countries;

(e) complete acceptance of conventional metropolitan social science and its ideological underpinning;

(f) relative academic and administrative autonomy;

(g) local academics were not in command of the intellectual leadership of the institutions, although they were generally nationalist and pro-government;

(h) the institutions had no financial problems;

(i) there was general consensus on the role of the institutions and the directions of government led development in the country. There were of course debates and disagreements etc. but mainly on technical issues rather than on fundamentals. There was general political and ideological consensus. The very few local and foreign academics who had profound disagreement with the status quo, were effectively marginalized.

*The Consensus Amongst the Main Actors*

The 60s have been described as the 'euphoric decade' during which general consensus prevailed not only at the institutions of higher learning, but also in society at large. This, in our view, was largely because of a conjoint of common interests of all the main actors involved with the social science institutions. Consider the main interest of the major actors at the time:-

**The Governments**: from their point of view, the institutions were producing trained, generally uncritical cadre without any problems. The institutions were supporting and sustaining the 'official' ideology of the government. Furthermore, they were providing the underpinning of the nationalist view and pride of African culture and history. The institutions were thus fulfilling their functions correctly, as far as the governments were concerned. To continue maintaining and developing the institutions in the same course was thus the strategy of the governments.

**The Academics**: the academics who joined these institutions in the 60s, were generally trained abroad (metropolitan countries and the US), were starting a distinguished, secure, well paid and high status professional career, and looked forward to upward mobility within the institutions/profession and possibly the government; they were generally nationalist and supported the governments, and as Mamdani put it, they thought that 'the state ...is the custodian of the development process and the university an institution that must train human resources for development. It then seemed natural to us that the state play a key role in managing the university' (Mamdani 1993:12). Their interests and those of the governments were thus essentially

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the same. The academic's strategy was thus to support the government and not 'rock the boat'.

**The Students:** as the top most group of the educational pyramid, they entered these institutions with the assurance of a good and free training, secure high status career at the end of it, upward social mobility and an expected life-long economic security for self and the extended family. If there were any dissatisfaction amongst students during this period, it was mainly on the ground that the food was not up to their high standards of expectations. These institutions thus catered for the interest of the student's body and the latter's strategy was generally to be good students and graduate from the various institutions with a reasonable degree/diploma.

**The External Donors:** the institutions were strategic in producing the trained cadres to maintain the wheels of the governments and private sector. The government's development orientation was based on free market with a strong dose of welfare, and a political system which attempted to maintain consensus within a nationalist ideology. More importantly, these governments largely pursued a pro-Western foreign policy. This was an ideal situation for the external donors given the cold war context at the time. And the social science institutions during this early phase of the 60s played a crucial role in underpinning such a situation. Hence the donor's strategy was to give strong support of various types to these institutions.

These interests of the main actors with a stake in the social science institutions, were finely balanced, and as described here, there was a communality of interest to maintain the institutions as they were and to develop them accordingly. However this complex interactions between actors and institutions contained internal dynamics which were the seeds of potential disruption in the near futures, of this communality and political and ideological consensus. There were thus conflicting forces within the societies which expressed themselves in internal differences within the government and the institutions but which, though contained during this period, were to appear later — breaking the consensus etc . We will discuss some of these issues later as we proceed with the evolution of these institutions. Here however it is sufficient to emphasize that the early phase of the development of social science institutions in Africa was a remarkable period of general unity and agreement about both goals and means. Unfortunately however it is not clear whether the knowledge produced by these institutions at the time had any direct or indirect contribution to the modest economic growth of most African countries during the 60s. Furthermore and with hindsight, barring the few brilliant exceptions of scholars such as Samir Amin and Ali Mazrui, there were no sparks nor any form of development in the social sciences in African countries during this period. These institutions were largely transmitters of metropolitan social science in their respective countries.

### The Expanding Phase of the 1970s: The Phase of Competing Ideologies

*The Changing Internal Context: The Emergence of Conflicts*

Most African countries entered the 70s with their economies continuing their modest growth of the 60s. The government itself was expanding considerably, particularly the parastatal sector. And so was the private sector. During the second half of the seventies however, most countries began to experience economic decline — some to almost zero growth. Economic crises became prevalent and the WB/IMF began to come up with the SAPs as a solution to the growing economic difficulties of African countries. Some 10 countries had accepted SAP by the end of the 1970s.

By the mid seventies the African middle-class had become sizeable and was in fact growing fast.

One of the major consequences of the growth of the middle class, was the pressure this class exerted on governments to expand social science institutions. It was during this period that new Universities were opened and various types of training and research centers were created. The student body expanded dramatically causing considerable problems over infra-structure and services at these institutions. At the same time the national academic staff increased steeply. The new and young academics brought with them the disciplinary divisions and battles acquired from the countries of training. More importantly they brought with them the ideological commitments acquired in Europe and North America as well as the socialist countries. Thus the students/professors 'group' became an important actor during this period, in contrast to the earlier decade of the 1960s. More significantly however, by the late seventies, the fast growing middle-class had become economically more differentiated and a significant part of it marginalized from political power — often on ethnic basis. As part of this process the military began to assert itself as a major political force through a series of coups d'état. Eventually the military were forced to share power with various factions of the civilian elite by forming political alliances with them.

Meanwhile the African economies were being increasingly integrated into the world economy with stronger and more diversified linkages between the countries and the international system, particularly through the financial market. By the late seventies, external debt was emerging as a major factor in the economic crises and the country's external links.

At the international level, both the information revolution which facilitated access to information, data and knowledge, the rapid globalization of the new information technologies, had considerable impact on the availability of publications in African countries which hitherto had been inaccessible or unavailable.

It is within this internal and external context that we now briefly charac-
terize the second phase in the evolution of the social science institutions
during the 1970s. The basic characteristics of these institutions during this
phase, were:-

(i) Expansions of institutional capacities (sometime doubling the number of
institutions) in response to demands from expansion of government, the
parastatal and the private sector;

(ii) Over production of cadre from the institutions to the expanding middle
class, some of whom could not be absorbed, by the state or the private
sector;

(iii) Increase in foreign financial and personnel support to the institutions;

(iv) Easy access to and availability of knowledge in books and journals on
major trends of ideas and schools of thoughts circulating internationally,
such as:-

- Assertion of Third Worldism — e.g. NIEO and various trends of
  ideas emanating from the UN specialized agencies such as UNCTAD,
  UNESCO, ILO etc.,

- The Latin American Dependencia school, Unequal Exchange debate
  and the literature on Asian Marxism — particularly Maoism,

- European and American neo-Marxism as well as official Marxisms,

- UN Developmentalism;

(v) Deterioration of the economic situation in many countries, during the
second half of the 1970s;

(vi) A combination of financial crises and the SAPs, leading to the reduction
of funds to social science institutions towards the end of 1970s.

*Contending Ideologies and the Radicalization of the Universities*
A combination of forces arising from internal developments within the
countries and changes in the international environment, led to a breakdown
of the consensus phase of the 1960s. As a result several significant develop-
ments took place within the institutions themselves during the decade of the
1970s.

Firstly there was the radicalization of a substantial part of both the
academics and the students. The students resorted to strike actions mainly
against mismanagement and lack of democracy within the institutions. These
actions led to a series of closures of universities and other major institutes
thus precipitating crisis situations within the elite/middle-class section of the
society. The 'radical' academics (normally a minority but more active be-
cause generally more politically committed), launched major debates on the

policies of governments and accused them of failing the people. The radical academic's attacks on the government were broadly based on the following arguments:-

(a) government policies have led to the exploitation of the country by foreign investors (supported by a small section of local investors) and the consequent deterioration of the economic conditions of most workers and peasants;

(b) governments have sold the country's major natural resources cheaply to foreigners thus making the country poorer;

(c) governments have, through illegal use of state power and institutions, enriched a small section of the elite in and outside the governments;

(d) governments have deepened economic differentiation within the countries;

(e) the ruling groups have unleashed corruption and wastage in government and ethnic hostilities within the country;

(f) governments have become dictatorial by using all types of forceful methods to suppress all forms of critique, opposition and democratic practices accepted in the 1960s — especially against academics, students and journalists etc.

These arguments of the radical academics, dominated the debates in social science institutions leading to a serious split within the academic communities — between those for the status quo and those proposing change.

Secondly, African countries went through considerable political instabilities, especially through military coups d'état, but also through secessionist movements, peasant rebellions, large scale withdrawals by peasants from commercial production, frequent industrial strikes etc. The deep economic divisions which had been created and the dormant ethnic hostilities, both emerged into the national scene as major problems. The critique emanating from the social science institutions began to be perceived by various forces and groups outside the institutions as being correct and justified. They were thus soon taken up and reproduced by the different dissatisfied groups and classes, in civil society.

Thus by the end of the 70s, the social science institutions had come under intense pressure from both students' struggle, and academics' activism. The governments reaction to the struggles of the students and academics was to use crude oppressive methods in an attempt at suppressing the campus struggles. Furthermore, through cuts in external funds and deep cuts of government finance, the institutions began to literally crumble. There began to appear what was aptly called 'the book famine' and other similar syndromes in most social science institutions. Most of the academics became

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demoralized by government suppression and by the economic crises — high inflation forcing them to 'moonlight' into other economic activities; consultancies being only one of them.

It is under these difficult circumstances that the demoralized academics found it necessary to support and rally around old and new NGOs 'owned' by the academic community at the sub-regional and continental levels. These institutions, as will be discussed later, supported, buttressed and sometimes rekindled the debates at the national level, and through various activities, kept the demoralized academics, morally and intellectually afloat — on a survival diet of books, journals and conferences.

Finally, the debate within the national social science institutions became a debate about social science itself — between received conventional social science which supported the capitalist system and the ideology which goes with it, and critical social science which broadly follows the framework of Marxist methodology. Everything discussed in the class room was subjected to questioning and classification in relation to the two types of social sciences. There were no neutral or grey areas with regards to journals, books, lectures, ideas and their proponents, and of course events taking place within the countries. Critical social science provided the framework from which came the prevalent critique of government. And those who supported critical social science were generally those activist academics who opposed the governments, some of whom moved into the arena of praxis and politics. Conventional social science on the other hand was the bedrock and foundation of government policies and the status quo.[3] And conventional social scientists were generally advocates and defenders of government policies, providing 'scientific' basis to such policies in the form of technical advise to government and through publications. This debate thus raged through the major institutions in almost every country, splitting the academic community into the two opposing camps. There were of course important differences and tendencies within each camp. The left of center camp (critical social science) in particular was often virulent in its internal debates. But on the whole the broad division was between the two camps, and government's reactions against academics (sometime violent) did not take into considerations the fine nuances and differences amongst their critics.

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3   There were exceptions. These were countries which proclaimed to have socialist governments and which followed socialist policies, particularly Marxism. Officially these countries were against Capitalism and liberal political ideology. At the same time they
•   were hostile and intolerant of academics who were proponents of critical social science and who dared critique government's 'socialist' policies. Example of such countries in the 1970s were Guinea Conakry, Benin, Algeria, Congo, Mozambique etc.

The social science institutions in most countries thus became effectively battle grounds between government supporters and radical academics and students. As the government's control mechanism became more and more violent many academics left for 'greener pastures', generally abroad, while the rich elite groups began sending their students to Europe and North America. It was during this period that the governments began to literally 'starve' the institutions of funds, as part of SAPs requirements.

The confrontation at the 'campus' between the government on one hand and the students and academics on the other, was basically a forerunner of the deeper divisions and potential conflicts within society at large. If the previous peasants rebellions and worker's strikes of the 1960s and early 1970s had been 'quietly' controlled, the 'campus' conflict of the late 70s had transformed into a new phenomenon representing the dissatisfaction of a substantial section of the expanded elite groups and the middle class as a whole. The dissatisfied part of the middle class is based largely in the capital, and though marginalized from political power, nevertheless has strong links within the government system. It is very articulate and often has its own 'media'. More significantly, it has sympathetic support from influential external groups — such as human rights groups, some donors, and sometimes even governments — groups which could publicize their case internationally. Once the focus of opposition moved from the 'campus' to the dissatisfied part of the middle class in the wider society (a basic objective of the academics), then the rules of conflict and confrontation changed. The middle class was a much more serious opposition to the government than the academics alone, and potentially it could form an alternative government. This dissatisfied part of the middle class became the bases for the so called 'democratization' movements of the 80s.

*Conflicting Interests of the Main Actors*
Let us briefly look at the changing perception of the major actors and their interest in the social science institutions during this phase.

The government: The government's role swung like a pendulum, from expanding the institutions in the early 70s to starving them financially and questioning their usefulness. This is because of the internal development within the countries which have resulted in considerable opposition to governments policies as discussed above. The social science institutions were producing more cadres than either the governments or the economies could absorb and more importantly they had become a forum for not only debating issues, but for articulating the case of the opposition groups and exposing the deep divisions and contradictions within the country. For most governments these institutions had become rather dangerous, and were easily persuaded by the new thinking of the WB/IMF that the institutions had 'outlived their usefulness' and needed immediate restructuring, if not complete

dismantling. This idea became the seed for the future strategies of governments towards social science institutions, as we shall see later.

For both the students and the academics, these institutions were no longer a stepping stone for a bright future career and economic security (or even for an ongoing career, in the case of the academics). They thus became a base for extra curricular activities — both economic and political. As long as the institutions provided a base(however difficult that base may be), and so long as there was no alternative base for a large body of the academics and students, their strategy was to try and ensure the continuity of these institutions.

For society at large, these institutions were still important and prestigious, even if their images have been tarnished by constant crises and government propaganda about their uselessness. Thus given the importance of education in African societies, and higher education in particular, for the majority of the people in the countries (and particularly the middle class); these institutions were still very important to them as national assets. Hence it was politically very difficult for the government to carry out any major restructuring of these institutions.

The external donors on the other hand had become alarmed at these developments and particularly at the new 'political' or 'confrontational' role the institutions were playing. A fundamental idea contained in SAP is that higher education should be opened to the free market and the existing institutions should be pruned to a small core of highly specialized centers which would directly support government policies and the economic management of the country. This idea was proposed as part of the SAP package, but was opposed by governments on the ground that such a policy was politically difficult to implement. In the late 70s most other donors began to experience internal economic difficulties and so began to cut down on any increases in their aid packages. The coordination of donor aid around World Bank policies, had not began but already discussions were taking place on this.

By the early 1980s, most national social science institutions had began to be physically dilapidated, performing their minimal functions with great difficulties because of reduced government and foreign finance. At the same time there was considerable pressure from an expanding student population to enter these institutions despite their deterioration and the steady migration of academics mainly to non-African countries or Bantustan South Africa. Thus the situations of these institutions was almost exactly the opposite of what it was like in the 1960s. And this brings us to the next phase of the evolutions of these government led national social science institutions.

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### The Phase from 1980: Africa as the Donor's Dominion

*Deepening Socio-Political Divisions*

The 1980s have been described as the 'lost decade' — a general phrase which does not tell us what was lost and to whom! The economic crises which was experienced by most countries in the late 70s, became deeper and widespread covering almost all African countries. The African economies with their serious structural distortions and weakness were propelled into their deepest crises by the triple shocks — the second oil shock, the recession in the developed economies and the external debt. The result was a deep and almost catastrophic socioeconomic crisis. Under these circumstances African countries began, *en masse*, to accept WB/IMF stabilization and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). From 1981 to 1989 a total of 36 sub-Saharan countries had accepted SAPs, most of them going through a succession of programmes. 'On average, each of the 36 countries undertook seven adjustment programmes in the 1980s. Eleven countries initiated 10 or more programmes' (Jespersen 1992:13). Only 6% of sub-Saharan countries had not initiated any adjustment programme by 1989. 'In addition several countries (eg. Burkina Faso) introduced some kind of 'home-grown' programme. Thus adjustment became the main focus of economic policy-making during the 1980s'.[4]

During the 1980s and up to the present, there have been important efforts (by forces within and outside the region) to bring about democratization in individual countries. This process which is still going on has not been easy or smooth. Almost all the countries which have introduced 'multi-party' political system, have experienced serious internal conflicts between political parties, which in most cases have tended to be vehicles of ethnic groups. Thus ethnic rivalries and hostilities have come out into the open in these countries, with opposition to the government tending to be an alliance of convenience of ethnic groups who perceive themselves to have been excluded from political power. And these ethnic alliances are generally led by the urban based middle class groups opposing governments. In addition to the 'controlled conflicts' emerging out of what Museveni (current President of Uganda) calls 'competitive politics', there have been other movements — secessionist, religious and other social movements of various types, some reviving from the past while others were new — which have added to the seriousness of political instabilities in most countries (including those two

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4    Jespersen, 1992, 13 The success or failure of these policies in individual countries or in the region as a whole, is a subject of considerable controversy, although most Africans perceive the programmes as having failed to (a) diminish if not remove the economic crises, and (b) remove any of the structural distortions and weakness in African economies. This point will be taken up later.

beacons and success stories of market economies during the 1970s: Kenya and Ivory Coast).

*The Final Collapse of the Institutions*

While the governments were very busy implementing the various stabilization and adjustment programmes and at the same time coping with political instability, the national social science institutions were ignored and their funding allocations annually reduced.[5] External funding to the institutions remained stagnant or was also progressively reduced. The institutions thus deteriorated rapidly, the infra-structure collapsing, the best and not so best academics leaving for better 'pastures', the children of the top economic elite groups going abroad while at the same time a larger number of students were being admitted into the existing institutions. The quality of training went down markedly, and normal research became nonexistent, except for consultancy research for external agencies. Finally the institutions became physically depleted and hardly functioning. Makerere University College is given by a World Bank document as an example (a Box example), titled 'Decline in Capacity at Makerere'.

Throughout the 1960s, Makerere University College in Kampala, Uganda was one of Africa's premier universities.... Makerere was also a de facto regional center of academic excellence...

'Unfortunately, this golden age of Makerere was cut short during the 1970s and 1980s. Those years of economic hardship and the ravages of war saw the institution shrivel to a mere skeleton of its former self. Inadequate staff salaries, a decrepit library, neglect of campus public utilities (telephone, water, electricity, sewers) — all these factors led to widespread faculty flight and a staggering decline in the quality of the educational experience at the university. Lecturers there were being paid the equivalent of less than US$25 per month in the summer of 1989. Only one phone was working for the whole of the university. Computer and modern technological facilities (for example the fax machine) were virtually nonexistent. 'Makerere is a graphic example of the decline that has occurred in numerous higher educational institutions throughout Sub-Saharan Africa' (World Bank 1991:11).

The World Bank has characterized the present situation of social science institutions as follows: 'At present higher education in Africa is confronted by an inappropriate mix of outputs, overproduction of poor-quality graduates, and high cost' (World Bank 1989:81). To elaborate:

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5    Between 1980 and 1985, sub-Saharan African spending on education, as a proportion to GNP, actually decreased from 4.5% to 3.5%. For many African countries, this spending was still hovering around 3.5% in 1990 — far short of the figure of 5% of GNP deemed necessary for a sustainable education system, *Donors to African Education*, Newsletter Vol.5, No.2, 1993, p.1.

(i) 'The growth in numbers of university graduate since independence has been extraordinary, from 1,200 in 1960 to over 70,000 in 1983. However, partly as a consequence of this growth, there is now a crises of quality in African universities. Too many poorly trained graduates are entering the labour market each year, many of them in already oversupplied sectors' (World Bank 1991:11).

(ii) 'One explanation of the shortages in high-level skills is the brain drain. The United States alone had more than 34,000 African students in 1985, many of whom are unlikely to return to Africa; there are reported to be more than 70,000 trained Africans who have opted to remain in Europe' (World Bank 1989:81). 'Over 10,000 Nigerians are reportedly now working in the United Sates' World Bank 1989).

An important factor which directly affected the institutions during this period was the intensification of student's and academic's activism, which was more and more related to the democratizations process in many countries. In response to this the governments often took harsh measures of closing universities, sending students to the villages for long periods, imprisoning and sacking academic staff etc. The institutions became essentially unmanageable and yet for political reasons, the government could not prune and restructure them. They became an encumbrance, an albatross to the governments.

*The Changing Parameters: The Demise of the LPA and the Triumph of the 'Berg Report'*

The great debates of the 1970s between the left and the right on alternative development paths and the central question of equity in development — debates which polarized the academic community into opposing camps continually confronting each other and throwing intellectual sparks all over the place, slowly and progressively became muted in the 1980s. The parameters of discussion on development for this decade were set out by the Monrovia Symposium report of 1979 followed by the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980 on the one hand, and by the World Bank's 'Berg Report' of 1981 on the other. While the former presented the African states' point of view which argued for a more autonomous form of a 'mixed-economy' type of development for African countries within an inter-dependent world economy and some form of regional economic integration, the latter advocated a return to an undiluted free market based economic growth with African countries focusing even more on expanding their traditional export of the primary goods sector. While the government's point of view on development was being 'presented to the public', many governments were at the same time signing agreements with the WB/IMF for stabilization and adjustment programmes. By the mid 1980s, the governments were mainly arguing about the technicalities of the SAPs, their implementations and their social effects. The Lagos Plan of Ac-

tion (LPA) was at the same time slowly being forgotten. On the other hand the Berg Report's basic arguments, despite serious critique by both African governments and academics,[6] was being progressively reinforced. By 1989, 36 countries had gone through various stabilization and adjustment programmes(see above), and the publication of the WB's *From Crises to Sustainable Growth: A Long-Term perspective Study* crowned the intellectual dominance of the WB parameters and development framework on all discussions of African development. The study became the bible for all researchers carrying out consultancy research — which by this time was the main form of research taking place in many social science institutions.

By the early 1990s, and after wide and intensive implementation of SAPs in most African countries, there was extensive discussion on the performance of SAPs. The most positive and optimistic view was that, at best, SAP had 'mixed performance' (Smith 1991:31). However most African intellectuals considered that the basic structural problems of African economies, especially the distorted linkages with the external environment, have not changed and indeed have not been addressed by SAPs. At the same time SAPs have evolved into a medium to longer-term process rather than a short-term one. Some see this process going into the 21st century Taylor 1991:19). Thus the development process which in the 1960s and 1970s was basically in the hands of the African governments, today this is no longer the case. Indeed it is becoming clear that even the long-term development process is now in the hands of the donor community, coordinated by the WB/IMF. This raises the important question as to whether the social science community should continue to address their critique to African governments or should shift and address them to the donor community.

By the end of the 1970s, the national social science institutions had become physically delapidated and overcrowded with students. They were trying to maintain their high quality training, even when the academics were doing very little research, and when most had gone through a political 'cleansing' process. Nevertheless the institutions were still operating at the minimal level. Supporters of critical social science — the left in general — were generally demoralized. It was however, during this period that the forum for analyzing and debating issues relating to the development process, from the perspective of critical social science, began to shift from the national institutions to NGO institutions at the regional and sub-regional levels. These latter institutions are 'owned' by the academics themselves — eg. CODESRIA, AAPS, OSSREA etc. As will be seen later, critical social scientists tended to dominate these institutions, and the debate between the

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6   CODESRIA, Colloquium on the World Bank Report: *Accelerated Development in sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action*, Dakar, Senegal, 26-27 April, 1982.

conventional and critical social scientists which used to take place at the national institutions during the 1970s, shifted to these institutions in the 1980s. This shift is important because it did symbolize both the important role these NGOs had assumed since the 1970s, as well as the effectiveness of state suppressions of critical social science at the national level. This also explains the dominance of conventional social science at the national level in the 1980s.

## Main Actors and their Broad Strategies

Let us now briefly focus our analysis on the role and strategies of the major actors involved in the development of the social science institutions in Africa during the 1980s. Starting with students, there are three important issues which need to be briefly mentioned here. Firstly it is a major goal of all students to get an entry into and qualify from social science institutions — whatever the outside world may think about the quality of their training. Graduating from these institutions of higher learning is a generalized and deeply held social value. Hence the great demand for entry into these institutions. Secondly once the students are in these institutions they are often divided between a small minority who become politically conscious, radical and active, and the majority who simply want to get their diploma and most likely a job to start a career. Thirdly the students as a group have no power to influence the future development of the institutions, although the activist wing of the students have some power of often forcing the closure (briefly) of the institutions. The general strategy — if they have a common strategy — of the majority of students is to ensure the continuity of the institutions rather than their permanent closure or reduction in their numbers. This goal is a reflection of the general aspiration of the parents and society as a whole.

The academics as professionals had invested heavily in order to become professional academics and therefore their vested interest is the continuity of the institutions which provide their livelihood and the basis of their career — despite the physical functional deterioration of the institutions. This is partly because the academics effectively do not have alternative skills to fall back to and cannot easily change career. Furthermore, both the political activist and those who are involved in supplemental economic activities, prefer the continuity of the institutions which they use as a primary base — for their salaries, as contact and communication points etc. Their present and future strategies are thus to ensure the continuity of the institutions — preferably with improvement in facilities and income, but otherwise in their present state. They are thus generally opposed to pruning or restructuring these institutions as is advocated by the donors. On this they generally have the support of the student body and society at large.

But the governments as the major actor vis-a-vis these institutions, face a serious dilemma. On the one hand society at large, the students and the academics would like these institutions to be improved and their capacities

expanded through further investment of public funds and donor support. On the other hand the governments have no funds for the institutions and donor support is predicated on reforming the entire higher education by reducing the number of the institutions, and reorienting their training and research programme towards economic management and technology. To carry out such restructuring reforms would mean going against the strong wishes of society at large, and would be against the interest of both the students and academics — a powerful group. Such reforms would thus be politically risky. Hence the general paralysis of governments on this issue. However very soon the governments will be forced to take action with regards to higher education as a whole and so will introduce the reforms required by the donors. Government's strategy for the future development of the social science institutions would thus be to introduce a reform package approved by the donor community.

Donor policies on aid to African countries is now largely coordinated by the Global Coalition for Africa under the close guidance of the WB/IMF. The reform of higher education — particularly social science institutions — have been outlined in various WB reports and documents whose recommendations, the governments are being urged to follow. 'To meet the crises in university education, radical measures are needed to improve quality, reduce cost for each student and graduate, constrain output in fields that do not support economic development, and relieve the burden on public sources of financing by increasing the participation of beneficiaries and their families' (World Bank 1989:82). However, whatever savings which may be made through reforming of higher education and through implementing other adjustment measures, may not be enough to create a higher education which is relevant and productive for the fully adjusted and restructured market economies of African countries in the near future. 'Regrettably, all such savings from adjustment measures will not be sufficient, in most countries, to cover the substantial resources needed to revitalize and build African education to the extent essential for future development. International aid will remain a critical determinant of the pace of progress of education in the region' (World Bank 1988:6).

'This support should be offered in the context of a compact' between the Africans and the donor community. A framework for mobilizing resources for economic development exists provided by UNPAAERD. 'To take this initiative a step further, a new global coalition is proposed for the 1990s.' 'The proposed global coalition for Africa would be a forum in which African leaders could meet with their key partners to agree on general strategies that would then provide broad guidance for the design of individual country programmes' on such issues as environmental protection, capacity building, population policy, food security, regional integration etc (World Bank 1989:194).

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· To sum up then, African national social science institutions throughout the 1980s to the present, have been seriously affected by the economic and political crises which almost all African countries have experienced. This in turn has led to the dominance of conventional social science in the entire development process. The dramatic restructuring of African economies, their deeper integration into the world economy, and the concomitant need for a new form of 'economic and development management' of the restructured economies, have made the existing social science institutions unsuitable, according to the donor community. Serious restructuring of these institutions has thus become necessary in order to meet the new demands of 'economic management'. Since the economies themselves are being restructured by a series of programme packages from the WB/IMF, the social science institutions will also need similar customized programme designed and financed by the WB and the donor community. Thus the future of African social science institutions at the national level is no longer in the hands of the governments. Rather the future of these institutions has been mapped out to compliment the emerging restructured market economies of African countries. The reform and restructuring will be carried out by the African governments with expertise from the donors and financed by the donors. The most important and critical part of the reform programme which directly relates to social science institutions, is The African Capacity Building Initiative. The impact of the ACBI's programme on social science institutions will be discussed later in a separate section.

## The Institutions of the UN Researchers and the Donors

### *The UNECA Sponsored Institutions*
During the last 35 years, the UNECA (hereafter ECA) and the African governments have sponsored and created 37 institutions, consisting of banks, clearing houses, associations, consultancy/advisory centers, and training and research institutions. The institutions cover major aspects of development including socioeconomic development, planning and management. They operate at the regional level and their function is to provide services to the member states of the ECA. These institutions are financed by the UN System, African States and other donors but are owned by the ECA and the African governments.

The 37 institutions were created primarily to fill perceived development gaps in Africa. 'ECA-sponsored institutions make important contribution to the development of their member States especially through their capacity-building training programmes, research and consultancy services' (ECA 1993:3). Of the 37 institutions, 9 are in the broad field of Socioeconomic Development. These training and research institutions cover the fields of Social Development (ACARTSOD), Economic planning (IDEP), Management and Administration (ESAMI, AAPAM), Population (RIPS, IFORD),

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Monetary Studies (CAEM), Crime Prevention (UNAFRI) and Women Studies (ATRCW).

The first UN social science institution to be set up was the Institute for Development and Economic Planning (IDEP) in 1962. This obviously reflected the concerns of the African governments and the international community (at the time highly influenced by the ex-colonial powers on African matters). It was felt that African governments needed to know more about economic planning of ex-colonial economies which were being adapted to nationalist goals but within the framework of market economies. It is important to note that, apart from the ADB (African Development Bank), no other social science institution was set up during the 1960s. Of the 8 other social science institutions, 7 were set in the 1970s (between 1971 and 1980). The last institute to be set up — on Crime Prevention — was in 1989. Again this last institute, like the first one, may· have reflected the concerns of the governments over the rise of crimes in African countries in the 1980.

The majority of the ECA-sponsored institutes were set up in the 1970s as part of the grand UN entree into Africa with its ideology of 'Developmentalism' within the framework of the UN Development Decade. As pointed out earlier, the decade of the 70s saw a major opening up of Africa to the international community and the UN presence in Africa was one such important force. However, UN developmentalism, stripped of its jargon, represented no more than orthodox free market economic growth with affirmative actions here and there. And the affirmative actions programmes (women, the handicapped groups, the rural poor etc.) were mainly advocated and initiated by NGOs. Thus the UN training and research institutions set up during the 1970s were basically concerned with propagating orthodox ideas of economic growth — through traditional sectorial planning techniques, monetary policies, population policies, improved administration and management practices, and social welfare policies as advocated by African governments. These institutions operated mainly as training institutions of middle range government officials. Even within the orthodox framework, they produced no important intellectual output through research and publications. Their contribution to the big social science debates and discussion on development, ·was essentially zero (with the exception of IDEP, which I will  discuss below). However the ECA's perception of the contribution of these institutions is very different. It believes that these institutions have so far done very well. 'Over the years, impressive achievements have been made by these institutions...' One achievement has been the 'provision of specialized training to African government officials in the field of socioeconomic analysis and planning, and in the area of management development' (ECA 1993:2). The ECA's criteria of success are that these institutions have trained a large number of officials (whatever the con-

tent of that training) and have therefore built up capacity in African governments to carry out development programmes.

Both the World Bank and a large section of the African social science community, have different views on the achievements of these institutions. Throughout the 1980s, the World Bank attributed part of the African crises to 'mismanagement' and argued that management capacity in governments was very low if it existed at all. By the end of the 1980s, the donor community under the coordination of the World Bank, came up with its own programme, — the African Capacity Building Initiative (ACBI) — an initiative with the objective of setting up programmes and institutes for training and research in policy analysis and economic management. Obviously the WB and the donor community had rather negative views of the achievements of the ECA sponsored institutions — especially in their claim to have built up African capacity for development. Similarly the African social science community do not think highly of these institutions or their achievements. From the mid-seventies onwards when the economic crises began to be serious in some countries and the governments began to tighten their control of the universities in order to silence their critics, these ECA institutions did not provide an alternative forum for such critique of governments development policies and received social science. And African researchers having no faith in these institutions began to create their own institutions, where they could be free to debate and discuss theories and practices of development. The ECA institutions were and continue to be mediocre training institutions of middle level government officials. Hardly any research, not even mediocre, came out of these institutions. The exception of course being IDEP.

## *IDEP — The Exception*

IDEP is a unique and excellent example of what these ECA institutions could have achieved but did not. Between 1962 and 1970, African countries were trying to transform the inherited colonial economies in order to achieve their vision of development. They thus embarked on major 'development programmes' — expanding their export oriented agriculture (the traditional crops), and embarking on import substitutions industrial policies — thus intensifying the integration of the ex-colonial economies into the world market on the basis of their so called 'comparative advantage'. During the period 1962-1970 there was no word from IDEP on these major developments in economic policies implemented by African governments. Similarly, from 1980 to 1990, when the entire African experience of socioeconomic development was being reduced to meaningless cliches by WB 'analysts', IDEP was not only quiet but it was as if it did not exist. The silence of IDEP during this period was very loud and incomprehensible, given the fact that in the 1970s IDEP became well known for its distinctive and controversial views of government policies and development prescriptions of the Bretton

Woods Institutions. Furthermore, CODESRIA which is in the same city of Dakar where IDEP is located was constantly producing critical analysis and commentaries of both government and WB policies during the 1980s while IDEP remained silent.

In 1970 Samir Amin became the Director of IDEP. During the ten years he led the institute, IDEP acquired African and international fame as well as notoriety. Its Political Economy Approach of focusing on the role of classes and the state in analyzing the development problems of African countries, and drawing attention to the 'periphery/center' unequal relationship as a major cause of African under development, attracted African and Third World scholars to IDEP. IDEP organized major conferences and seminars throughout Africa advocating its radical perspective of Africa's development problems. Through these public exposures and publications, IDEP became a major center of debates and a source of radical ideas on Africa and the Third World. More importantly IDEP attracted many African scholars as teachers, researchers and participants in its conferences, thus becoming a parking place for projects which could not be carried out at the national level. Thus the rebirth of CODESRIA in 1973 with IDEP as the host institute and Samir Amin as its first Executive Secretary was a major effort and achievement by Samir Amin to accommodate African researches who were attracted to Pan-Africanism and the radical approach of Amin.

All this did not go down well with the ECA, the UN in New York or the WB and other donors. From the mid-seventies pressure began to build up for Amin's removal on the never stated ground that he was a Marxist. Amin thus had to fight, what he called, a continuous 'guerilla war' against the UN officials while continuing with his prolific activities of publications, teaching and actively participating in the 'Third Worldist' movement of the time (eg. the creation of the Third World Forum, the linking of CODESRIA and its Latin American counterpart, CLACSO, and the strong involvement in the NIEO debate etc.). In 1980, Amin resigned from IDEP. Since then IDEP has become a forgotten and quiet institution.

This brief history of IDEP is given here to indicate that these ECA-sponsored institutions had the potential of becoming more than simple 'technical' training centers for low level officials. As regional institutions they should have risen above the petty technicalities of training for development (which in any case was being done at the national level, and perhaps better). They were supposed to have a continental perspective of Africa's development problems and prospects and to contextualise the continent within the world system. This is exactly what Samir Amin did in IDEP. Unfortunately however Samir Amin and IDEP could not be reproduced in the other institutes because of the uniqueness of the man. But one did not need a Samir Amin to make these institutions rise above their mediocrity. In the end, the job of critical examination of government

policies, of sifting through the strong input of received knowledge and ideas in African social science institutions, and of trying to develop an African perspective and paradigms to Africa's development experience, was left to the African social science community itself through its own institutions which it created such as CODESRIA, AAPS etc.

## *Prospects of the UNECA Institutions*

Finally, what is happening to these ECA-sponsored institutions? Like the national institutions, they have also been affected by the crises of the 1980s. 'One major attribute of these institutions is that their operational existence depends largely on the assessed contribution of their member States, supplemented by other donors, in particular for technical assistance projects'. 'However, a number of them face serious financial constraints due to lack of financial support from their member States in terms of non-payment of their assessed contributions, diminishing donor assistance and limited or no self-financing capacity'. Member States of the ECA have set up several Ad-hoc Committees to deal with this situation. It was found that 'there were unnecessary duplication and overlapping of activities among the existing institutions'. Hence 'rationalization measures are necessary to produce a few but coherent set of regional and sub-regional centers that are efficient, self-supporting and supportable by member States' (ECA 1993:3). In the case of social science institutions, the rationalization measure recommended, is to merge the three main institutions — IDEP, ACARTSOD and ACMS (economic planning, social development and monetary studies). Despite the critique of the WB and the donors, or the critique of the African social science community, the merger is a purely bureaucratic solution meant to save money! The fact that the officials produced by these institutions over the years, have made no impact on the development of their respective countries, nor have they contributed to averting the crises that befell their countries, should have warned the Ad-hoc committee that perhaps there is something deeply wrong with these institutions! Could it be that the contents of the training and research of these institutions has so far been inappropriate, irrelevant and of little use to the member States? This issue does not seem to have crossed the minds of the members of the Ad-hoc committees. And if it did, they must have found it necessary not to mention it!

## The Social Science Community Led Institutions

### *Establishing the Researcher's Institutions: The Context*

In 1973 two important social science Pan-African organizations were established — CODESRIA in Dakar and AAPS in Dar-es-Salaam. These two organizations were set up as NGOs by African researchers themselves in order to serve their professional and scientific interests. CODESRIA was hosted by IDEP while AAPS by the University of Dar-es-Salaam. The two hosting institutions were at the time major social science centers dominated

by the Political Economy approach or what came to be known as 'critical social science'. At the time the material and working conditions of most universities were probably at their best, and the free circulation of ideas, freedom of expression and publication had not yet come under any serious assault by the African states. Self censorship by academics was not a characteristics of the scholars at the time. So why were these institutions established at the time?

The reasons for creating AAPS in 1973 are more or less the same as those behind the establishment of CODESRIA.[7] For CODESRIA there were several reasons for its establishment at the time. The immediate reason was the setting up of CERDAS by UNESCO, in 1972. When in 1972, the Center for Research and Documentation for Africa South of the Sahara (CERDAS) was set up upon UNESCO initiative in Kinshasa, there was reaction within the CODESRIA circles. The main concern was that if the UNESCO initiative remained unchallenged, then there was great danger that establishment, i.e. governments, would in effect gain control over social science in Africa. The major worry was over academic freedom and the prospect of a legitimizing rather than influencing role of social scientists'.[8] The second reason was to counter the strong influence of former colonial powers in universities and research institutes. And the third reason was the strong belief of African scholars at the time that (a) the governments had rightly assumed the responsibility for developing their countries, and (b) that the scholars had the responsibility of informing and influencing the governments to carry out relevant and appropriate development policies. The scholars at the time sincerely believed that the governments would listen to them or that they would be able to influence critical personalities and forces in government — especially if the scholar's voice came from a Pan-African body of African scholars. The disappointment which followed later turned

7   The man who was behind, the creation of AAPS was the late Professor Anthony Rweyemamu, at the time Head of Political Science Department of the University of Dar-es-Salaam. I was at the time Head of Sociology Department of the same University. He was a good colleague and a friend and I knew the background to Professor Rweyemamu's initiative to create AAPS.

8   Social Science in Africa: The role of CODESRIA in Pan-African Cooperation Evaluation Report to SAREC, by Stefan de Vylder and Anders Hjrt a Omas. In 1972 CODESRIA was the Council of Directors of Economic and Social Research Institutes in Africa (CODESRIA). At the time discussions were going on in IDEP between Professor Onitiri(who was in charge of the pre-1973 Council), and Samir Amin. Samir Amin wanted to establish a new and different type The ......... interpretation given above by Vylder and Omas is correct. Both Professor Onitiri and myself participated in the UNESCO organized preparatory meetings for establishing CERDAS in Lome (1971). We were both aware and concerned at the potentially negative impact CERDAS could have on the social science researchers in Africa.

into combativeness which was later to be reflected in CODESRIA's mode of operation.

If AAPS and CODESRIA had been set up during the period of universities' expansion, of relative freedom and good working conditions for researchers, of optimism and high economic growth in most African countries, the other 15 social science organizations and associations set up by African researchers, were definitely established when the crises had already started in the late 1970s. Indeed the majority of these institutions were set up in the decade of the 80s. There is thus a definite link between the creation of these institutions by the social science community, and the difficulties the community faced in the universities and research institutes. Indeed it is our argument that as the economic crises deepened and authoritarianism took roots, these led to extreme deterioration of the infrastructure and material conditions at the universities (as exemplified by Makerere University described earlier) and to political repression of academics, official and self-censorship, and attacks on the dignity and well being of researchers. It was because of these conditions that social scientists began to commit themselves to the then existing organizations — CODESRIA and AAPS — and at the same time to set up their own institutions mainly at the sub-regional levels. Clearly the research community felt that only through their own organizations, operating above the national level, could they effectively fight for their survival, publicize their critique of government policies, continue their efforts of 'domesticating' or indigenizing social science, defend academic freedom as well as fight against political oppression. Despite the flight of many scholars from their countries, the majority of scholars stayed behind. For those who stayed behind, and especially for the younger generation who were joining the academic ranks, the intolerable economic and political conditions had the effect of strengthening their resolve to take their own organizations seriously and to operate at the sub-regional and regional level in order to acquire the Pan-African perspective which most of them lacked but found exciting. Furthermore these new linkages, in addition to widening their intellectual horizon, they also strengthened political ties amongst the researchers.

The setting up of these social science community led institutions was of course not easy, given their 'radical' objectives and the demands on them by the African social science community. In the first place the African social science 'community' was more of an ideal than a reality, given the recentness of higher education, the size of the continent and its heterogeneity. The researchers did not know each other, they had different traditions of higher education, and of course the language barrier. To overcome this latter problem, most of the organizations set up by the researchers were generally sub-regional — the most successful being those

operating within the same linguistic region (English or French). Of the 17 organizations, only five are continent-wide organizations (CODESRIA, AAPS, AAWORD, AAS and the Third World Forum). Of these five only three are operating effectively across the continent. The remaining 12 are basically sub-regional organizations, 4 operating in Francophone countries and 8 in the Anglophone sub-regions. The second problems facing these organizations is the ideological division amongst the research community — broadly between left and right — each faction wanting to dominate the output of these institutions. The third and very important problems is that of funding. These organizations are almost entirely dependent on external funding.

> *The problems connected with this dependence are well-known; insecurity and lack of continuity, a tendency to favour 'project-funding' at the expense of core support to institution-building, danger of directing research towards easily fundable projects which the donor happen to favour at the moment, a neglect of basic research, priority to 'mainstream' themes and methodologies at the expense of innovative or critical research, etc. As in all aid, conditionality is always present — after all, funding agencies are accountable to their own countries — although it may be subtler in research cooperation than in ordinary development project (Vylder and Ornas 1990:3). Different organizations found their own ways of handling this problem, the most successful ones being CODESRIA and the Third World Forum (Bujra 1990).*

Another very important problem facing these institutions is the question of finding committed, efficient and honest management. Many African organization have foundered as a result of this problem. A final problem facing these organizations once set up, is whether they are able to provide the 'services' demanded and needed by their constituency — the researchers.

The performance of most of these organizations has varied widely from surviving as an inactive organizations to those which are successful and well established, such as CODESRIA or OSSREA. The achievements of these institutions should be measured in terms of several important criteria relating to their basic objectives, such as — mobilizing researchers, providing service to researchers, defending researcher's basic academic freedom, indigenization of social science, and providing a forum for debating critical development and political issues. These are tough criteria and some are not easily measurable. Nevertheless applying these criteria even liberally, most of the 17 institutions set up by the research community would fail the test. A few however have done very well. Since the social science scene is changing very fast in response to the changing political and economic environment in African countries, these successful institutions will soon face a new situation. The question is therefore whether these presently successful few

institutions will be able to adapt themselves to the new emerging forces which are likely to have significant impact on the future African social science scene.

### CODESRIA: A Case Study

CODESRIA is the most successful of these researches institutions. It may therefore be useful to measure its success by applying specific evaluative criteria such as service to research, mobilize researcher, policy oriented research, 'indigenization' of social science and defending academic freedom. In this way we may be able to highlight critical issues and problems is faced by all similar institutions. But CODESRIA's objectives:-

> *CODESRIA's main objective is to activate concerned African social scientists to undertake fundamental as well as problem-oriented research in the field of development from a perspective which is more relevant to the needs of the African people and thus challenging the existing orthodox development theories which have often led many African countries to stagnation and underdevelopment. It is hoped that research coordinated by or associated with CODESRIA will lead to producing new ideas, and alternative strategies to the development problems of Africa.*

Apart from this broad objective of mobilizing researchers and 'indigenizing' social science, CODESRIA had other and more practical objectives, principally:

- to strengthen collaboration between African social scientists;

- to facilitate the exchange and dissemination of information and research results;

- to promote interaction and flow of ideas across linguistic and geographical barriers;

- to defend academic freedom.

Using the criteria mentioned above, we now turn to look at what CODESRIA has achieved or failed to achieve during the last 20 years of its existence, keeping in mind its objectives and the conditions under which it has operated during this period.

### Services to Researchers

CODESRIA has provided a forum for public debates through its publications, such as *Africa Development* (first published in 1976) and the *CODESRIA Bulletin*, the latter having achieved extensive publicity (almost 2000 subscribers). Additionally it publishes working and occasional papers and more importantly a book and monograph series. Originally these were publication outlets for researchers directly involved in CODESRIA networks, but have over the years, become important outlets for African

researchers in general especially since the mid-eighties when publication services (for social science) at the national level collapsed.

It set up the CODESRIA Documentation and Information Center (CODICE) in 1983, through which it provided bibliographic support to researchers and research institutes in many countries. CODICE played an active role during the 'book hunger' of the 1980s, in responding to researcher's requests for documents, especially for journal articles, and documents/reports published by international and inter-governmental organizations, which were inaccessible to African researchers and their institutes.

*Defence of Academic Freedom*

Over many years CODESRIA encountered many serious limitations of academic freedom in many countries, making research on many important problems almost impossible. Research and publication on some of the 'sensitive' issues was dangerous. And it is the governments which defined what is and what is not 'sensitive' — the definition being arbitrary and very wide. For many years, CODESRIA could do very little about this kind of breach of academic freedom. However when researchers lost their jobs or were imprisoned because of their publications, CODESRIA's reaction was often to organize a letter of appeal or protest to the authorities on behalf of the researchers. In 1990 CODESRIA organized a major conference on academic freedom in Kampala. The conference produced the widely publicized Kampala Declaration which is apparently used by various organizations. It has also set up a small fund to support some researchers, national conferences on academic freedom, publicize cases of violation, and make representation on behalf of individual scholars. It is now in the process of setting up a small unit which will carry out these activities on a full time basis. This serious activism for academic freedom and in support of oppressed scholars is an important contribution by CODESRIA to the wider human rights movement now sweeping the continent.

*Mobilizing Researchers*

How far has CODESRIA succeeded in mobilizing researchers throughout the continent? CODESRIA carries out various types of activities involving researchers from all over the continent. The statistics from CODESRIA is impressive. Here are some of the figures:

- 60 Conferences carried out during the last 20 years. This excludes the workshops carried out by national working groups in individual countries;

- 2000 social scientists have participated in CODESRIA conferences;

- 1987 papers have been presented at these conferences;

- 170 researchers have participated in MWG from 39 countries;

- 27 National Working Groups have been set up between 1985-1990 i.e. NWG in 27 countries, each group involving an average of 10 researchers;

- 600 grants have been awarded to young researchers since 1987. Researchers cover different disciplines and from all over the continent;

- 422 articles have been published by *Africa Development* since 1976. The bilingual journal has a distribution of 700 per issue in Africa;

- 2000 copies of each issue of the *CODESRIA Bulletin* is distributed to subscribers;

- 42 books and monographs have been published between 1973-93;

- 42 Working and Occasional Papers have been published.

The distribution of CODESRIA's publications is still not what it should be. More importantly the quality of the publication is still uneven and the spread of the contribution is also uneven, with the Anglophone dominating and with Nigeria making the largest contribution amongst the Anglophones. How far has all this output impacted on, for example, government policies, or the development of social science itself. We will discuss these issues below.

In addition to the above activities, CODESRIA has carried out a major programme of creating and supporting sub-regional organizations and professional association. Between 1975 and 1990, it has in fact been directly involved in the setting up of 8 sub-regional organizations and association[9] out of a total of 16 (excluding itself). This has been an important programme in which these institutions have made great efforts to mobilize researchers within their sub-region or profession.

*CODESRIA and Policy Research*
In general the relationship between CODESRIA as an institution and the African governments has always been delicate and ambivalent. When it was founded CODESRIA had thought of itself as the Pan-African 'think tank' on development issues, with an obligation to help African governments with advise based on its research expertise and collective wisdom. At the same time, CODESRIA has always been a consistent critique of government development policies, and many of the participating researchers in CODESRIA's activities are often well-known critiques of their governments. Thus despite CODESRIA's self assigned role as a 'think tank', most African

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9    The institutions are:- AAWORD, SAUSSC, OSSREA, SADRA, CIEREA, AECA, CASA, and PAA.

government have kept a polite distance from CODESRIA, while a few have expressed open hostility. Indeed the optimistic assumption of the founders that CODESRIA could influence government policy, was at best unrealistic and at worst an illusion. It was soon abandoned.

Apart from government's suspicions of CODESRIA's ideas, there were important structural reasons for its lack of influence of government policies. Government's development policies, particularly on the economy, were based on and guided by the following parameters:

- the structure of the inherited economies of the African countries;

- the nationalist government ideologies (and later the narrow interest of ruling factions — military, civilian or an alliance — that economic development can only take place within a market economy (with some state intervention in support) and through foreign investment;

- the direct input of advisors provided by the donor community — by the former colonial powers during the 60s, by a mixed bag of advisors during the 70s, and directly by the WB/IMF from the late 1970s onwards. In the 1980s there were 100,000 technical assistant experts in sub-Saharan Africa.

CODESRIA's literature was dominated by an advocacy for equity in the distribution of national resources, participation of the poorer classes in decision making and at various levels of economic management, and full democratization of the political process. It also carried out consistent attacks on corruption, bad governance and state oppression. Given the advocacy of these ideas by CODESRIA, and the environment of government policy and decision making, it is not surprising that CODESRIA has made little impact on policies made by the states.

Clearly this question is complicated and cannot be addressed fully here. As CODESRIA began to realize its impotence to directly influence policies of the African governments, it entered into a period of serious soul searching on this question. The shredding of the interface between research and policy making and the apparent impotence of the social scientists in face of serious political, social, and economic crises were a source of considerable soul searching among the social science community. In the end CODESRIA decided that the 'consumers' of policy-oriented research were not only states or donors, but society at large and that what the states view as 'policy-oriented' was only that which they could digest. It was important that re-search results be accessible to a larger community and that influencing the thinking and perception of the main social actors, including those outside the state was an important contribution to the process of policy making in

Africa'.[10] Thus on the basis of experience, CODESRIA felt it stood a better chance of influencing civil society with its ideas on development policies, than the states themselves. CODESRIA therefore shifted its target to civil society. It is thus important to note that today CODESRIA no longer claims that its research output is aimed at influencing government policies, as it did in its first brochure quoted above, but rather that its target is to influence the wider society (civil society), through the social science community; and in an ideal democratic society, civil society would in turn affect the policies of the government. This position is supported by an experienced social scientists who for many years has been involved in both policy making and trying to influence government policies. He argues that:

> *African social scientists need to exploit more effectively the opportunities brought about by the pressure to democratize and open up African societies for a greater degree of participation, transparency and accountability in order to make more meaningful contribution to policy making. Important to stress here is that policy-oriented research is not only meaningful for and should not be directed only to governments. Parliamentarians, people's organizations (Trade Unions, Women, Youth and grassroots organizations etc.) and NGOs have a great need for policy research not only to help them shape their own policies and decisions, but also to assist them in influencing the process of national policy making. They are part of civil society and of the forces of social and economic change* (Rasheed 1993:29).

How then would we be able to identify the impact of CODESRIA on civil society? Perhaps the first step is to find out what has been its impact on the research community and on social science itself.

## CODESRIA's Impact on Social Science

### The Indigenization Question
This is one of the most complicated and controversial issue when discussing CODESRIA's achievements or failures. And those who pronounce on this issue are generally passionate and partisan on the question. In any case the criteria for an indigenized social science are not clear and there is very little agreement as to how to measure the 'domestication' or 'indigenization' of social science in Africa. Has CODESRIA indigenized social science in Africa? Has CODESRIA developed its own paradigm? Has it developed a clear and recognizable CODESRIA perspective on development issues and on world issues? What is often referred to as 'critical social science', is it the CODESRIA perspective? And what is the difference between 'critical

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10   Report of the Executive Secretary to the 20th Anniversary of CODESRIA, p.7, 1993.

social science' and the Political Economy Approach? Is the latter a uniquely CODESRIA approach, or is it a terminology appropriated by Marxists, neo-Marxists, or just the broad spectrum of various 'leftists tendencies'? Clearly this is a complex issue. And there are strong feelings about it (by both proponents and opponents of CODESRIA), precisely because it is both a methodological and an ideological issue. Divisions therefore do exist amongst African scholars. Hence an appreciation or evaluation of CODESRIA's impact on social science, is very difficult to do objectively. But we can try, very briefly, to give some views which exist on this issue.

As a starting point it may be useful to differentiate between two of the most dominant broad 'schools' of social science in Africa. Firstly there is the orthodox social science school evolved on three axis — classical market economics, modernization sociology/political science, and classical history. Recently the most dominant representation of this school in Africa has been the two Bretton Woods Institutions — the WB and IMF (and also the entire baggage of UN Agencies' 'Developmentalism'). It is important to point out that there are many African researchers who subscribe to this school.

Secondly there is the broad 'leftist's school', whose axis are classical Marxism, neo-Marxism and other various 'Marxists' tendencies, and the 'dependencia school'. Sometimes this second school is referred to as the Political Economy Approach. The strongest advocate of this second school have generally been the many Africanists foreign scholars. Needless to say there are also many African scholars who subscribe to the various tendencies of this school — some of whom are associated with CODESRIA.

An objective look at CODESRIA would clearly indicate that since its inception, CODESRIA has consistently opposed the first school, with very serious arguments. On the other hand, CODESRIA has often been confused with the second school partly because some of its most important supporters were and still are adherents of this school. Over the years however, CODESRIA has claimed that it has been developing a uniquely relevant and African perspective to Africa's development problems, a perspective which is different from and has gone beyond that of the perspectives of the second school. And it is this claim which constitutes, CODESRIA's definition of indigenization of social science i.e. it has developed a perspective which is different from both the first and the second schools of social science in Africa. Needless to say this claim is contested by the followers of the two main schools, both Africans and foreigners.

CODESRIA's case is well articulated by its present Executive Secretary.

> *There were many facets to the process of indigenization. The simplest one simply involved indigenization of personnel involved in research. The second followed from the old-age injunction 'know thyself' and gave primacy to knowledge of Africa. The third involved the problem of reconciling the 'universal' with the specificity of the African experience.*

> *In the process, African social science had to overcome many problems.*
> *One of these was the burden of received knowledge. Most of the social*
> *scientists have been trained abroad and had learnt to see Africa*
> *through certain intellectual prisms of vantage points. And even those*
> *who had not studied abroad were victims of the same problem that often*
> *resulted in mimetism in scholarship, a situation decried at many*
> *conferences* (CODESRIA 1993:12).

The differences between African and foreign scholars over the interpretation
of the African experience, has, in the final analysis tended to define
CODESRIA's perspective and therefore what constitutes indigenization of
social science. Briefly these differences are over a number of critical issues,
such as:

- Foreign scholar's excessive focus of their analysis on the African
  state. African states are pictured either as having done nothing wrong,
  or that everything they did was bad. Most African scholars associated
  with CODESRIA, would disagree with this over emphasis on the state
  and with the black or white picture of those states. Indeed many
  African scholars have recently been refocussing their research on civil
  society and its internal dynamics, as well as its external links. This
  refocussing may thus be an important breakthrough from both the first
  two schools. And CODESRIA would argue that this is part of the
  process of 'indigenizing' social science in Africa.

- During the last decade, most foreign scholars who adhere to the first
  school, accepted the view 'that both the diagnosis and the prescription
  of the international financial institutions were essentially correct'.
  'There was however widespread consensus in African intellectual
  circles that both the diagnosis and the prescriptions of these
  institutions were wrong and therefore could not be a point of
  departure of the analyses of African politics' (CODESRIA 1993:13).
  Again here African scholars would argue that their analysis of the
  African crises during the eighties, was richer and reflected the reality
  more than the analysis of the Bretton Wood's Institutions.

- A third area of difference was the practice of many foreign Africanist
  to use African examples as a 'case study' to fit their theoretical
  construct. African societies were therefore assumed to behave
  according to certain models — supposedly universal models — thus
  denying any independence, uniqueness or specificity to African
  societies. African scholars were generally not amused by this
  treatment of Africa by foreign Africanist. More importantly, this
  approach reflected the shallowness and poverty of the methodology
  used by the Africanist.

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To sum up this question I cannot do better than to let Archie Mafeje (1992) describe the essential elements of indigenization of social science from his latest and best study of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms of East Africa. Mafeje's aim in this study is to reconceptualise, from the existing ethnography, the concept of African social formation.

First and foremost is the idea that each region has its own 'historical specificity' or 'experience' without refusing to be 'analytically universal'. Deciphering regional/local experiences ('vernacular', social structures, histories etc.) can only be done through authentic local interlocutors. Hence the call for the indigenization of social science and the 'rejection of homogenization of all social experience under the pretext of 'universalism' (p.7).

Secondly African social phenomena and social relations have been approached and analyzed in a particular way by non-Africans and thereby creating serious misconception. This is attributed to an: .

> *inarticulation between universal language, as is employed in the social sciences and derived from European historical experience, and vernacular, as is experienced and understood by the Africans themselves. As we see it, what is at issue is the authenticity of social science texts* (p.9).

Thirdly the African experience needs to be 'decoded' and interpreted through an:

> *appreciation of what is involved contextually' i.e. understanding the context of the social phenomenon and social relations. Nothing is self evident. Hence the demand that the analysis be informed by local expertise in order for it to be 'endowed with greater validity and objectivity. From the point of view of social theory, this involves a process of sifting, discarding and recasting* (p.9).

Fourthly, deep local expertise and knowledge of the vernacular often lead to different interpretation of social relations and phenomenon, since the same social categories such as 'class' 'need not behave the same way everywhere in the world'. For example:

- African entrepreneur might forgo opportunities to maximize value in favor of kinship considerations or leisure;

- in Buganda landlords-chiefs found greater value in political followers than in servile labour;

- the interlacustrine kingdoms exhibited the same mode of production but were at different stages of centralization of political power. Thus 'the relationship between modes of political organization and modes of economic production is not absolute but relative;

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- and 'the absence of property and labour-relations in what is presumably class societies' (of the Kingdoms), raises the question as to what is meant by 'class' in different contexts.

These examples indicate the difficulties of using social science 'universalistic' categories, and at the same time show the importance of local expertise in interpreting the specificities of the African social systems.

Finally Mafeje's approach of the ethnography was to learn from it rather than to impose preconceived theories and categories.

> *I deliberately avoided all this. Using discursive method, I allowed myself to be guided by the African ethnographies themselves. In trying to decode them, all pre-existing concepts became suspect and were subject to review. In the process a number of epistemological assumptions, including Marxist ones, ceased to be self-evident and became objects for intellectual labour'. 'Having deciphered the chosen African ethnographies, I felt that I was in a position to evaluate them from inside outwards, i.e. towards the wider social environment, for example, colonial capitalism and struggles against imperialist domination* (Preface).

This approach of re-examining one's concepts and assumptions and making an interpretation from the ethnography itself and its context, is, in our view, critical for a deeper understanding of the African social experience.

We have used Mafeje at length here because he is one of the few African scholars who has come to grips with the notion of indigenization of social science, as a methodological problematic — both at the conceptual and classificatory levels. His seminal book is the best example of an explicit effort at reconceptualising an important social science concept, 'social formation', within the African context, using a clearly identifiable 'indigenous' approach. Mafeje's study has pushed the indigenization process far ahead.

CODESRIA has clearly gone beyond mere claims, and seem to be definitive with a clear conception of what its perspective is and what constitutes indigenization. This confidence is reflected in the very euphoric view of CODESRIA's President in his opening address to the 20th Anniversary of CODESRIA. He states:

> *Very briefly we can say that the result [of CODESRIA's 20 years of work] constitute an emerging pan-African paradigm of social sciences with increasingly definite political values, ideological values, philosophical values and creatively drawing on the previously produced scientific forces. It took a multidimensional battle, in a very difficult and hostile environment, against received knowledge and values and power relations sustaining it. The number of the social scientists involved in*

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> *this movement has increased considerably. It is one requirement to make the CODESRIA paradigm a normal one for social science in Africa. It is a healthy sign of this paradigm that it allows intense theoretical and methodological debates on the kinds of entities (ontology) being in the explanation of social formations; on ways of knowing Africa and the logical structures of produced theories. Quite a number of researchers (Africans and non-Africans) have been forced to wake up from their paradigmatic slumber.*

The above statement is very certain and congratulatory about the achievement of CODESRIA in terms of indigenizing social science. Coming as it does from the President of CODESRIA at a 20th Anniversary celebration, the confidence is to be expected and perhaps rightly so. Outside CODESRIA's 'community' as it were, there are doubts about its achievement precisely on this issue. And the most negative view of this comes from two Swedes, who say that 'the early attempts, of which CODESRIA was an important part, to create an indigenous alternative to the prevailing 'mainstream' paradigms (read — first school) in social sciences are largely reckoned to have failed, as witnessed by the rise and subsequent decline of various 'dependency' and neo-Marxian currents' (Vylder and Ornas 1990). In my view the Swedes are confused over this issue. As already seen from Mafeje's description earlier, the indigenization approach is independent of the other schools, or their rise and decline. Clearly the debate over this issue will continue, and that as CODESRIA has argued, a part of the process of indigenization, is that African scholars now have more confidence in their views about the African experience, and will not be easily dissuaded from them by outsiders as was the case in the past.

CODESRIA is celebrating its 20th Anniversary (1973-1993) and in such situations, people tend to look at the more positive aspects of their past. In the case of CODESRIA this self-congratulation is well deserved. Well placed objective observers have given similar accolade to the organization. Despite important weaknesses which are recognized by CODESRIA itself, the main question facing it now is whether it will recognize the changing conditions of the African social science scene and work out strategies for the future, or whether it will remain cacooned in its past success and look at the future with rose tinted glasses.

To sum up then, we have used CODESRIA as a 'case-study' in order to bring out the problems which these institutions led by the social science community have had to face, and the high expectations the researchers had of them. If CODESRIA has survived the rough and tumble of Africa and the world during the last 20 years, then this could be considered an important achievement by itself. But as we have tried to show above, it has done more than survive. It also made remarkable progress, as the brief evaluation we

have made above indicates. The same cannot however be said of all the other sister institutions.

The growth of these research community-led institutes has been one of the most positive developments in social science in Africa. National universities and research institutes. were given very functional roles — training, and research acceptable and digestible by governments. Furthermore influenced by foreigners, and later by researchers satisfied with the status quo and received social science, these institutions were constrained from developing into serious national centers of dialogue, critique, and innovators of ideas, policies and strategies. Hence there was an objective need for the existence of these scholar's driven institutions (as NGOs) not only to further the interest of researchers, but also to develop social science itself, through innovative research (basic and empirical) and to provide forums for dialogue and critique of received ideas. As someone has pointed out, referring to the most successful one of these institutions, 'If CODESRIA did not exist, it would have had to be invented'.

Indeed the furtherance of researcher's interest, especially the defence of their academic freedom, is a necessary pre-condition for the development of social science itself. These institutions have thus played this dual role.

## The Donor Community Led Institutions and Programmes

Without any explicit statement made by the donor community, one can clearly see a framework emerging within which the various elements of donor driven reforms of African countries (not just economics) fall. Clearly there are three donor prescribed pillars of reforms:

- reform of the economy to bring about economic growth;

- reform of the political system to bring about better-governance and political stability as an essential environment to economic growth;

- reform of the economic management and policy formulation system as an essential instrument to economic growth.

These three pillars are inter-connected and essentially constitute the 'grand design' of the donor community to reform Africa out of its present crises and to carry it to the end of the century.

Economic reforms emanating from several generations of SAPs are being carried out by the African governments but with the supervision and evaluation of the WB/IMF. For our purpose, it is important to note two emerging points with regards to economic reforms and SAPs. Firstly that SAPs 'have virtually replaced economic planning in African countries'. Secondly, 'The persistence of the malaise suggests that the macroeconomic problems of the 1980s now have a long-term presence which may carry over well into the new century' (Taylor 1991:19). Hence it is necessary that the coming new generation of SAPs should be carefully examined 'now that structural ad-

justment is a medium/long-term process rather than a short-term one' (Smith 1991:21). Clearly therefore African long-term economic development rather than short term reforms, is now literally dominated by the Bretton Woods Institution's thinking and programmes.

The second pillar, that of political reform, is the democratization process introduced through the multi-party system.

Although there are important internal forces in African countries which are pushing for democratic reforms, the introduction and implementation of multi-party system in most African countries is generally part of the WB/IMF conditionalities. Such political reforms and national elections in particular, are being monitored and supervised though myriad official organizations and NGOs. Whether this process will eventually bring about a 'liberal democracy' with 'transparency and good governance' in the Western sense, is a subject of heated debate in Africa. For our purpose however, we do think that a political space is emerging which may allow the national social science institutions to become once again centers of active dialogue and debate. This is assuming that the universities and research institutes will not have been reformed — reduced in numbers, restructured, their programmes refocussed and their personnel and management, streamlined, changed and reorganized.

The third pillar of reform is on economic management and policy analysis. This is the subject of the ACBI and is being carried out through the ACBF. This third pillar is crucial to the future of all African social science institutions and indeed to the process of indigenizing social science itself. What then is the programme of the ACBF and how will it affect African social science institutions?

The WB's arguments for major changes in African higher education were presented in its 1988 study on Education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

> *Higher education's contribution to development in Africa is being threatened, however, by four interrelated weaknesses. First higher education is now producing relatively too many graduates of programmes of dubious quality and relevance and generating too little new knowledge and direct development support. Second, the quality of these output show unmistakable signs in many countries of having deteriorated so much that the fundamental effectiveness of the institutions is also in doubt. Third, the cost of higher education are needlessly high. Fourth, the pattern of financing higher education is socially inequitable and economically inefficient (World Bank 1988:5). This argument was repeated in the Bank's LTPS, 1989 with both these studies calling for action (World Bank 1989:81-2). The ACBI was thus born, in 1991, as a response to this challenge.*

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> *The ultimate objective of the ACBI is clear: 10,15, or 20 years from now, Sub-Saharan Africa will have its own professional policy analysts and managers and its own institutions for training and advice in policy analysis and development management. There will be much less dependence on external technical assistance. Africa will be more in control of its economic destiny* (Jaycox 1991).

Although the WB is the 'lead' institution of the ACBI, the Initiative is in fact 'owned' by the international donor community. 'The African Development Bank, the United National Development Programme, and the World Bank are the lead co-sponsors of the ACBI. The Initiative represents a broad partnership between Sub-Saharan African countries and the international donor community' (Jaycox 1991:1).

The scope of the ACBI is focused on 'policy analysis and development management — because these skills are crucial and affect all other development issues'. Despite this focused scope, the impact of the Initiative 'should be deep and widespread' (Jaycox 1991:1). And the action program of the ACBI will focus on six principal components. These are:

- the rehabilitation and improvement of selected national institutions — already existing departments of economics or public administration in universities or colleges, or research and management institutions;

- the building or strengthening of a small number of regional institutions for policy analysis and development management; these regional centers would be principally training institutions in policy analysis and development management skills, and sources of policy analysis and advice;

- the strengthening or creation of government policy units in the Offices of the Presidents, Ministries of Finance, Planning and Central Banks;

- the provision of fellowships to support selected African individuals in their research and training needs;

- the expansion of in-service training and work experiences for African professionals;

- the strengthening of local consulting firms, professional associations, and other non official organizations.

The ACBI action programme is extensive. Policy analysis and economic management training and research will be carried out within the framework of neoclassic economics and the modernization school of sociology and political science. Clearly it is not possible to analyze government policies relating to economic, social and political development of a country without using methodologies, concepts and theories developed by Western orthodox

social science. Thus the ACBI programme will affect and indeed likely to dominate, all aspects of social science in Africa.

The ACBI programme will set up new institutions as well as revive old universities which used to be 'first-class' institutions in the 1960s. Makerere University, the University of Ghana at Legon, and the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, have been mentioned as universities which are in a severe states of despair and therefore need to be rehabilitated through the ACBI programme. Indeed by the end of 1993 (i.e. within three years of the ACBF being established), it had committed some 25 to 30 million US dollars to new institutes and old Universities in 11 countries.[11] At this rate higher education in sub-Saharan Africa will soon be dominated by institutions and programmes financed by ACBF and under the guidance, if not supervision of the ACBF. Since governments will continue to reduce their financial support to institutions of higher education, ACBF support will create a two tier system amongst social science institutions in Africa — those with access to ACBF finances and those with very limited and diminishing resources from their governments.

*The difference in access to resources between foreign-supported research centers and projects on the one hand and national academic institutions on the other has increased during the past decade. If present tendencies continue, there is a danger that the research community will be divided between a small group of scholars in well-funded 'islands', supported by foreign agencies and with modern computers and easy access to the global network of knowledge, and a large group of badly paid and equipped academics muddling through at national universities (Vylder and Ornas 1990:3). If this situation comes about, which is the most likely result of a vigorous implementation of the ACBI Programme, then there is no doubt that the social science scene in Africa — especially sub-Saharan Africa — will be dominated by the institutions and programmes supported by the ACBF. Given this likely scenario, the inevitable question which one must ask is, what will happen to the whole process of indigenizing social science which institutions like CODESRIA have been trying to bring about?. Indeed what will happen to the institutions led by the social science community all of which are entirely dependent on funding from the donor community? Will the donor community continue to support ACBF institutions and programme and at the same time support researchers led institutions which oppose the orthodox social science of the ACBF?*

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11    Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, Botswana and South Africa. Also financing is provided to AERC and CIEREA (Francophone Faculties and Institutes).

**The Future Prospects: Whither Social Science in Africa?**

Discussion of the future prospects (of social science) may either lead to what has been termed 'afro-pessimism' — a state of mind that simply project past trends into the future and sees nothing but bleakness for Africa — or become an excuse in voluntarism and wishful thinking about a bright future for Africa unencumbered by the dreadful experiences of the recent past (Mkandawire 1993:129). To avoid both pessimism and wishful optimism, it is necessary to have a deep grasp of the past and the present. In this paper I have tried to carry out a serious analyses of social science institutions in order to have a deep understanding of their evolution during the last 30 years, and the socioeconomic and political contexts which affected that evolution. The result of this analysis indicates that there are clear and unmistakable trends which are emerging and which are most likely to continue for the rest of this decade and possibly into the first decade of the 21st century:

We have argued so far that African social science institutions are directly affected by the socioeconomic and political contexts of African countries and the continent as a whole. The future of social science institution, like their present and their past, depends very much on the future socioeconomic and political contexts in which they will operate. What then is the most likely socioeconomic and political context to prevail in African countries during the next 15 years?

Although this is not the place for developing a future scenario of Africa or of specific African countries, nevertheless we need to do a little 'probing of the future' to anticipate the most likely outline of the socioeconomic and political contexts within which social science institutions will operate. The primary base of this 'probe' are the interrelated forces or trends which have emerged out of the deep analysis of the past and the present of the social science institutions and the environment within which they have functioned. Briefly the main trends which we have identified, are:

1. the sustainability or continuity of the democratization process the consequences of which will bring about more autonomy and academic freedom to the social science institutions;

2. the present situation of most economics and the SAPs are both processes which have taken a medium to long-term character and therefore likely to continue for the next two decades;

3. the continuing decline of the role of government in social science institutions, a trend which is likely to lead to a decrease in both government financial contribution and political control of the institutions;

4. the implementation of the ACBI Programme and the coordination of donor policies and financial backing behind the Programme;

5. the continued expansion of demand for social science training and research by the expanding middle class and society at large;

6. the reform and restructuring of higher education will be vigorously implemented as part of the coming new generations of SAPs;

7. most of the researcher's institutions are in the process of withering away either because they have been unable to cope with the normal requirements of institutional developments or because of the changing internal and external conditions. However a few such institutions will survive.

Are these major trends likely to continue for the next two decades? It is our view that these trends will continue, if we make the following assumptions:-

Firstly that the democratization process will continue. It is likely to bring a degree of functional 'political stability' and a 'democratic space', which will enable the economy (and social science institutions) to function and possibly even grow. The 'political stability' likely to emerge will encompass various degrees of tensions and 'controlled' conflicts — such as revolts of unemployed urban youths, low level ethnic, religious and secessionist conflicts, mostly in isolated areas etc. An important feature of these tensions and conflicts is that they would not adversely affect the functioning of the middle class, the main productive economic areas and enterprises, the basic infrastructure, and major institutions. This situation actually prevails now in Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Senegal, Zambia, Zimbabwe to mention but few of the more important countries. We are assuming that most countries will have this kind of 'stability', while some countries are more likely to degenerate into chaos or 'manageable anarchy'.

Secondly, we assume that most African governments will continue to implement new generations of SAPs which may bring about a perceptible economic growth of between 2% to 3% annually to some few countries with strong economies. Most countries with weak economies and weak management capacities, are likely to continue with negative growth and thus protract the present level of social and economic crises.

The BWI will continually work out new generations of SAPs, possibly introducing low level 'social net' schemes into their programmes whose implementation they will continue to supervise. ODA is not likely to increase from the present level. More importantly, very little FDI money is likely to come to Africa. Hence the necessary capital to propel the few promising economies into a fast growth track — a la South East Asia — will not be available. Nor will there be significant internal reforms of the South East Asia type (eg. Korea) in any countries with promising economies, since they are being forced to implement BWI's reforms (the SAPs) which do not touch the deep structural distortions of their economies. Hence, as far as

African economies are concerned, we assume the continuation of the present situation rather than a major breakthrough into a fast track path of economic growth.

Thirdly, we assume that the donors will push through their ACBI programme so that in 15 to 20 years from now, Africa 'will have its own professional policy analysts and managers and its own institutions for training and advice in policy analysis and development management' (ACBI). This is the objective of the ACBI and we assume that the donors will implement and sustain this programme.

These assumptions, in my view, are reasonable and realistic given the analysis we have made and the data available. They are not based on the 'afro-pessimism' state of mind nor on a flight of imagination of optimistic fantasy. One would have liked to be reasonably more optimistic with regards to the economic outlook. But I could not find encouraging trends or data to enable me to make assumptions of a bright economic outlook. Of course there are always what are known as 'critical uncertainties', the possibility that some unforeseen or neglected trends may lead to a new and positive development which will compound all the assumptions we have made here. This possibility always exists, and in our case, if it were to come about, it might take place in such countries as Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Kenya or Zimbabwe. On this possibility, one is at the level of hope rather than analysis. And to go back to analysis let me look briefly at each of these assumptions.

The first assumption — that of continuing democratization process and its likely consequences — is based on my reading, research and observation of the post-independence political systems of African countries. This is not the place to argue the case for this assumption. Of course there are other interpretations particularly on: (a) whether the 'democratization' process will continue or not and for how long, and (b) on the likely outcome — whether it will be a Western type liberal democracy, back to dictatorship, or simply various degrees of 'chaos'. However, I stand by the scenario I have assumed despite these other interpretations.

The second assumption — on the possible economic outlook — is also, in my view, realistic and reasonable. On this question most analysts tend to go to the extremes of 'afro-pessimism', a view which I do not subscribe to. On the other hand the outlook is not very bright, and indeed is rather gloomy, given the available information. Here are two views from different sources, one on the general economic outlook, and the other specifically on the question of external resources coming to Africa.

*On the General Economic Outlook*
According to the World Bank, 'The outlook for sub-Saharan Africa is especially fragile, with the biggest risks being a continuation of the deterioration in the terms of trade and continuation of political unrest'. The

baseline projection for the above outlook assumed 'no major adverse conditions with respect to the weather and internal conflicts' even though Africa is 'more susceptible to droughts than any other continent'. Furthermore there is risk of a lower availability (of ODA), which could result in severe reductions in investments and consumptions'. Thus poverty is expected to increase by 50% between now and the year 2000. And if one assumes a 'low-case scenario' for the international environment, this 'carries very gloomy implications for this region'. Since Africa is particularly dependent on primary commodities, the prospect would be one of negative growth per capita GDP and ensuing political tension. The number of poor could easily double under this scenario (World Bank 1993:65-6). The prospects for African countries are therefore rather gloomy.

### On External Resources for African Development

In a Survey of Third-World Finance, the *Economist* (September 25 — October 1st 1993) consistently paints a gloomy picture on this issue:

> *But the poorest economies, especially in Africa, are still confined in the debtor's prison of the 1980s.... Much if not all of any additional external resources, in the form of aid or loans, must be devoted to that purpose (paying their debts); little remains to pay for productive investment. For these countries the 1980s were not merely, as the cliche has it, a 'lost decade', but a time when they became substantially poorer. In the 1990s at least some of them will fall even farther behind (p.7). Against this background (of debt), the chances (of African countries) of attracting much new private capital are negligible (p.14). Perhaps for years, Africa's poor reputation amongst investors will continue to taint its individual economies, reformers and non-reformers alike. Until that changes, it will be difficult for the region's more promising economies to attract the private capital they may, in due course, be able to use profitably. Difficult but not impossible (p.15).*

The WB and the Economists may, in general, think alike, and also may draw on the same sources for data. Nevertheless we have to take their views and analyses on some of these issues seriously. Without accepting and agreeing with everything from the WB and the Economists, I have used their views on the economic outlook because I broadly agree with them. And in the absence of any serious alternative views, about the future economic outlook of Africa, my assumption on the economic outlook will thus stand as stated.

The third assumption is straight forward. The ACBI Programme is a long-term one. The structure, the mechanism, the funds and the political will are all in place. The latter (political will) may wane or become stronger during the next two decades, but I don't think it will seriously affect the implementation of the Programme. Unless of course the Programme is canceled for reasons which we cannot at the moment foresee. But this is one of

the uncertainties of any attempt at probing the future. My views are the Programme will continue for the next one if not the two decades.

Given the main trends identified and given the assumptions made above, what then are the most likely consequences or outcome on the social science institutions? Indeed on social science itself? Briefly, here are some of the most likely possibilities:

1. Given the progressive decrease of UN and government funds, and the shift of donor funds (mainly if not exclusively) to the ACBI programme, the UNECA led institutions are likely to continue to have financial problems. The three remaining institutions will either be discontinued for lack of funds or may be taken over by the ACBF.

2. Some training and research institutions and universities are likely to be discontinued or 'whither away' as part of the reform and restructuring process which will most likely be required by SAPs.

3. Universities and institutions which survive the restructuring process are likely to focus their training and research to science and technology as would be demanded by SAP. Social Science is most likely to occupy a smaller part in these restructured institutions. More importantly the social science programme will be largely focused on policy analysis and economic management as defined by the ACBF. These social science programmes will be heavily if not entirely funded by the ACBF. Those universities and institutions which do not have ACBF Programme or finance, are expected to become second class institutions with a poor material base and research environment. These latter institutions will be in the majority but with less status and prestige.

4. More new institutions are likely to be set up by the ACBF. These institutions and the ACBF funded social science programmes in universities and management institutes will most likely dominate the social science scene in African higher education.

5. Consultancy research is most like to increase dramatically since strengthening local consulting firms is a part of the ACBI programme. Researchers in consultancy firms, the ACBF institutes and the Universities will most likely interact intensively. Thus the consultancy mode of research is likely to be the most dominant type of research in these institutions.

6. The demand for University education will continue to rise especially by the middle class. Given the reduction in the number of places at universities, the high cost of studying at African Universities (even with cost sharing), many African students are likely to go to West Asia for university education if the cost there continues to be cheaper than in

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Africa. Private universities are also likely to increase in number so as to cater for the children of the elite who could not afford to send their children to Europe or North America.

7. As the presence of the 'democratization process' continues to be felt and academic freedom returns to the campus, the critique over government policies and the debates over the relevancy and type of social science at the universities are also most likely to resume. This development is likely to be disapproved and even resented by both governments and the donor community. More importantly however, it is likely to lead to better academic research (in contrast to consultancy research) and a more robust social science at the universities.

8. The researcher's led institutions almost all of which depend on donor funding are likely to go through a difficult time. Donor funds are likely to be scarce and very tied. Donor conditionalities of good management, efficiency and productivity are likely to discontinue most of these institutions.

9. The few researcher's led institutions which are likely to survive such as CODESRIA, will face a new situation whose basic features will most likely be:

(i) National level institutions will be divided into two 'classes' or tiers by ACBF — the rich and the poor.

(ii) A divided academic community between those who are linked to the ACBI Programmes and supporters of the status quo and those who are not linked to the ACBI Programmes, mostly in the poorer institutions, radicalized and supporters of critical and indigenized social science. The latter category of researchers are most likely to be also political activist.

(iii) 'African governments have virtually abdicated their responsibility for and have also lost control over the process of development' (Rasheed 1993:27). Policy making on economic growth and development is now essentially in the hands of the Bretton Woods Institutions.

(iv) A critical uncertainty of the future will be the behaviour of CODESRIA's donors. Will they continue to accept CODESRIA's independence, as in the past, even if CODESRIA becomes a major critique of their ACBI Programmes?

On the positive side however:

(v) African Scholars have become and will continue to be more confident of themselves and their work is likely to have greater impact both in Africa and internationally. The 'community' will be larger and

substantial, composed mainly of younger researchers more steeped in the post-independence experience.

(vi) The process of indigenization of social science is well advanced. Given the continuing paradigmatic confusion of the foreign Africanist and of the left in general, the indigenization process is likely to gain momentum and therefore constitute a major challenge to the conventional social science.

CODESRIA is the most important and successful Pan-African institutions owned by the research community. There are major changes of long-term consequences taking place within African countries and globally. Clearly CODESRIA is aware of these changes (Mkandawire 1993). However will CODESRIA take the next step and 'plan for the future' by formulating strategies based on a serious analyses of the emerging trends and their likely development during the next 10 to 20 years? This is CODESRIA's challenge.

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\* National Long-Term Perspectives Studies, PNUD, Côte d'Ivoire

# Acronyms

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|---|---|
| AAF | African Alternative Framework |
| AAPAM | African Association for Public Administration and Management |
| AAPS | African Association of Political Scientists |
| AAS | African Academy of Science |
| AAWORD | African Association of Women for Research and Development |
| ACARTSOD | African Centre for Applied Research and Training in Social Development |
| ACBF | African Capacity Building Fund |
| ACBI | African Capacity Building Initiative |
| ACDESS | Africa Centre for Development and Strategic Studies |
| ACMS | African Centre for Monetary Studies |
| ADB | African Development Bank |
| AECA | Association of Economists for Central Africa |
| AERC | African Economic Research Consortium |
| AIDB | Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank |
| ATRCW | African Training and Research Centre for Women |
| BAD | Banque Africaine de Développement |
| BRALUP | Bureau of Resource Assessment and Land Use Planning |
| BWI | Bretton Woods Institutions |
| CAEM | Centre africain d'études monétaires |
| CAFRAD | African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development |
| CASA | Conseil africain des sociologues et anthropologues |
| CERDAS | Centre de recherche et de documentation pour l'Afrique au sud du Sahara |
| CIEREA | Conférence des doyens, directeurs de facultés et d'écoles de sciences économiques, et de centres de recherche d'Afrique noire francophone |
| CIRES | Centre Ivorien de Recherches Economiques et Sociales |
| CLACSO | Consejo latino americano de ciencias sociales |

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| CODESRIA | Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa |
| CODICE | CODESRIA Documentation and Information Centre |
| CREA | Centre de recherches en économiques Appliquées |
| CSER | Centre for Social and Economic Research |
| DANIDA | Danish International Development Agency |
| DSRC | Development Studies and Research Centre |
| ECA | Economic Commission for Africa |
| ERB | Economic Research Bureau |
| ESAMI | Eastern and Southern African Management Institute |
| ESAURP | Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme |
| FAO | Food and Agricultural Organisation |
| FDI | Foreign Direct Investment |
| FINNIDA | Finnish International Development Agency |
| GATT | General Agreement for Tariff and Trafe |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HIVO | Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries |
| IDA | International Development Association (of World Bank) |
| IDDA | Industrial Development Decades for Africa |
| IDEP | African Institute for Development and Planning |
| IDRC | International Development Research Centre |
| IDS | Institute for Development Studies |
| IFORD | Institut de Formation et de Recherche Demographique |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| INSEA | Institut National de Statistique et d'Economie Appliquée |
| ISSER | Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research |
| LPA | Lagos Plan of Action |
| LTPS | Long Term Perspective Study |
| MWG | Multinational Working Group |
| NGO | Non Governmental Organization |
| NIEO | New International Economic Order |

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| NISER | Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research |
| NORAD | Norwegian Agency for International Development |
| NWG | National Working Group |
| OAU | Organization of African Unity |
| ODA | Official Development Assistance |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| OSSREA | Organization of Social Science Research in Eastern Africa |
| PAA | Pan African Association of Anthropogists |
| RIPS | Regional Institute for Population Studies |
| SAATA | Structural Adjustment Advisory Team for Africa |
| SADRA | Southern African Development Research Association |
| SAP | Structural Adjustment Programme |
| SAPES | Southern Africa Political Economy Series |
| SAREC | Swedish Agency for Research in Cooperation |
| SAUSSC | Southern African Universities Social Science Conference |
| SDA | Social Dimension of Adjustment |
| SIDA | Swedish International Development Authority |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNECA | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| UNNADAF | United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s |
| UNPAAERD | United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development |
| UNTACDA | UN Transport and Communication Decade for Africa |
| WB | World Bank |

# Book Review

*The Sun is not always Dead at Midnight*[1]
(A Review of Basil Davidson's *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, New York and London, 1992)

## Mahmood Mamdani*

'These pages offer the conclusions of a life time', so Basil Davidson intro-duces *The Black Man's Burden*. Focused on the period since the emergence of Africa from colonial rule in the 50s, this 'meditation on the nature of the African experience' could not have come at a more opportune time. For the air is rife with 'Afro-pessimism'. Even friends of Africa have despaired of a crisis, persistent and prolonged, taking on continental dimensions, so much so that words like 'intervention', 'conditionalities', 'limited sovereignty', and even 'recolonization' have increasingly moved from a vocabulary that once sought to explain the genesis of 'the African crisis', to one that now prescribes solutions to it. Africa must be saved from itself, and the sooner the better, so runs the current refrain of specialists on Africa.

In the midst of such pervasive gloom, it cannot but be sobering to en-counter the first fruit of Basil Davidson's forty years-long meditation: 'In retrospect, the whole European project in Africa, stretching over more than a hundred years, can only seem a vast obstacle thrust across every reasonable avenue of African progress'. For that project has 'taught that nothing useful could develop without denying Africa's past, without a ruthless severing from Africa's roots and a slavish acceptance of models drawn from entirely different histories'. (p. 42)

But Basil Davidson's reflection is not just another lament about the unin-tended consequences of ill-considered external intervention in Africa's inter-nal affairs. It is, rather, first and foremost a devastating critique of the 'ideological poverty' of the educated strata, of those who assumed the reins of African independence in the 50s, of 'the general acceptance by literate Africans, at least down to the 1970s and perhaps beyond, of their necessary self-alienation from Africa's roots', (p. 50) of their seeing 'Africa's own

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1    Line from Okello Oculi, *Orphan*, East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1968.

history as irrelevant and useless' (p. 103), of their faith in everything imported, from 'capitalism' to 'socialism'.

## An Alienated Intelligentsia

With great sensitivity and care, the opening chapter outlines the social history of the pace-setting core of the educated strata: the 'recaptives' and the 'mission-educated', on the west coast of Africa. It is a history that opens with Britain's 19th century naval blockade designed to put a stop to the Atlantic slave trade. 'In the curious language of those times', the 'captives... taken into slavery for shipment to the Americas, but 'recaptured' and set free by the crews of the naval blockade', came to be known as 'recaptives' (p. 25). Many thousands were set ashore at Monrovia. But many more 'settled in villages around Freetown or in Freetown itself'. 'Little by little', they 'created a common language, a modified English known as Kreo (Creole in English), invented forms of self-administration or adapted those they remembered from home'. They 'went into local business, local politics, local administration... and in due course produced theologians, political thinkers, men of capable action and, increasingly, men of relative wealth', though 'absolutely African in their origins', the recaptives 'were divided from Africa by an acute experience of alienation', for 'Africa had sent them into slavery'. 'With Christianity and Constitution as their watchwords, the recaptive thinkers held that Africa needed to be saved, and salvation must come from outside the Continent'. (p. 25-28).

The children of the recaptives were in time joined, in their literary skills as in their profound alienation from all that they thought Africa stood for, 'by all those West Coast and other Africans who now began to receive the benefits of literate education in mission schools in several colonies'. 'Those who are instructed in the English language', wrote the Afro-Carribean diplomat and civil servant Edward Wilmot Blyden to a friend, Mary Kingsley, in 1900,

> *are taught by those from whom they have received their training that all native institutions are, in their character, darkness and depravity and in their effects only evil and evil continually... The Christianized Negro looks away from his native health. He is under the curse of an insatiable ambition or imitation of foreign ideas and foreign customs* (p.42-43).

Basil Davidson has the confidence of one who combines conviction with knowledge, who has spent the better part of his working life not just combatting the racist presumption that Africa has no history worth recording but bringing to public knowledge the contours of that very history. At no point does this pungent critique of the educated strata in contemporary Africa convey even the hint of a caricature. His judgement is harsh, but

never exaggerated. It is pointedly formulated, but brought to life with numerous life-sketches of illustrious recaptives and mission-educated locals. With painstaking sensitivity, Davidson sketches the deep-seated tension that marked the consciousness of this group: it 'saw that the assertion of Africa having a history of its own must be part of their case against colonial racism', (p. 102) but wanted to erase this history in the name of development; it argued for Africa's independence, but could not break any thought of a development rooted in Africa's own history. Assailed by a white racism which contemptuously dismissed them — in the words of a colonial Governor — as 'useless visionaries, detestable clerks' (p. 45), and yet convinced that a 'job had to be done' for Africa had to be saved from the 'unrepentant savagery' that had fed the sinews of the slave trade, the educated strata found themselves 'sentence (d) to nowhere' in the purgatory that was colonial racism. They joined and inevitably led the anti-colonial struggle, with a passion that was directed as much against the colonizers as against the 'traditionalists' (p. 33, 46-48). And when they won, these modernizers with a mission sought to wipe Africa's historical slate clean. Of this group, Davidson rightfully concludes: 'No matter how much they spoke in defense of the virtues of Africa's cultures, the 'modernizers' were necessarily standing on the ground of European culture' (p. 35). It was the European legacy that they mechanically transplanted onto African soil that was to be their, and Africa's, undoing.

## Erasing the Pre-Colonial Heritage

To import European institutions uncritically was the same as denying Africa's own legacy. With a broad sweep that only a historian of Davidson's stature can dare and deliver, chapters 2 ('Road not Taken') and 3 ('Shadows of Neglected Ancestors') sum up the political legacy of precolonial Africa that the 'modernizers' threw away without a second thought. Davidson sketches a legacy with an accent on processes of state formation and associated political cultures. He outlines two core paths leading to state formation: one to the ethnically distinct nation-state, the other to the ethnically diverse *regna*.

The history that Davidson recapitulates to highlight the process of nation-state formation in pre-colonial Africa is that of the Asante in West Africa. He traces with authority the process of unification of various clans of a people called Akan beginning 'around 1690 or so'.

> *The Europeans who first came in close contact with Asante... certainly thought and wrote of Asante as a nation-state, even if they only used for it the term 'nation', because it had all the attributes that justified the label.*

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Davidson is insistent on the parallel. Precolonial Africa produced nation-states as did Europe, and a national consciousness that cemented allegiance around this state as did Europe:

> *The history of precolonial tribalism... was in every objective sense the history of nationalism: of socio-political categories, that is, corresponding to the origin and development of unifying community formation in one terminology or another* (p. 75).

Also, as in Europe, the consolidation of the nation within the territorial boundaries of its own state unleashed a powerful dynamic of expansion.

> *By 1750 this powerful nation-state had secured effective control of the whole of what would become, two centuries later, the republic of Ghana. The Asante nation-state had become an empire-state* (p. 58-59).

The political life of the Asante nation-state was organized around three general principles that Davidson contends more or less regulated the life 'of precolonial political institutions in every African region where stable societies produced one or other form of central government'. These under-lined the need to create:

> *A unifying force (for) a system of participation that must not only work, but must publicly be seen to work, (and finally, for) a systematic distrust of power (leading to) an insistence on the distribution of executive power.*[2] (p. 60-61, 86).

But the nation-state was not the only destination to which state formation processes in precolonial Africa led. The second was a less centralized and more federalized form, one that developed 'south of the Sahara in medieval times, 'in ancient Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Kanem. These 'big political formations' brought diverse peoples around an ambitious 'core people', and yet had little concern with 'ethnic minorities'. Davidson finds them 'an exact parallel with' the *regna*, a state form that developed in Europe after the collapse of the western Roman empire, (p. 93). Though the African *regna* 'fell apart' by the beginning of the seventeenth century and 'disap-peared from history', its lesson has not ceased to be relevant. That lesson is the virtue of tolerating diversity in large political formations.

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2  Davidson later outlines 'a number of guiding principles of social behaviour', also characteristic of otherwise diverse societies: 'a principle of conservation' based on the idea that 'a successful balance with nature had to be a stable balance' (p. 83); the 'principle of 'levelling compensation' ... (in) judicial practice' as illustrated by the following example: 'Homicide is a crime, but the killing of one person may not be best answered by the killing of the killer: it may be better answered by providing the deprived family with a person to take the place of the lost person'. (p.84).

The synthesis is impressive; its historical sweep breath-taking. But as the reader moves from these historical chapters to what Davidson claims is 'the Black Man's Burden' — 'the curse of the nation-state' that is Africa's inheritance from Europe — a seed of doubt is implanted. For if the pivot of Africa's present crisis is the form of state that characterized its political life, the nation-state, to what extent can this be understood as a European import, and to what extent — given Davidson's own historical synthesis — is it a return to one of the two main trajectories in Africa's own precolonial political history, the Asante nation-state, of its extension, the Asante empire-state? Or does the problem lie not in Davidson's historical synthesis but in his historical analogy, leading to a conceptual confusion which sees the centralized state — and, at that, a very specific form of it, the centralized colonial state — as analogous to the nation-state? I shall argue that, in spite of his astute and startlingly mind-opening historical insights, Davidson is led astray by his tenacious search for historical analogies. Before moving on to the critique, however, let me sum up Basil Davidson's own formulation of the multi-faceted problem that plagues contemporary Africa.

**The Problem and the Analogy**

'Primarily, this is a crisis of institutions', so Basil Davidson begins his analysis of the problem. 'Which institutions?' he asks, and answers, 'We have to be concerned here with the nationalism which produced the nation-states of newly independent Africa after the colonial period: with the nationalism that became nation-statism' (p. 10). It is a process that, Davidson finds, has led to remarkably similar developments in east and central Europe, as in Africa.

> *About a dozen nation-states thus took shape in Europe out of the collapse of the old internal empires. Many more were going to emerge in Africa from the external empires: some fifty new nation-states in all* (p. 267).

We shall see that Davidson pursues this analogy relentlessly, from the beginning to the end of the book, and pays a heavy price for it.

But Davidson is aware that 'no simple explanation of such phenomena can ever be adequate'. He identifies two, and not just one, pivots of the African problem — on the one hand, the legacy of the nation-state, on the other, a culture of tribalism/clientelism, Africa's time-tested response to predatory dictatorship and disorder (more on this later) — one external, the other internal. And he proceeds to further unravel the many dimensions of these two horns of the African dilemma — an authoritarian bureaucracy, clientelism, a countryside bled dry by bloating urban areas and forced to turn to illegal trade to survive, all set in an ever-worsening ecological and

international context — as 'they all came together, visibly in the 1980s, in destruction of the accountability of the state' (p. 215).

Once again, Davidson illustrates his argument with numerous case studies, several that in their own right would interest a reader. But the most poignant outcome is that of Liberia. For here, the 'alienation' of the recaptives 'was displayed in its purest form by transatlantic black people' who meant to develop the continent 'on entirely non-African lines, convinced that nothing else was possible or, if possible, desirable' (p. 43-44). And it was here, in 1990, that 'the outcome of this long experiment in civilizing Africa by denying Africa's own history and achievements was to reach its ultimate degradation'. But Davidson makes it plain that the tragedy of Liberia, as of its leader Doe, is not explained by a single institutional inheritance from outside, the nation-state; it is also shaped by an internally-generated African response. Doe, like Liberia:

> was equally the victim of another pathology of the times that formed
> him: the pathology, that is, of a colonial or a neocolonial 'tribalism' or
> clientelism which, itself, was a product not of Africa's precolonial
> development, but a desperate mode of self-defense by citizens whose
> state could not or would not protect them (p. 248).

This 'modern tribalism', Davidson has no doubt, 'flourishes on disorder, is utterly destructive of civil society, makes hey of morality, flouts the rule of law' (p. 11). The two horns of the African dilemma are thus the nation-state that has denied Africa's own history and 'modern tribalism' that has destroyed 'civil society'; one externally imposed, the other an internally generated mode of self-defense. The more Davidson explores these two 'curses' the more he gets entangled in East European analogies, and the less fruitful becomes his quest for answers to questions that he formulates in the introductory chapter: 'What explains this degradation from the hopes and freedoms of newly regained independence? How has this come about? Where did the liberators go wrong?' (p. 9).

## Nation-State or Centralized Colonial State?

In just about every country in Africa, two broad groups contended for leadership at independence: 'modernizing nationalist' and 'traditional chiefs'. The kings and chiefs enjoyed not only the legitimacy of 'tradition' but also the backing of the colonial power. And yet, in just about every country, they lost. Why?

To make sense of this outcome, one needs to be wary of the implications of Davidson's brief description of 'nationalist' organizing as mainly an urban affair with periodic campaigning forays into the countryside. True, this movement drew its cadres mainly from urban and peri-urban social forces: teachers, petty traders, trade unionists, ex-students. And yet, the fact

remains that the core social base of every compelling movement — such as the CPP in Ghana or TANU in mainland Tanganyika — was mainly rural, not urban. Also, among the targets of this rural peasant revolt, everywhere, were chiefs. To understand the constellation of forces on both sides of the anti-colonial struggle, and to grasp the character of the state that the 'modernizers' inherited at independence, one needs to move away from Davidson's analogy centered on the 'nation-state' and begin with an analysis of the agrarian question in peasant colonies.

The widespread contradiction between peasants and chiefs, surfacing from colony, was generated by the very character of the colonial state and the office of the 'chief'. For the colonial state was predicated on a sharp distinction between town and countryside. Towns were governed through a 'modern' state structure based on a differentiation between various moments of power: the executive, the legislative, the judicial, the administrative. But this 'bourgeois' state form was only transplanted into colonial towns, not into the countryside.

The state structure which governed the rural population was organized around an opposite principle: power was concentrated, not differentiated. The various forms of 'native authorities' confronted their peasant populations like a clenched fist. A chief in the countryside did not just implement laws passed down from the central government; he also had the power to formulate bye-laws affecting the area of his jurisdiction. He was also the authority that adjudicated local conflicts, listened to appeals, and meted out punishment — so long as this concerned only 'natives'. A single example from Uganda, requiring no more than minor modifications to suit other cases, will suffice to illustrate my point. Come the beginning of the calendar year, it was the chief who assessed the property of the peasant, determined the tax he would pay, had the right to pass a bye-law which may involve a supplementary payment, whether in cash or kind or labour, listened to the appeal of the peasant if he thought he had been unfairly assessed, arrested the peasant in case of failure to pay the levies in time, released him when the sentence expired, and determined the fine he would pay in addition, for having failed to pay the original levy in time! This 'chief' was no 'traditional' leader with 'traditional' powers; he was the executive, the legislator, the administrator, the judge, all rolled into one. Even when local governments were elected following post-war reforms, their role was only advisory — to the chief.

This form of the state becomes intelligible once we understand that the relationship between the state and the mainly rural communities over which it ruled, was markedly different in the colonies: the state structure was not only there to stabilize and reproduce existing social relations, but to transform them; not just there to regulate existing markets but to create them in the first place. Force was not just a regulator of productive relationships, it

was integral to the very process of production, often necessary just to set it into motion. Relations of exploitation were not simply economic, but also extra-economic: forced enclosures. The fused power that was the person of the chief made sense as the enforcer of this regime of extra-economic coercion.

But this regime is not brought to light in Basil Davidson's analysis. Davidson's analysis of the city-country dichotomy revolves exclusively around two notions: exploitative trade relations, and the increasing weight of an urban-based authoritarian bureaucracy. No wonder that his starting point is the unequal terms of trade between town and country, institutionalized with the setting up of post-war marketing boards, and taken over at independence. The non-monetary relationships where direct force figures as a key ingredient and its political deployment that enforces them evade him totally. It is an analysis that cannot possibly come to grips with the totality of the agrarian question under colonial conditions. If thus cannot explain why, when the anger of the rural masses did explode, it was aimed not only against the marketing boards and the (usually immigrant) traders that formed a link in the chain of unequal trade relations, but also against the chiefs who were the linchpin of the regime of extra-economic coercion. This anger was a force readily available for organization and incorporation into the countryside anti-chief and anti-colonial movement led by the 'modernizers'.

When independence did come, the 'modernizers' inherited a bifurcated state structure, designed to govern 'citizens' in towns but 'subjects' in villages. It was a state structure forged and perfected during the colonial period, not imported from the metropolitan countries on the eve of independence. But Davidson claims the latter, maintaining that the colonial state gave way to the nation-state at independence. His only proof is the language of 'nationalism' used by the 'modernizers'. But the language stood at odds, and sharply too, with the institutional reality. It was not the first time that the oppressed sought to lend legitimacy to their struggle by borrowing battle-cries and slogans from the arsenal of the oppressors. Every colonial child was aware of the imperial dictum that the right to self-determination was cast in the language of nationalism; the debate on whether Jews, Armenians, or Poles had the right to self-determination became a debate on whether Jews, Armenians or Poles were 'nations' or not. 'One thing's certain', Davidson quotes Jacques Rabemananjara, the Malagasy nationalist, writing in 1958:

> *in today's political vocabulary the word nationalism means, generally, the unanimous movement of coloured peoples against Western domination. What does it matter if the word doesn't really describe the phenomenon to which we like to apply it?* (p. 164).

But Davidson is adamant, that Africa at independence took the same route that Europe did following the Wilsonian settlement át the end of the First World War, the route of the nation-state. But if 'the Divine Will' in Europe 'was generally seen as urging each culture to realize itself as a nation, and then as a sovereign nation-state' (p. 129, it was not so in Africa. And the irony is that several statements, scattered through the book, indicate that Davidson is not unaware of this historical fact. He says at one point:

> *The doctrine of the sovereign nation-state in Europe was accepted more easily than in Africa, if only because the cutoff from the precolonial past in Europe was less drastic and complete. This was because the new frontiers in Central and Eastern Europe corresponded, often enough, with major ethnic groupings and historical memories* (p. 267).

The point is that they did not, often enough, in Africa, it is a historical fact that Davidson himself proceeds to illustrate, quoting Jean Suret-Canale, a leading French historian of West Africa (p. 203):

> *Like most frontiers in Africa today, those inherited by Guinea from the colonial partition are completely arbitrary. They do not reflect the limits of natural regions, nor the limits of separate ethnic groups. They were shaped in their detail by chances of conquest or compromise between colonial powers.*

And this is the real point. The language of 'nationalism' notwithstanding, one could not speak of 'nation-states' in Africa. The nation-state is precisely the option that Africa did *not* take at independence. For, unlike in Europe, the history of state formation bears little resemblance to the history of social transformation in Africa. Political history, the history of state-making and boundary-drawing, is at total odds with social history in this one continent in the world. The irony is that the African case is, if anything, the opposite of the historical process that led to state formation in Europe.

As I have been at pains to point out, this basic fact cannot escape a historian of the calibre of Basil Davidson. And sure enough, it is a point often made in his book, but also just as often set aside as Davidson pursues the central analogy around which he has chosen to organize his material and fashion his argument. The more tenaciously Davidson pursues the analogy between Africa and Eastern Europe, the more surely he is led astray, and the more the analogy hangs like an Albatross leading to a lame and tame conclusion in place of the *tour de force* that the opening chapters seem to promise.

But before we can turn to Davidson's prescriptions for Africa's contemporary ills, we need to follow him through the tortuous path he has chosen to tread to drive home the East European analogy. For the analogy hangs on not one but two conceptual pegs: not just nation-state but also civil society.

### 'Civil Society' vs 'Modern Tribalism'

Following popular uprisings in Eastern Europe in the late eighties, the notion of 'civil society' gained widespread currency amongst Western intellectuals. Democracy, many argued, meant the liberation of civil society à la Eastern Europe. To that refrain, Davidson adds a corollary: the evidence of the collapse of civil society in Africa is the spread of 'modern tribalism'.

Davidson distinguishes between three types of 'tribalism': pre-colonial, colonial and modern. Pre-colonial tribalism was largely a 'nationalism' that 'has often been a force for good, a force creating civil society dependent on laws and the rule of law' (p. 11). Then there was the 'tribalism' of the colonial period whereby 'tribes' were literally invented where none had previously existed. Davidson sees colonial 'tribalism' as 'perhaps the only African political invention of those times that could or did succeed, and was well-promoted by the British or the French major colonial powers, as a useful administrative instrument'. For enterprising men (and there must also have been some women), it was a rare opportunity for endeavour and enterprise. For the colonial authority, it rationalized and lessened the cost of administration: 'Let related ethnic units' band together and become 'tribes' ... because, if they banded together, the costs of European administration would be that much less'. So ran the flow of official thinking.

So 'new tribes, such as the Sukuma and the Byakusa' in mainland Tanganyika 'rose fully formed from the mysterious workings of 'tradition' (p.100-101).

To these two types of 'tribalism', one a pre-colonial 'nationalism', and the other a colonial 'invention', Davidson contrasts a third: modern tribalism/clientelism. Once again, Davidson falls back on a historical parallel, while remaining faithful to the original analogy with Eastern Europe. 'The Nigerian historian Peter Ekeh has argued convincingly', Davidson tells us:

> That the spread and reinforcement of kinship ties and manipulations —
> in short, forms of clientelism — became a dominant mode of political
> life in Africa in that historical period, the major slaving years,
> whenever the state either failed to defend citizens from violence or
> enslavement or became the wrecker of community life. ... As the slaving
> state became increasingly a predator, 'kinship systems were
> strengthened and elaborated as a means of providing protection against
> the dangers of the violence created by the slave'.

'In just the same way', argues Davidson,

> the predatory nature of the postcolonial or neocolonial state in Africa ...
> has provoked self-defense by kinship ties or their bureaucratic

*equivalents and, with this, a corresponding subversion of the state by
smuggling and related kinds of economic crime.*

Matters have come to a point, he insists, that:

*in present day life there is no doubt that kinship corporations or their
equivalent, rather than any other form of political self-organization, are
what generally count for most in everyday life.*

But 'kinship corporations cannot produce a democratic state, whether or not
they are disguised as political parties', he concludes, for 'they point, more
often then not, to a collapse of civil society ... open(ing) the gate to fearful
abuse of common interest'. As evidence, Davidson cites examples of:

*Uganda, Chad, Burundi, and quite a few other lands ... submerged in
tides of violence which revealed time and again that the 'tribalism' of
kinship corporations and their equivalents could act as agents of mutual
havoc that nothing seemed able to contain* (p. 225-228).

So, finally, and alas, Davidson arrives at the same conclusion as have the
'modernizers', whether within or outside Africa, that the real problem in the
continent is 'tribalism', even if a modern and historical product!

But Davidson does not stop there. He goes on to argue that, no matter
what the appearances, 'modern tribalism' has become the single most endur-
ing reality of contemporary Africa. It is these 'regional or territorial
interests' that have 'flowed into the 'party-political' compartments" and
have 'often ... assumed an ethnic guise'. It is this 'modern tribalism', or this
'clientelism', that lurks behind every organized interest. 'Generally', argues
Davidson, 'the nation-states of Africa have had to endure clientelist 'single-
party rule' with all its openings to dictatorship, or else 'multi-party rule',
which has simply led to other forms of clientelist corruption' (p. 207). So
much so that the 'multiparty' state proclaimed in Zaire in 1990 'had fostered
overnight no fever than 230 'political parties', not a single one of which had
any of the organizational and mobilizing capacity that a political party is
supposed to have'. 'This was a reversion', he claims, 'to kinship corpora-
tions under the thinnest guise, and was going to solve precisely nothing'
(p.227).

Having started his journey with an uncompromising and illuminating
critique of the 'modernizers', Davidson is ironically tempted to conclude it
with a return to the fold of a triumphant modernism. I shall argue that the
clue to that retreat is the dichotomy civil society / modern tribalism: con-
trasting the promise of 'rule of law' that regulates 'civil society' with the
danger of 'modern tribalism' opening floodgates 'to a fearful abuse of com-
mon interest'. I shall try to show that so ideological is this dichotomy, that
neither of its polarities is anchored in a defensible historical analysis. Rather,
Davidson uses the concept 'civil society' as many have 'socialism',

prophetically and not analytically, as a promise and not a reality, as programmatic and not actually-existing; just as he employs 'modern tribalism' as a semi-caricature, throwing to the winds his otherwise sure inclination for not just a contextualized but a nuanced understanding of historical phenomena'.

Let us begin with the notion 'civil society'. Forged in the annals of Western social theory, the concept of 'civil society' is anchored in a dichotomy central to modern sociology, that between community and society. Perhaps the clearest explanation of this dichotomy is to be found in the writings of Max Weber as he seeks to contrast 'communal' action with 'associative' action. In his words, community relations are based on 'various types of affectual, emotional or traditional bases', whereas relations in a society turn around either a 'rational free market' or 'voluntary associations'.

While communal relations are natural or primordial, societal relations are historically constructed. In this distinction between community and society was anchored the post-war edifice of modernization theory, constructed around the dichotomy tradition and modernity.

Civil society, too, is understood by its proponents as a historical construct. While contemporary notions of civil society are several and varied, some more and others less structural, Hegelian theory remains the underpinning of them all. For Hegel, civil society formation is a process with multiple dimensions, anchored in profound changes in the nature of both 'society' and the 'state': on the one hand, the rise of free and autonomous individuals, relations between whom were recognized as contractual with the emergence of civil law and the freeing of economic relations from social bondage; on the other, the rise of the modern state and the depersonalization of violence, a phenomenon that contemporaries were tempted to describe as the advent of 'civilization'. Hence, 'civil(ized) society'.

The history of civil society formation in Africa — Davidson's trans-historical use of the concept notwithstanding — has a very distinct trajectory, one marked by racism from the outset. For civil society under colonial conditions was urban society, and urban society was the society of colons. The distinction between civil society and peasant ('tribal') communities was crystallized, as I have briefly sketched earlier, in both the bifurcated state structure and the regime of extra-economic exploitation in the countryside. To be sure, the parameters of civil society in Africa were continually and forcibly stretched through democratic struggles. The first to gain entry to it were immigrant minorities; on their heels followed indigenous middle strata and even sections of working classes. The high point of these struggles was the post-war anti-colonial movement, a movement that pitted not only the colonized against the colonizers, but also peasant communities against civil

society. That clash was captured most incisively and eloquently in the writings of Frantz Fanon.

But the truly spectacular expansion of civil society was yet to come, it followed independence. That dramatic expansion can be glimpsed if we contrast the primarily rural-based anti-colonial post-war movements with the mainly urban-based 'pro-democracy' movements of today. For while the nationalist movement of yesterday drew its strength mainly from the organized support of peasant communities, the pro-democracy movement of today is mainly anchored in civil society. To be sure, there is a marked difference between most African countries where civil society is a minority construct and its movements — dominated by middle strata such as clergy, lawyers, professionals and academics — tend to speak the language of liberalism, and those like South Africa where a strong working class has shaped the struggle of a civil society whose demands transcend the boundaries of a liberal agenda. Davidson, however, totally ignores the latter while he has little sympathy for the former. He sees their liberal agenda, and particularly their call for a multi-party electoral system, as nothing but a facade for the forces of 'modern tribalism' to continue to occupy the political stage. It is surely a curious contradiction in Davidson's writing that, in spite of a never-ending eulogy of civil society, he sees nothing regenerative about actually-existing civil society in Africa!

But this not all. The same contradiction plagues his passionate denunciation of 'modern tribalism'. For a more analytical and nuanced understanding of that phenomenon will bring to light a fact obscured in Davidson's treatment of it: every emancipatory movement in the peasantry, whether in the colonial or the contemporary period, has been either a 'tribal' or a religious movement. This has been as true of the armed liberation movements like the Mau Mau, the movements in the former Portuguese colonies, or the National Resistance Army of the 80s in Uganda; as it has been true of religious cults, from Nyabingi in Uganda/Rwanda, to Maji Maji in Tanganyika, to Mwana Lesa in Zaire, to Alice Lanshena in Zambia, to Maitatsine in Nigeria, to Alice Lakwena in contemporary Uganda. Contrast, for example, Amilcar Cabral's analysis of the social base of armed liberation in Guinea-Bissau ('An Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea-Bissau') with Basil Davidson's treatment of 'modern tribalism': Cabral makes sense of that social base as primarily a united front of several peasant ('tribal') communities. Surely, it is yet another curious contradiction in Davidson's writing that while pinning hopes on peasant-based armed liberation movements as swept through former Portuguese colonies — movements whose leadership spoke the language of 'national liberation' and 'socialism' with as much ease as its adherents did the language of 'tribalism' and 'religion' — he repeats *ad nauseum* a one-sided critique of 'modern tribalism', not forgetting, once in a while, to warn against 'fundamentalism'.

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## The Way Ahead

Davidson would surely agree that neither the 'revolution from above' that Africa's post-independence 'modernizers' sought nor the 'revolution from without' that the international financial institutions promise today can hold much prospect for Africa. But to say this is to accept that the main elements of any solution to Africa's malaise must be found within the parameters of the African problem itself. It is in its attempt to charter a way out of the current crisis that *The Black Man's Burden* falls short, not only because of the inconsistencies it is riddled with, but because of Davidson's failure to appreciate the contradictory nature of the phenomena he seeks to analyze.

Davidson is right to identify the problem at two levels: the form of the state, and the absence of 'mass participation'. But he is wrong to identify that state form with the nation-state, and the absence of 'mass participation' with the destruction of civil society, both à la Eastern Europe. So enamored is Davidson with the language of civil society that he seems constantly in danger of slipping into an uncompromising modernism, and substituting one borrowed solution for another. But he doesn't, not because he discards the 'civil society' perspective, but because of his instinct, the sure touch of a veteran with a long and enduring experience of Africa. In the process, however, there emerges a continuous tension between Davidson the theorist and Davidson the historian and the practitioner.

The theorist who never tires of reciting the virtues of 'civil society' and the evils of 'modern tribalism' is saved by the practitioner who has learnt from liberation movements of the eighties that, where the peasantry is a majority, there can be no democratic transformation without direct peasant participation, and that 'democratic participation would have to be 'mass participation'' which must be 'aimed at giving rural multitudes a real measure of practical self-government' (p. 295-299). The historian affirms that:

> 'mass participation' ... was at the heart of all those African societies which has proved stable and progressive before the destructive impact of the overseas slave trade and colonial dispossession had made itself felt (p. 295).

And yet, blocked by a 'civil society' and 'nation-state' perspective, the practitioner is unable to cull from experience the kernel of what democratization must involve if it is to be of meaning to the peasant majority: the dismantling of the *uncivil* colonial state that strangles the peasantry in a web of extra-economic coercion.

Davidson is right in pointing to 'federalism' and 'mass participation' as key signposts in Africa's endeavour to find a way out of its crisis, but he is unable to link the two in an organic whole. The theorist who never tires of

the uni-dimensional critique of 'modern tribalism' fails to appreciate that 'modern tribalism' (like modern religious movements) is a contradictory phenomenon, comprising moments both manipulative and democratic. And yet, the practitioner unhesitatingly concludes that:

> *a hopeful future ... would have to be a federalizing future: a future of organic unities of sensible association across wide regions within which national cultures, far from seeking to destroy or main each other, could evolve their diversities and find in them a mutual blessing* (p. 286).

Is it not strange that, having just dismissed 'modern tribalism', Davidson should turn around and see salvation in rejuvenated national cultures?! What would these 'national cultures' be if not the cultures of the much berated 'tribes'? And why in the same breath herald the liberation of these 'national cultures', these 'diversities', while bemoaning the demand for a multiparty system because it would mean 'a reversion to kinship corporations under the thinnest guise', leading to 'a collapse of civil society' and a 'fearful abuse of common interest'? (p. 227).

The point is neither to celebrate 'modern tribalism' nor to recoil from it in alarm. Rather, to recognize its contradictory nature is to appreciate the contradictory possibilities in any liberation of 'modern tribalism'. While any type of federalism would have to recognize the legitimacy of 'tribal' interests, the resulting 'tribalism' could either be democratically-constituted or turn into a top-down manipulation. The outcome, in turn, would depend on whether or not federalism has been joined to 'mass participation' through a reform which goes beyond simply federalizing the colonial hold over the peasantry to dismantling it.

This is why it is rather unfortunate that Davidson should uncritically acclaim 'those honest generals and soldiers' in Nigeria who have been the guarantors of a federalized state, but have at the same time held the fort against every movement calling for its democratization! It is also why it is equally unfortunate that Davidson should lamely apologize for the failure of regimes born of armed liberation struggles in Portuguese colonies to proceed 'with the project of mass participation once the driving disciplines of the war were no longer present' — and not recognize that a far more important reason lay in the perspective of 'revolution from above' that these regimes shared with fellow-modernizers around the continent. It is unfortunate, too, that Davidson should choose to ignore the experience of those regimes around the continent who have gone the furthest in institutionalizing rural mass participation. I am speaking of Khadafi in Libya, Sankara in Burkina Faso, the early Rawlings in Ghana, and now Museveni in Uganda. How does one explain the staying power of such regimes except by the reforms they carried out, far-reaching reforms that generated rural support by reorganizing the colonially-inherited state structure and simultaneously

recognizing collective rights of reorganized rural communities — even if not always consistently.

But these regimes have their darker side too: a deep-seated suspicion of civil society and its liberal demands. His eulogy of 'civil society' notwithstanding, it is a suspicion shared by Davidson — and by the regimes born of the armed liberation movements in Portuguese colonies. One needs to recognize that, all the way from the post-war anti-colonial movements to the armed liberation movements of the eighties, peasant-based movements have had a deep distrust of civil society. At the same time, the Achilles Heel of contemporary civil society-based movements is their lack of a peasant base, and consequently their limited liberal agenda. The question of the hour, surely, is how to transcend the limitations — in their social base as well as perspective — of both types of movements, and not reproduce the limitations of only one of them, as would Davidson. For if we are to arrive at a political agenda that can energize and draw together various social forces in the highly fragmented social reality that is contemporary Africa, we need to devise an agenda that will appeal to both civil society and peasant communities, that will incorporate both the electoral choice that civil society movements seek and the quest for community rights that has been the consistent objective of peasant-based movements.

It is Davidson's merit to have taken a bold step on a journey that must without fear challenge all received wisdom, even if he begins to fall back on a little too much received baggage along the way! His contribution is to have asked questions that were taboo for a long time amongst conventional 'modernizing' circles, and equally so amongst radical champions of a 'revolution from above' who were equally constrained by the 'modernization' paradigm. But it is a limitation of *The Black Man's Burden* that it retains vestiges of that very perspective. For, after all, was not the language of 'modernization' also a language of domination, delegitimizing popular struggles of colonial and neocolonial subjects as so many 'tribal' — and today, also, 'fundamentalist' — holdovers on the march of progress? Because he remains trapped in 'fundamentalism', and because he continues to share with top-down revolutionaries a deep distrust of civil society movements, Davidson is unable to identify the social forces whose struggles can take Africa out of its present crisis — precisely because these forces are to be found inside these very movements!

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