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The Petty Bourgeoisie in the Thought of Amilcar Cabral and Walter Rodney[1]

Issa Shivji*♣

On Petty Bourgeoisie

One of the most debated ideas of Amilcar Cabral is that of the suicide of the petty bourgeoisie. Much has been written on this idea, a few in context but much out of context, thinking of it as a dictum or an edict. In revisiting this statement, I want to locate it in its historical and political context: why it was said, in what context and with what political purpose in mind. Cabral and Walter Rodney always emphasised the specificity of discourse – to be concrete and contextual, discussing concepts and ideas emanating from our own specific conditions and political practices. Before I proceed, it is relevant to discuss the social category of the petty bourgeoisie, which both Cabral and Rodney frequently employed in their writings. This is important because their meaning of 'petty bourgeoisie', particularly in the political context, is slightly different from that of the Marxist classics.

In the *Communist Manifesto* ([1850] 1973: 62–98), Marx and Engels seemed to imply that in Europe there were two types of petty bourgeoisie: the 'old' petty bourgeoisie (artisans, shopkeepers, etc.), who were remnants from the precapitalist formations (feudalism, in the case of Europe), and the 'new' petty bourgeoisie, formed in developed capitalism and ensconced between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, 'fluctuating between proletariat and bourgeoisie and ever renewing itself as a supplementary part of the bourgeois society' (ibid.: 89).

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♣ Paper presented at the International Symposium on 'Amilcar Cabral: A National and Universal Heritage', in commemoration of the centenary of Cabral's birth. Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau 9–12 September 2024.

The concept of the fickle nature of the petty bourgeoisie oscillating between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was more graphically formulated by Marx in his polemical text against Proudhon. He described Proudhon as a petty bourgeois who was 'continually tossed back and forth between capital and labour …' (Marx and Engels [1847] 1976: 178). The fickle or unreliable nature of petty bourgeoisie has remained with us and is often deployed in polemical writings. However, we do not find this in Cabral or Rodney, who took the role of the petty bourgeoisie seriously, notwithstanding its fickle nature. Once again, Cabral and Rodney cautioned that we should desist from generalisations and be context-specific.

There is another important point to add in reference to Marx's writings on the petty bourgeoisie. From his historical conception of it as an intermediary class without independent material interests,[2] Marx could not envision the petty bourgeoisie gaining political power on its own and becoming a ruling class serving its own interests. Even where it did get into state power, it was objectively serving the interests of the bourgeoisie (see, for instance, Marx [1852] 1973). This is important because, in some of Rodney's writings, we encounter the idea of the petty bourgeoisie as the ruling class (Rodney [1975] 1990: 54–55). More on this later.

Matters stand differently when it comes to colonial and neocolonial formations, which were the dominant framework for Cabral and Rodney. On the place and political role of the petty bourgeoisie, there are certain commonalities and significant differences between their writings.

Firstly, the most significant difference between the European situation and the struggles that Marx was writing about, and the African situation, was the central factor of imperialism. Whereas in the European case the formations and transitions from one to another were largely autonomous, dependent on internal social and political contradictions that were ultimately decisive, in the colonial and neocolonial contexts, internal contradictions were muted under colonialism. The internal contradictions between classes and social groups surfaced after independence under neocolonialism. In the anti-colonial struggle, almost all colonised people were fighting against the colonial power. As soon as independence was achieved, social classes and groups began to assert their own interests, albeit under the overall hegemony of imperialism (Cabral [1966] 1969: 57 et seq.).

Secondly, in the colonial and neocolonial situation the petty bourgeoisie was more than an intermediary. Tethered to the metropolitan bourgeoisie under colonialism and tied to the international bourgeoisie in various ways

under neocolonialism, the petty bourgeoisie, or at least large sectors of it, served as a transmission belt. Its privileged position and perks were best served by playing second fiddle to the international bourgeoisie.

Thirdly, national liberation in Africa, whether through armed struggle or peaceful means, was a kind of alliance between classes led by the petty bourgeoisie, or some sectors of it. On this, Cabral and Rodney agreed. They saw the leadership of the petty bourgeoisie as almost inevitable. The petty bourgeoisie under colonialism was the class nearest to the colonial state apparatus, or in it; had a broader view of the world than the working people; had some education to articulate the demands of the people; knew the colonial ways of the Europeans; and had a personal interest in fighting for independence given that it subjectively felt the racial discrimination and the humiliation of petty European officials, their bosses, in spite of the latter being less qualified. This was the point made by Cabral, giving his own example.

Cabral was a highly qualified agronomist in the colonial civil service but earned far less than his Portuguese boss, to whom he could have 'taught his job with my eyes shut' (Cabral [1966] 1969: 52). Cabral added that such discrimination and affront suffered by the African petty bourgeoisie mattered 'when considering where the initial idea of the struggle came from' (ibid). This ought not to be generalised because there are instances in many African countries where the initial ideas for freedom and independence came from some sectors of the working people, even though in such cases too, eventually, the leadership landed in the hands of the more educated petty bourgeoisie.

Fourthly, although Cabral and Rodney drew their classification of the petty bourgeoisie from Marxism, their application was not slavish. In Cabral's astute analysis of what he called 'the social structure in Guinea' (Cabral [1964] 1969: 46–61), he separately considered towns and rural areas, as well as Fulas and Balantes. In towns, he identified several groups, including workers (for example, dockworkers), European bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, African petty bourgeoisie of different social gradations, African shop workers employed by European merchants and commercial houses, prostitutes, thieves and other déclassé elements. He characterised Fulas as semi-feudal, having two main classes: chiefs and peasants. Between these two classes are intermediate social groups, like artisans and Dyulas (itinerant traders), who could be classified as petty bourgeois. Balantes hardly had much stratification, land was communally owned, instruments of production were privately owned, and the product went to the one who laboured.

In his synthesis of the social stratification of Africans, Cabral saw higher and middle officials and liberal professionals as a group, followed by petty officials, commercial employees and small farm owners as the petty bourgeoisie (ibid.: 48). He was somewhat hesitant to place higher officials and liberal professionals in the petty bourgeoisie but made a rather tantalising observation: '… if we were to make a thorough analysis the higher African officials as well as the middle officials and members of the liberal professions should also be included in the petty bourgeoisie' (ibid.). I venture to say that Cabral was inclined to include this group in the African petty bourgeoisie. (In our East African debates of the 1970s, such a group was unambiguously included in the petty bourgeoisie – see Shivji 1975, passim.)

What is perhaps most interesting in Cabral's essay is not so much the analysis of the social structure, which is somewhat schematic, but his *political* analysis of the attitude of each class and social group to national liberation *and* social revolution. This was rooted in the current social conditions of Guinea-Bissau; however, in its methodology, Cabral seems to have leaned heavily on classic Marx. He refused to call workers 'working class' or the 'proletariat'. His argument was that there could not be a proletariat in the absence of a national bourgeoisie. By the same token, he refused to call déclassé elements the lumpen proletariat since there cannot be a lumpen proletariat in the absence of a proletariat.

It is difficult to agree wholly with this *logical* argument. However, one must also keep in mind that Cabral was writing this in 1964, based on the actual existing conditions in Guinea-Bissau. He did not have behind him the experience of independent African countries, since most had become independent only a couple of years earlier. He could not be expected to predict outcomes in independent African countries that eventually developed a proletariat and some bourgeoisie, albeit dependent bourgeoisie, mostly comprising compradorial classes in both public and private sectors.

Another interesting point in Cabral's analysis is that he did not consider the peasantry as a revolutionary force. Although the peasantry is most exploited, that does not in itself make the peasantry a revolutionary agency (ibid.: 51). Moreover, he certainly did not see revolutionary potential in the déclassé elements of what is traditionally called the lumpen proletariat. In both these respects, Cabral departed from Frantz Fanon, who considered the working class as some of labour aristocracy and the peasantry as the revolutionary force (Fanon 1967; see also Macey 2000: 390 et seq.). In fact, Fanon disagreed with the Angolan People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), which based its struggle in urban areas and neglected the peasantry (Macey ibid.).[3]

Whereas Cabral's conception was based on the experience of Guinea-Bissau (and he always emphasised this and refused to generalise), Rodney's arose from his experience of the Caribbean, and of East Africa, where he participated in the vigorous debates of the 1960s and 70s at the University of Dar es Salaam. At the time, the term petty bourgeoisie was in vogue to the extent that many of us involved in those debates took it for granted that it was the petty bourgeoisie that was in power, albeit as a dependent class. Rodney, writing in 1974 (Rodney 1975a, 1975b) and in 1975 (Rodney [1975] 1990), continued to adhere to the concept of the petty bourgeoisie, sometimes even referring to African states as petty bourgeois states. In hindsight, we can legitimately ask whether it was correct not to recognise the differentiation of the petty bourgeoisie in state power after independence.

As a participant in those debates, I tried to develop the concept of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, particularly after the 1967 nationalisations in Tanzania. My argument then was that the petty bourgeoisie, having lacked an economic base when it came to power, had sought to create such a base through nationalisation. My position was that the state had become the site of accumulation for the collective interests of the entire bureaucratic bourgeoisie, although consumption remained individual. Yet I continued to include the bureaucratic bourgeoisie in the petty bourgeoisie. I did not fully develop the argument that, in fact, the petty bourgeoisie had morphed into a bourgeoisie, a bureaucratic bourgeoisie. One commentator on the earlier version[4] of my *Class Struggles in Tanzania* (1973) observed that I always bracketed the term 'bureaucratic bourgeoisie' in inverted commas, implying perhaps a tentative formulation or that the class was not yet fully developed (Foster-Carter 1973: 12–24). I later changed my position, recognising the bureaucratic bourgeoisie as a class (see, for instance, Shivji et al. 2020: book 3: passim). It is unclear whether Rodney also changed his position.

In his Hamburg lectures in 1978, Rodney had come a long way from his hopes for Tanzania's Ujamaa and his tentative formulations on class and class struggle. According to his biographer, while giving some credit to the nationalism of the Tanzanian petty bourgeoisie, Rodney showed surprise at how the bureaucratic bourgeoisie had abandoned the Ujamaa project and embedded itself in the international capitalist system (Zeilig 2022: 268–283). I cannot conclusively say that Rodney had by then come to accept that the bureaucratic bourgeoisie had developed into a class in itself because I have not heard or read the original lectures. However, the biographer quotes one statement from the lectures which I find pregnant, as if Rodney

were moving towards identifying the bureaucratic bourgeoisie as a class in itself. 'The idea of class struggle does not suit a bureaucratic bourgeoisie or any sector of the petit-bourgeoisie, because it's an idea that speaks about the negation of their own existence over time' (ibid.: 284). Be that as it may, what is important for the purpose of this paper is to underline that in Rodney we do not find a fully fledged analysis of how the petty bourgeoisie in power had transformed into some other kind of bourgeoisie.

There is another piece of analytical observation by Rodney that I find both refreshing and illustrative of his refusal to apply theories developed elsewhere slavishly. In his conversation with the comrades of the Institute of the Black World, over a period of two days on 30 April and 1 May 1975, he said:

> We still have a large peasantry. Do we treat them as petty commodity producers and as a consequence as members of the petit bourgeoisie, or do we see them as part of the working people, the producers in our country? What do we do with the large number of unemployed? Thirty-three per cent of our population is unemployed. Do we call them 'lumpen proletariat' and with all that that implies – that they're outside the working class, that they are even in some ways antisocial – or should we understand that this is a fundamental part of the thrust of capitalism to keep our working people from having the right to work. (Rodney 1990: 107)

In this observation, Rodney was hinting at an extremely useful concept, the concept of the working people. Inspired by Rodney, I have further developed the concept of working people (Shivji 2017). I consider Rodney's concept of the working people as his most important contribution to the theory of class and class struggle in Africa and the Caribbean.

Let us return to Cabral. Did Cabral think that the petty bourgeoisie in power would change into some kind of a bourgeoisie either through the state or in alliance with the comprador bourgeoisie outside the state? Remember, Cabral did not have the experience of neocolonialism behind him. He was in a sense extrapolating, yet his observations are very sharp and revealing. In his 1966 essay, 'The Weapon of Theory', Cabral began talking about the possible class structure and class struggles under neocolonialism. He argued that 'imperialist action takes the form of creating a local bourgeoisie or pseudobourgeoisie, controlled by the ruling class of the dominating country' (Cabral [1966] 1969: 82). He used 'pseudo' because, in his main thesis, this class is incapable of releasing the free development of productive forces or, in the language of class, is incapable of becoming a true national bourgeoisie.[5] Fanon described

well the characteristics of the 'national middle class' ('pseudobourgeoisie' in the words of Cabral, or 'compradorial class' in the language of East African debates) in his celebrated passage:

> in underdeveloped countries no true bourgeoisie exists; there is only a sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of the huckster, only too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial power hands out to it. This get-rich-quick middle class shows itself incapable of great ideas or of inventiveness.[6] (Fanon 1967: 141)

Elsewhere, Cabral described succinctly the differentiation of the petty bourgeoisie once in power:

> the creation of a native pseudobourgeoisie which generally develops out of a petty bourgeoisie of bureaucrats and accentuates the differentiation between social strata and intermediaries in the commercial system (compradorial), by strengthening the economic activity of local elements, opens up new perspectives in the social dynamic, mainly by the development of the urban working class, the introduction of the private agricultural property and the progressive appearance of an agricultural proletariat. (Cabral 1969: 82)

This comes close to my analysis of Tanzania in *Class Struggles*, but unlike Cabral, both Rodney and I (I now believe wrongly) continued to talk about the bureaucratic bourgeoisie as a part of the petty bourgeoisie. That, writing as early as 1966, Cabral could almost foresee the morphing of the petty bourgeoisie into another bourgeoisie after independence is not only prescient but the result of his deep theoretical insights and powerful belief in the socialist revolution as the most viable option for progress in a neocolony. Contemplating a socialist path, Cabral had already begun to think of the possible class enemies that the working people would have to face. I revisit this subject in the next two sections.

On the Petty Bourgeoisie Committing Suicide

There are two instances in which Cabral deploys the idea of the petty bourgeoisie committing suicide. In both, the context was his political discussion on the possible trajectory of the petty bourgeoisie that led the national liberation movement as it was poised to take over state power on the morrow of independence. The first instance is in his essay 'Brief analysis', where Cabral says that the petty bourgeoisie has only two options: either 'ally itself with imperialism and reactionary strata in its own country' or 'ally itself with the workers and peasants', in which case 'Are we asking the petty bourgeoisie to commit suicide?' 'Because if there

is a revolution, then the petty bourgeoisie will have to abandon power to the workers and the peasants and cease to exist qua petty bourgeoisie'[7] (Cabral [1964] 1969: 57). The second instance is in his 1966 theoretical essay 'The weapon of theory'.

Before addressing with this, let me clarify one thing. Unlike Rodney, Cabral stated very clearly that the petty bourgeoisie was not capable of retaining political power and becoming a ruling class, even if it came to power, because it lacked an economic base. It was essentially a service class not involved in the production process (ibid.: 89). This aligns closely with the classic Marxist view of the petty bourgeoisie discussed above.

Cabral argued that for the petty bourgeoisie to retain the power that national liberation had put in its hands, it had two options. The first option, which meant allying itself with imperialism and reinforcing neocolonialism, was 'to give free rein to its natural tendencies to become more bourgeois, to permit *the development of a bureaucratic and intermediate bourgeoisie*, in the commercial cycle, in order to transform itself into a pseudo-bourgeoisie' (emphasis mine).

The second option was not to betray the objectives of national liberation, which meant:

> strengthen its revolutionary consciousness, … *reject the temptation of becoming more bourgeois and the natural concerns of its class mentality,* … identify itself with the working classes …. This means that in order to truly fulfil the role of the national liberation struggle, the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie must be capable of committing suicide as a class in order to be reborn as revolutionary workers, completely identified with the aspirations of the people to which they belong. (emphasis mine) (Cabral [1966] 1969: 89)

There is no concept in Rodney of the petty bourgeoisie committing suicide. However, he too urged the people of the middle classes, in the words of Eusi Kwayana et al., 'to a commitment to service of the masses of the working people' (Kwayana et al. 2009: 130). Rodney also talked about certain sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, like intellectuals, 'grounding' with the people to be able to play a revolutionary role (Rodney et al. 2013: 300). Fanon, on the other hand, came very close to the formulation of Cabral in his formulations. The 'authentic national middle class in an underdeveloped country is to *repudiate its own nature* in so far as it is bourgeois' and 'make itself the willing slave of that revolutionary capital which is the people' (emphasis mine) (Fanon 1967: 120). In other words, like Cabral, Fanon was urging the "national middle class' to betray the calling fate has marked out for it, and to put itself to school with the people …' (ibid.).

I conclude this discussion on the idea of the petty bourgeoisie committing suicide by underscoring four principal issues of methodology and perspective that are embedded in Cabral's approach.

Firstly, Cabral's approach was political, based on class and not some reified or metaphysical perspective, although he used words like 'reincarnate', 'reborn' and such like.

Secondly, in this context, Cabral was not advocating for a return to the roots, to 'return to the source', or identifying with the masses, or reverting to culture/tradition. Rather he was calling on the petty bourgeoisie to repudiate its class nature (see Fanon above) and 'acquire … a working-class mentality'[8] (Cabral 1969: 55).

Thirdly, Cabral's formulation in 'The Weapon of Theory', that the petty bourgeoisie should commit suicide as a class, has often troubled me. Did he mean the whole of the petty bourgeoisie committing suicide, which would be absurd, or some individuals from the petty bourgeoisie? After carefully re-reading the essay and its context, I come to the conclusion that the phrase 'as a class' is not a reference to the petty bourgeoisie as a social category. Cabral was rather implying that the petty bourgeoisie betrays, so to speak, its petty bourgeois class nature to become more bourgeois. Thus, Cabral was talking about the nature or aspiration of the petty bourgeoisie to become bourgeois, which it is called upon to repudiate so as to become revolutionary and join the working people in their historical role to transcend the system of capitalist imperialism.

Finally, let me re-emphasise that the context of this idea was the transition from anticolonial national liberation to postcolonial revolution. Cabral was already thinking and agonising over what would happen after the victory of national liberation, that is, whether the country would fall into neocolonialism and therefore under the hegemony of imperialism, or advance to a social revolution. This distinguishes Cabral from many of his contemporary African leaders of national liberation, including those of a Marxist orientation, and leads me to the final section of this paper.

National Liberation and Social Revolution

Rodney stated: 'Our predicament at the present time throws up new questions. Neo-colonial man is asking a different set of questions than the old colonial man' (Rodney 1990: 69). And he went on to urge his audience not to get trapped in the colonial moment where the struggle is of the whole people, Africans, against the dominant Europeans. Under

neocolonialism, the new question is whether Africans are a homogeneous mass or differentiated into classes. And if they are differentiated, then against which class or classes are the working people struggling?

Rodney was raising these questions almost fifteen years after the independence of most African countries and therefore had the benefit of the experience of neocolonialism and internal class struggles. Cabral did not have that benefit. He was writing only a couple of years after the independence of some African countries and before his Guinea-Bissau became independent. Therefore, in Rodney's formulation, Cabral was the 'old colonial man' raising and grappling with the new questions of the 'neocolonial man'. Cabral combined both. In this respect, he was ahead of his time. He was raising questions of social revolution beyond national liberation and positing a possibility of national liberation seamlessly flowing into anti-imperialist, anticapitalist social revolution. This is contrary to the widely held belief in many national liberation movements at the time, which posited two stages: first, the national democratic stage, and then the socialist stage. This position also suggests that Cabral appreciated the limits of nationalism spawned by anticolonial struggles, while at the same time seeing in them a revolutionary potential. Presumably, he would have called this a 'national liberation revolution' rather than simply 'national liberation' whose ultimate goal was independence and state sovereignty.

In the context of training cadres for national liberation, in his 1964 essay Cabral observed: 'we realised that we needed to have people with a mentality which could transcend the context of the national liberation struggle ...' (Cabral [1964] 1969: 55). Cabral was already thinking in terms of transcending the anticolonial struggle. Referring to the historical situation where imperialism was dominant and socialism was consolidating itself in a large part of the world, Cabral reiterated the necessity of eliminating imperialism. Thus, there were only 'two possible paths for an independent nation: to return to imperialist domination (neocolonialism, capitalism, state capitalism), or to take the way of socialism' (ibid.: 87). Needless to say, then, for Cabral, social revolution meant a revolution against imperialism and capitalism and going 'the way of socialism'.

Almost sixty years down the line, virtually all African countries have taken the path of neocolonialism, entangled woefully in the imperialist web. Cabral's hope and wish for national liberation to transform into a social revolution was dashed, even in his own two countries (Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde), for whose liberation he sacrificed his life.

The neocolonial and neoliberal reality of the African world has been so pervasive that some scholars, even radical ones, are damning the national liberation struggles for which thousands of people sacrificed their lives. Cabral indeed showed some reservations about the national liberation struggles, but with a different motivation and without repudiating the anti-imperialist struggle against colonialism. His major concern was that the national liberation struggle for independence and self-determination should evolve into a national liberation *revolution,* which would seamlessly transition into a socialist revolution.

Cabral asked whether national liberation could be taken simply as a revolutionary trend or required a deeper analysis. '[I]n fact I would even go so far as to ask whether, given the advance of socialism in the world, the national liberation movement is not an imperialist initiative' (Cabral [1966] 1969: 58). He continued with a series of rhetorical questions:

> Is the judicial institution which serves as the reference for the rights of peoples to struggle to free themselves a product of the peoples who are trying to liberate themselves? Was it created by the socialist countries who are our historical associates? It is signed by the imperialist countries, it is the imperialist countries who have recognised the right of all peoples to national independence, so I ask myself whether we may not be considering as an initiative of our people what is in fact an initiative of the enemy? (ibid.)

Cabral then proceeded to answer his own questions explaining why he was raising them in the first place.

> This is where we think there is something wrong with the simple interpretation of the national liberation movement as a revolutionary trend. The objective of the imperialist countries was to prevent the enlargement of the socialist camp, to liberate the reactionary forces in our countries which were being stifled by colonialism and to enable these forces to ally themselves with the international bourgeoisie. The fundamental objective was to create a bourgeoisie where one did not exist, in order specifically to strengthen the imperialist and the capitalist camp. … We are therefore faced with the problem of deciding whether to engage in an out and out struggle against the bourgeoisie right from the start or whether to try and make an alliance with the national bourgeoisie, to try to deepen the absolutely necessary contradiction between the national bourgeoisie and the international bourgeoisie which has promoted the national bourgeoisie to the position it holds'. (ibid.: 58–59)

The international situation has changed enormously since Cabral raised these questions. The socialist camp does not exist anymore – but the imperialist capitalist camp does. It has become even more ferocious than

ever before. The comprador classes that wield state power in our countries are hand in glove with the international bourgeoisie. Within the process of classes and class struggles, the revolutionary forces of the working people have to continuously face the question of building broad alliances so as to isolate the reactionary forces. In this context, if there are enduring lessons to learn from Cabral, then they are these.

- One, the absolute importance of doing a concrete analysis of our concrete conditions, in particular that of the class structure.
- Two, to try and understand politically the attitude of each class and social stratum towards the revolution as opposed to imposing revolutionary agency doctrinally.
- Three, build an ideological hegemony of the working people in civil society by engaging in intellectual and ideological struggles with the dominant hegemony both to dent the credibility of the ruling ideology but, even more important, to develop a 'pedagogy of the oppressed', to use Paulo Freire's revolutionary concept (Freire [1970] 1993).
- Four, to be cautious of populist regimes which may mouth nationalist or anti-imperialist slogans.
- Five, radical scholars need to be cautious of some ruling classes deploying anti-imperialist slogans or even struggling for state sovereignty while at the same time using the repressive state apparatus against their own people. This does not necessarily mean that radical intellectuals may not lend critical support to such struggles, depending on each concrete situation.
- Six, and finally, to identify non-dogmatically the classes and forces with which revolutionary forces of the working people can ally at each conjuncture. All this involves organisation, on which Cabral also had some very profound observations to make. A discussion on revolutionary organisation/s will have to wait for another occasion.

The youth of Africa, or Generation Z[10] as the Kenyan youth call themselves, have a lot to learn from Cabral.

Cabral's legacy endures. It teaches, inspires and mobilises, all at the same time.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Dr Carlos Cardoso for inviting me and to Dr Godwin Murunga, through CODESRIA, for enabling me to travel to Guinea-Bissau.
2. In Marxist political economy, 'material interests' refers to those interests that arise from the specific role a class plays in the process of production. This is distinguished from 'privileges' that a class or sector of it may enjoy arising from its social status or role in the sectors servicing, directly or indirectly, production or related processes.

3. The veteran Pan-Africanist revolutionary, C. L. R. James, also considered the peasantry in Africa a revolutionary force (James 2012: 60). Robin Kelly, in his introduction to the book, points out that 'Insisting that the peasantry – in this case ex-slaves – could be a revolutionary force in and of itself was not entirely new. Indian Communist M. N. Roy had made a similar point in his 1920 debate with Lenin over the national-colonial question' (ibid.:18).
4. The earlier version was titled 'Tanzania: The Class Struggle Continues,' which I had shared with a group of comrades, including Rodney, before it was first published in 1973 in a mimeographed form by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam.
5. In the language of Samir Amin, this class is incapable of developing an autonomous economy based on its own internal, rather than external, logic (Amin 1990: xii).
6. Fanon used the term 'national middle class' and 'national bourgeoisie' interchangeably. This is probably a carry-over from the historical French discourse in which the rising bourgeoisie was considered a middle class, between the aristocracy and the peasantry, in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. In the situation of Africa, Fanon could have been referring to some kind of a compradorial class or a petty bourgeoise, which is doubtful. Fanon never used the terms 'comprador' or 'petty bourgeoisie'.
7. In 'Brief Analysis', he again talked about the petty bourgeoisie having to commit suicide if it wanted to identify its interests with those of workers and peasants. However, by doing this it would not lose 'by sacrificing itself [because] it can reincarnate itself, but in the condition of workers and peasants' (Cabral 1969: 59).
8. Cabral was using this phrase in the context of training cadres who were from different social categories, but it is equally applicable to the petty bourgeoisie.
9. For a more nuanced stageist argument, see Slovo 1988. Joe Slovo was then the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, which was closely allied with the African National Congress (ANC), then the leading national liberation movement of South Africa.
10. For some insights into the struggles of Gen-Z in Kenya, see Durrani 2024: 14 et seq.

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Indigenous African Knowledge and the Challenge of Epistemic Translation

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Prologue

Allow me to start by recalling an encounter at another CODESRIA meeting in Dakar, in January 2013. In collaboration with Point Sud (Centre for Research on Local Knowledge), based in Bamako, Mali, CODESRIA had co-organised a conference, 'Africa N'ko: Debating the Colonial Library'. The conference brought together some of Africa's finest intellectuals to consider the implications of what Congolese philosopher V.Y. Mudimbe designated a 'colonial library' on knowledge production and gnostic practices on and about Africa, as well as to imagine the continent beyond the epistemic regions that structure violence and contaminating vectors of this library.

Coinciding with the conference was Operation Serval, a French military intervention in Mali ostensibly to oust Al-Qaeda-linked Islamists who had seized control of the north of Mali and were pushing into the centre of the country. Like every other 'savage war for peace', Operation Serval was justified in the name of a higher ethical purpose: namely, to prevent the Malian state from collapse and rescue it from the savagery of Islamists harkening to irrational and premodern beliefs. Among those attending the conference, however, concerns were especially focused on the protection of historical and cultural artefacts – specifically, the manuscripts and knowledge troves of medieval West Africa housed in a library in Timbuktu, central Mali.

Indeed, Timbuktu had, under the kings of Mali and Songhai, flourished not only as an important trading post on the trans-Saharan caravan routes but also as a thriving commercial, cultural, and especially, educational centre

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in medieval West Africa. The Sankoré Mosque/University, for example, attracted many famous scholars from the Islamic world, including those from as far away as Andalusia, Egypt, and Syria. And this, in addition to a thriving book trade, established the city as a renowned scholarly centre in the medieval and early modern world. Under the rule of Askia Muhammad the Great of Songhai (1493–1528), for example, the Sankoré University reached its apogee. Its archives are a significant historical and cultural monument and remain one of the most important sources for the reconstruction of West African history. And only a fraction of these invaluable documents has been translated and decoded. Obviously, the need to preserve and protect this archive is beyond debate. In the context of a conference on the colonial library and its implications for knowledge cultivation practices in Africa, the concerns over the protection of the library of Timbuktu, which forms part of the Indigenous African archives, were well-founded and justified.

However, there was a lack of care in the way those concerns were expressed. The Malian crisis to which the conference was responding was itself partially a blowback to the savage military intervention and destruction of Libya by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) two years prior. That event, in which France played a central role, has continued to have catastrophic consequences beyond Libya, as we now know: NATO not only bombed Libya, overthrowing its government and destroying its vital infrastructure, but it also helped to destabilise the Sahel region by flooding it with arms that Islamist militants would use to further destabilise Mali and beyond. A decade later, this security crisis continues to unfold in the Sahelian states that now comprise the Alliance des États du Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger), as well as Chad, Sudan, Nigeria, northern Cameroon, and other regions.

One would think that a gathering of some of Africa's brightest minds at a meeting co-organised by the premier pan-African research institution on the continent would be alarmed not only by the destabilising effects of a rising Islamist militarism but also, and more importantly, by the banalisation of Western militarised interventionism on the continent. In the aftermath of NATO's misadventure in Libya and the catastrophic consequences it was having on Mali and the Sahel region, the expectation that a gathering of these scholars would at the very least adopt a critical stance and place what the French were doing in Mali and elsewhere in that region in a critical frame proved unfounded. The mood at the conference, in part because of concerns about the library of Timbuktu and its invaluable archives, was very fearful and this manifested in support for the French intervention, for which a statement to the effect was being drafted to be adopted by

the conference. And the language used to justify this position was very similar to the tropes historically used to legitimate colonial interventions: it was framed in terms of a stalwart external agency, the rational European altruistic actor, intervening to overcome the dark and irrational violence of the Islamists. The panic about the imminent destruction of the library of Timbuktu had made it almost impossible for us to see the historical parallels and the dangerous ground on which we were treading.

I was shocked beyond belief. Here was what was supposed to be an anticolonial moment, or at the very least, a moment of sober reflection, not only on the archives of colonisation but also its historical and contemporary practices. Instead, the event was turning into a spectacle of hegemonic rearticulation, reinscribing itself on the conceptualities of the very library it was supposed to be interrogating. And paradoxically, it was reproducing and sanctioning the very modalities of practices archived by the library.

A statement calling on France and the international community to do everything possible to prevent the library of Timbuktu from destruction was eventually tabled for the conference to adopt. As the sole dissenting voice, I protested against this attempt to sanction the French intervention in the name of protecting the library of Timbuktu, drawing the attention of the conference to the historical parallels and implications and pleading for us to take a more critical stance. My position, which I stated forcefully, emerged from the fear that appealing to France to intervene to help save the library was naive and complicitous at best. It not only legitimised imperialist violence but also concealed or wrote over French complicity in the very violence it was now being asked to respond to. This, I argued, was tantamount to calling on the arsonist to put out the fire they had started in the first place. And by invoking a higher ethical imperative as the basis of French action, I argued, it was serving once again as a mechanism for reinstating and reinforcing French neocolonial agendas and imperialistic vocations in the region. In the end, once it had been voiced, my position led to an uproar in the conference hall, igniting a debate that led many to reconsider and express their own uneasiness with lending their names to the statement.

I begin with this encounter to underscore the political and contested nature of notions such as 'Indigenous' and how the seemingly innocent call to protect it can serve as an alibi for oppressive power and imperialistic vocations. Indeed, the invocation of 'Indigenous', or whatever felicitous nomenclature or terminology is used to designate this category – the local, the subaltern, the autochthonous and so forth – is always under threat of appropriation. If not placed in a proper political context and critical frame, it can serve as a mechanism for the reproduction, legitimation and

justification of imperial and oppressive power relations. As Sylvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) warns in another context, this uncritical invocation of the Indigenous can function as an instrument not only for entangling, hence neutralising, radical impulses for self-determination with oppressive power structures, but also for strategic appropriations, co-options, recuperations, neutralisations, silences, erasures, and invisibilisations. In other words, what is hailed as a site or instrument for imagining alternative futures and knowledge systems can become the object of political and intellectual fantasies that through ornamental and symbolic appropriation and co-options theatricalise localised experiences or existences and entrap them in conquering systems.

The importance of this observation owes in part to the fact that we now live in an era that has been characterised as a 'decolonial turn', in which the invocation of the Indigenous, the local or subaltern, and the retrieval of their knowledge systems, cosmogonies and embodied histories, has become a prominent feature of conversations about epistemic decolonisation (or decoloniality) and the possibility of imagining worlds and knowledges otherwise. This idea, so widespread and prevalent in the discourses of our time, insists that the recuperation of embodied histories and living knowledge traditions of Indigenous, local, or subalternised experiences is crucial for rethinking modernity and its cultural and epistemic traditions, and for configuring alternative knowledges and imagining alternative futures. Yet, the lack of care taken in invoking the Indigenous can not only lead to the kind of slippage referred to above but also risks turning it into an instrument for imperialistic agendas.

Indigenous and Alternative Knowledge in Africa

As has become fashionable, especially in decolonial and decolonisationist discourses, Indigenous knowledge designates systems of knowledge, practices and belief systems that are said to be endogenous to a particular local place and culture. It involves claims of the existence of an epistemic essence in local knowledge systems and the ways they comprehend the world; it is this constitutive difference that is said to make them radically different from Western knowledge systems. The idea is that every society or culture has knowledge systems that derive from their own specific local contexts and cultural milieus and that these systems capture the worldview, cognitive patterns and spirit of that culture. Grounded in the embodied histories and practices of autochthonous systems, these knowledges are said to reflect the unique cultural values, cosmographic beliefs and linguistic patterns of Indigenous societies.

As the vessel for a collective cultural and historical memory, Indigenous knowledge is said to function both as an explanatory system that allows for the formulation of a cultural worldview and as a monument of the traditions of a given community. As a gnostic and epistemic system, it witnesses to, accounts for, and textualises the experiences of a local culture and place, as well as its understanding of the world, while correlating local customs with discursive practices that constitute them as knowledge systems. In this sense, Indigenous knowledge is endogenous and place-based. It emerges from within specific local cultural milieus as a living archival monument and a historical derivation of a community transmitted over a long period from one generation to another. Colonial epistemic and representational schemas sought to radically suppress, discard, overwrite, and devalue these knowledge systems, or violently incorporate them into their own conquering epistemologies, as well as use them for instrumental purposes to serve colonising agendas. However, Indigenous knowledge systems continue to constitute significant ways of understanding human existence.

Following the anticolonial struggles in the 1960s and proceeding well into the 1980s, largely in response to the colonial denigration of African cultures and histories, the idea of decolonisation came to be conceived largely in terms of 'Africanisation', 'indigenisation' or 'endogenisation' (Mbembe 2021). In other words, decolonisation was inextricably linked to both the retrieval of African histories and the revival and celebration of the grounded normativity and embodied histories of autochthonous African cultural, cosmographic, and Indigenous systems for the regeneration of African societies. The focus was not only on a critique of colonial knowledge systems and their perverse ideological and representational schemas, as seen for example in colonial anthropological denigrations of African cultures and societies, and their adverse effects. It was also on the recuperation, reconstruction, and celebration of Indigenous African knowledges, which are said to reflect the unique cultural, ethnolinguistic, and cosmogonic beliefs and values of African societies. In disciplines such as history, anthropology, theology, philosophy, and literature, African intellectuals proposed strategies for critically challenging colonial discursive and representational denigration of African historicity, humanity, culture, and systems of thought. Moreover, they sought to rethink the disciplines for Africa and propose strategies for the continent's regeneration from an African situatedness that drew on Indigenous and alternative knowledges.

In *The Invention of Africa* (1988), a text that can be read as a critical evaluation of these Africanisationist and decolonisationist attempts, V.Y. Mudimbe differentiates between the pre-independence and

post-independence generations of African intellectuals. Whereas 'the preindependence generation of African intellectuals was mostly concerned with political power and strategies for ideological succession', he writes, the post-independence generation, frustrated with these strategies, became more concerned with figuring out new ways of collectivising and democratising historical reason, Africanising knowledge, reformulating 'residual questions concerning ideological power and scientific orthodoxy' and affirming the African voice in spaces from which it had hitherto been excluded or radically silenced (Mudimbe 1988: 181). Writes Mudimbe:

> Since the 1960s, and more visibly since the 1970s and '80s, a new generation prefers to put forward the notion of *epistemological vigilance*. This generation seems much more concerned with strategies for mastering intellectual paradigms about "the path to Truth," with analysing the political dimensions of knowledge, and with procedures for establishing new rules in African Studies. (Mudimbe 1988: 36)

Cameroonian Jesuit priest and philosopher, Engelbert Mveng (1983), captured the mood of this period effectively and forcefully: 'If political sovereignty is necessary, the scientific sovereignty is perhaps more important in present-day Africa'. And in this preoccupation, he insists, many routes exist in the search for truth: 'The West agrees with us today that the way to Truth passes by numerous paths, other than Aristotelian Thomistic logic or Hegelian dialectic. But the social and human sciences themselves must be decolonised' (cited in Mudimbe 1988: 36). And one of these routes is through African Indigenous knowledge systems and strategies of Africanisation, rethinking the social sciences from an African standpoint, recuperating and reconstructing the African past and centring African cultures.

In a now canonical text, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) proposed a decolonisationist strategy that proceeded via the reclamation of linguistic sovereignty. Language, Ngũgĩ suggests, is not only a tool of cultural domination but also a tool for liberation, for it is a carrier of culture and thus embodies a people's identity, history, and worldview. Colonialism functioned simultaneously through the violent imposition of the hegemony of the language of European colonising powers and the radical disruption of the way Indigenous knowledge and values were transmitted, alienating them from their own cultures and forcing them to see themselves through the lens of the coloniser. Therefore, reclaiming the value of Indigenous languages and cultures is an integral part of decolonisation. This reclamation

constitutes 'a liberating perspective' that would allow Africans to not only express themselves in their Indigenous languages but also 'see ourselves clearly in relationship to ourselves and to other selves in the universe' (Ngũgĩ 1986: 87). It thus involves the project of 'recentring' African cultures and placing African languages at the centre of projects of African rejuvenation, pedagogical transformation, and imagining relations with the rest of the world. 'With Africa at the centre of things, not existing as an appendix or a satellite of other cultures or societies, Ngũgĩ contends, things will be seen from the African perspective.'

Three major tendencies can be identified in these decolonisationist quests. First, is the process of temporalising Africa as an object of knowledge in a retrospective and prospective *parole*, caught between an alienated present and an invented glorious past. The second regards the expression of African experiences, cultural systems, and embodied practices as concrete existential realities that can be accounted for by local knowledge systems, and the process of translating them into the language, conceptual categories and epistemic systems of the social and human disciplines. Finally, there is the fundamental question of how Africans can or should relate to and comment on their own beings and conditions without perceiving themselves as being imprisoned in bad faith (Mudimbe 2009).

These interventions constituted a reversal of colonial, anthropological or Christian missionary discourses on Africa and represented 'a break with the ideology inherent in the anthropologist's techniques of describing African Weltanschauungen' (Mudimbe 1988, 1991). However, they also paradoxically employed, functioned and actualised themselves and their credibility within the efficiency and the power of the very modern colonial epistemic systems through which Africa was invented and used to negate the pertinence of traditional beliefs and systems of thought, depending as it were, on 'Western methodological grids [as] a requirement for reading and revealing a deep philosophy through an analysis and an interpretation of linguistic structures or anthropological patterns' (Mudimbe 1988: 152). This was not limited to gnostic attempts at accessing local knowledge systems, but also included projects for African rejuvenation, foregrounded by the liberation movements and post-independence governments. 'Despite the fact that the liberation movements opposed anthropology as a structural factor of colonisation, some pre- and post-independence African policies seem predicated upon the results of applied anthropology' (Mudimbe 1988: 184).

Indigenous Knowledge and the Decolonial Turn

Ngũgĩ's *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) was one of the last major texts to explicitly think of decolonisation from the perspective of the grounded normativity of African situatedness before the decolonisationist projects were interrupted by the ideological shift that propelled the neoliberal ascendancy. Neoliberalism mounted an assault on the sovereignty of postcolonial African states, and with that the African university, through structural adjustment policies in the 1980s. These changes also coincided with the advent of postmodern and poststructuralist modes of inquiry and their scepticisms about the received traditions and categories of modern thought. In this political and ideological climate, the modular nation-state form was attacked and deconstructed, so was any stable conception of politics, identity, culture, knowledge and so forth. Amidst economic crisis and development failures, the unravelling of postcolonial national state projects and neoliberal restructurings, as well as assaults on the state, these decolonisationist quests were eclipsed or jettisoned, while the radical, emancipatory politics they championed came to be doubted. In their place emerged Afropessimism, postmodern and poststructuralist modes of inquiry, and specifically postcolonial theory, which came to champion these critiques in relation to the postcolonial state and the afterlives of colonialism in Africa and the global South more broadly.

In recent years, these decolonisationist sentiments have been re-energised by the emergence of what is now known as the 'decolonial turn', that is, the current theoretico-political environment in which the politics of decolonisation (redefined as decoloniality) has gained renewed attention. This moment has brought new reasons to African consciousness for proposing strategies that rethink the social and human disciplines for Africa and African regeneration, based on the embodied histories and grounded normativity of African Indigenous systems. Emerging in the 1990s and consolidating around the Latin American coloniality/modernity research programme, the decolonial turn is said to be anchored on epistemic scepticism about the received Eurocentric accounts of modernity. Specifically, that coloniality, which is understood as the persistence of colonising structures and logics in postcolonial and contemporary social orders, in global and domestic power hierarchies, knowledge systems, gender norms, conceptions of being and so forth, remains a fundamental problem of modernity; hence the theoretical commitment to decolonisation (redefined as decoloniality) as an unfinished project (Quijano 2007; Lugones 2008; Maldonado-Torres 2011, 2007; Grosfuguel 2007).

The group of theorists associated with the decolonial turn had come to believe that despite years of, especially, postcolonial interventions, a new perspective was needed on modernity, its relationship with colonisation, its postcolonial afterlife and how to transcend its structuring matrices (Escobar 2007; Grosfuguel 2007). This belief was partly related to the perceived discomfort and sense of frustration with what had come to be seen as the Eurocentric limitations of the critiques of modernity, as instantiated by the textual turn. In particular, this unease was caused by what was perceived as the anti-emancipatory limitations of postcolonial theory and its relationship with poststructuralism, as well as with previous attempts at decolonisation.

Decolonial theorists claim that previous attempts at decolonisation were limited by their narrow focus on the anticolonial liberation movements and post-independence nation-building projects, and neglect for the epistemic question beyond the ideas of co-contamination with colonial discourse. Walter Mignolo, a leading decolonial theorist, insists that despite the 'enormous contribution of decolonisation (or independence) …, the limits of all these movements were those of not having found an opening and a freedom of another thinking: that is, of a decolonisation that would carry them … towards a world that would fit many worlds' (Mignolo 2011a: 50). In a similar vein, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2022), perhaps the leading decolonial theorist in Africa, speaks of 'truncated African liberation projects' that resulted in 'problematic and fragile nation-building processes' on the continent, hence 'the myth of decolonisation' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2022: 2).The fact that some of these states were under attack from the moment independence was proclaimed, as the example of Patrice Lumumba and Congo illustrate, seems to be lost in the fog of attempts at disparaging the significance of their contributions.

A number of quick points. First, the decolonial turn may be thought of as a *re-turn*, that is, as an attempt to return to or take up the unfinished or interrupted project of historical decolonisation, which is now reformulated mainly in terms of epistemology and relabelled 'decolonial'. Second, it can be read as a response to what had come to be characterised, rightfully or otherwise, as the anti-emancipatory limitations of the textual turn and, especially, postcolonial theory. Finally, it is primarily epistemic, that is, a quest to delink from the logic of coloniality that they claim is sustained at the epistemic level. As a result, significant attention has been focused on the epistemic dimensions of coloniality and its co-imbrication with modernity. Decolonial theorists insist that there is, in fact, a global epistemic hierarchy that privileges Western subjectivity, knowledge systems, beings, and so forth over those of non-Western origin. More specifically, the West masks its own

local and particularistic viewpoints as detached, ungrounded, superior, and universal, while representing non-Western knowledges and perspectives as particular, subordinate, less valuable and incapable of advancing universal and transcendental consciousness.

Decolonial thought, thus, seeks to challenge the dominance of Western geopolitics of knowledge by disarticulating the locus of enunciation from its modern colonial configurations and resignifying it through a curative, recuperative and restorative practice that grounds the geohistorical locations and biographic inscriptions of localised, Indigenous and subalternised experiences, voices, histories and knowledges (Mignolo 2000, 2011b). Decoloniality—that is, the epistemic condition of delinking from the 'colonial matrix of power'—is thus seen as a double preoccupation that must necessarily proceed in two interrelated stages. The first involves 'unveiling the regional foundations of [modernity's] universal claim to truth', decentring its locus of enunciations from its modern colonial configurations. The second, through a geohistoric location and biographic inscription, divests from coloniality and its matrices in order to reimagine modernity beyond its Eurocentric universalistic evocations (Mignolo 2011b: 116).

In Africa, despite the existence of a rich history and tradition of decolonisationist thought and praxis that in some sense provides inspiration for the Latin American iteration, it is some of these decolonial ideas and concepts that have been taken up to resurrect and provide the conceptual and theoretical anchor for decolonisationist projects on the continent in recent time. Even scholars such as Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2022), who have championed the cause of epistemic decolonisation in Africa, have had to partially mediate their thought through these projects. The result is that historical decolonisation on the continent is conflated with contemporary decoloniality without really specifying their differing epistemic, political, and ideological foundations and regions of emergence.

Towards a Critique

The idea that the embodied histories and living knowledge traditions of Indigenous and subaltern existences and experiences are important for rethinking modernity, its cultural and epistemic traditions and material, political, and sociohistorical configurations is an important insight for rethinking the discursivity of the modern disciplines and imagining alternative futures. However, my interest is not in the truth value of the *prise de parole* of this claim. Nor is it in the demand for transforming existing epistemic structures and protocols and imagining the conditions of possibility of the pluralising effects of knowledge cultivation practices that place Indigenous and

alternative knowledges at the centre of rethinking modernity and imagining alternative futures. We all agree today that modernity is highly political; that it was constituted through the projection of the European cogito on the world as the locus of the universal; that through a systematic construction of a global political, social, economic and epistemic hierarchy the West placed itself above the non-West, which enabled the West to represent its experience and knowledge as the historical expression of the universal. Therefore, the necessity of provincialising and displacing 'the Western geopolitics of knowledge' and recentring alternative knowledge traditions as a means of building alternative futures is not in dispute.

My interest is in submitting the claim to close scrutiny to understand its implications for Africa. First is the condition of possibility of situating Indigenous knowledges in decolonisationist practices. For starters, in centring Indigenous knowledge, cultural texts and signifying practices in a restorative praxis, these systems must also be submitted to the external gaze of a conquering episteme that purports to represent them as 'decolonial' in order to validate its own praxis. In this way, these projects become captives of the linguistic and epistemic protocols of the modern disciplines and are actualised within the authority and historicity of the very systems they aim to challenge. The discursive fields of the modern disciplines have themselves been historically implicated in the politics of the production of colonial difference and its essentialist fetishes. The importance of this point resides precisely in the circularity of the epistemic dependence that it fashions. The emphasis on 'radical epistemic and ontological otherness' of the Indigenous thus foregrounds what Scott Michaelsen and Scott Cutler Shershow (2007) characterise as 'epistemological and political acadianism' (Michaelsen and Shershow 2007: 40), which, through a politics of obversion, yearns for the purity of the Indigenous subject or position that it valorises. This nostalgia for purity, a yearning for and faith in an 'unadulterated voice', recalls Rousseau's noble savage, imagined as 'pure' and undisturbed 'in the plenitude of its self-presence and self-possession' (Michaelsen and Shershow 2007: 43).

However, if the *longue durée* of colonial modernity has constituted a matrix of power that structures contemporary social orders and power relations, and if, in an imperialising period of over five hundred years, everything has become co-entangled and co-contaminated, then how can we ascertain the purity of local cultures or the Indigenous or subaltern voice? How may we know exactly what in local cultures or Indigenous knowledge has been or has not been corrupted by the imprimatur of the colonial matrix of power? Put differently, how do we know that what is being valorised in local speech, Indigenous cultures, subaltern knowledge and so forth is not, in fact, the inventions,

interpolations, or ventriloquisms of the very modern colonial matrix of power that is being contested? Indigeneity does not automatically make a subject inherently radical, neither is Indigenous knowledge automatically emancipatory in and of itself. As a palimpsestic inscription of modern colonialism, it may be tarred with the marks of colonial power and represent the deformities of its authority, identitarian effects and representational violence, which are almost always at risk of being re-implicated in local speech and action. Indigenous knowledge may also perpetuate regressive forms of cultural and identitarian essentialism in its projects.

I would like to recall here Mahmood Mamdani's (1996) injunction about the political nature of notions such as 'tradition', 'custom', 'culture' or 'tribe', which are partially the invention of colonial modernity. The political modernity instituted by late colonialism in Africa, Mamdani tells us, was partly enunciated through the tribalisation of authority. By giving an authoritarian bent to 'tradition', colonialism systematically produced and distorted the 'tribal' and 'customary' as a site or mechanism of modern colonial power. Thus, the customary was and remains tarred by colonial palimpsestic inscriptions. This immediately recalls Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* (1992), as a telling illustration.

The issue here is not whether local customs or Indigenous knowledges and traditions exist; neither is it about whether Indigenous groups are capable of speech or action. It is about whether such speech, by virtue of being spoken from a certain location or by a certain body, specifically a body that has been tarred by colonial palimpsestic violence, can in and of itself be inherently emancipatory. In this regard, I would like to refer to the menace of the contaminating violence that Mudimbe calls the colonial library. As the archival and epistemic configuration of colonial knowledge regimes and representational schemas, it not only contributed to the invention of the very identities and subjectivities being fought over but also constituted a frame that foreclosed the possibility of approaching to these identities and subjectivities innocently, and their conditions of existence. In other words, Indigenous subjectivities are not neutral categories but tarred by the palimpsestic violence of colonial power.

Almost always already implicated in the production of local histories, cultures, identities, speeches, and subjectivities, the authority of this library also tends to force subaltern, Indigenous, postcolonial subjects seeking to speak with their own voice to imitate or reproduce its preestablished discourse. Similarly, gnostic attempts at apprehending local experiences and retrieving local speeches and histories to refute, resist and transcend the corrupting vectors of the library and its epistemic and representational

systems constantly risk reproducing or imitating the contaminating violence of an intransigent library that surreptitiously masks, insinuates, or reimplicates itself.

The recuperation of local texts and Indigenous knowledge for overcoming colonialist social formations and advancing a politics of liberation for African rejuvenation thus raises two important questions. The first relates to whether one can innocently retrieve local texts or Indigenous knowledges without recourse to an existing archive that threatens gnostic and decolonisationist practices with conceptual contamination. Is it possible (in part because of the contaminating effects of the colonial library) to reveal the past or local cultural and knowledge systems within the context of their own rationality without distorting their *chose du texte*? Since 'anthropologists perverted the cultures they had studied', Mudimbe writes, it would be 'naïve not to see the catastrophic effects of the anthropologist on the African traditions they have studied and modified in the name of disciplinary demands' (Mudimbe 2013: 399). This has continued to haunt the recuperative and gnostic practices that are often informed by cultural essentialisms or nativist fantasies.

The second question relates to whether the danger of epistemological slippage, when gnostic or scholarly attempts at refuting the discourses of the library run the risk of imitating or reproducing them in their frames, can be avoided and under what conditions. In other words, can the structuring violence of the library, which is a menace for attempts at retrieving Indigenous systems, be transcended and under what conditions? The failure to think through these questions or seriously attend to them in a satisfactory way can and is producing simplistic and insufficiently conceived conceptions of the condition of postcolonial existence, decolonial transcendence, subaltern resistance, local agency and conditions of converting Indigenous knowledges advanced in the name of a politics of alterity that is completely depoliticised and therefore neither radical nor transformative.

The Materiality Question

The focus on epistemology has also tended to ignore the material question of historical decolonisation. In fact, the exotic economy of autochthony and the politics of alterity it advances in the name of decoloniality is precisely what neoliberal capitalism needs and targets as key sites of its power and expansionist logics. Recalling Alain Badiou (2003), neoliberalism proliferates through the valorisation of difference, in the sense that identities that demand recognition through liberal multicultural politics of diversity become key sites for the production and universalisation of the logics of neoliberal capitalist expansion. As this drive articulates itself

by targeting sites of difference, that is, seeking new particulars to which neoliberal universals might be exposed and which might be subsumed under its expansionist logics, so more combinations of territorialised cultural identities and differences allow neoliberal capitalism to proliferate.

It is therefore in the interest of neoliberal capitalism for political struggles about the historical and ongoing structural contradictions of colonial capitalist modernity and its exploitative practices to be framed not in terms of sovereignty or the material, but in cultural, epistemic and identitarian terms, for these do not fundamentally challenge the ethos of its logic and practice. And decolonial theory, precisely because it has tended to occlude the materialist impulses of historical decolonisation, focusing instead on the epistemic, cultural, and identitarian, as if those political economy questions and the material conditions that gave rise to them have been exhausted, risks becoming an avenue for, or unwitting accomplice of, neoliberal traversals and universalising drives.

This risk raises the issue of materialism and how it is accounted for in decolonial theory. Let us consider this through the idea of 'delinking', which is posited as a strategy for decolonial transcendence. First proposed by Samir Amin (1985), delinking was grounded in the materiality of political economy and proposed to advance the Third World Marxist project as a strategy for escaping the structural conditions and exploitative relationships that constrains Southern development in a fundamentally unjust and unequal global capitalist world system that is characterised by exploitation and unequal exchange. However, as appropriated by decolonial theorists, specifically Walter Mignolo (2007) and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2022) among others, delinking has been uprooted from its political economy groundings, emptied of its materialist content and resignified as an epistemic strategy. The reason for this strategic appropriation and resignification, Mignolo tells us, is that Amin was Marxist. And as part of the Eurocentric archive of modernity, Marxism constrains or prevents the taking over of 'epistemic power'. Writes Mignolo:

> Samir Amin's version [of delinking] is formulated at the level of economic and political (state) delinking. Without an epistemic delinking it is difficult to really delink from the modern notion of Totality. In the case of Amin, he was still caught in the mirage of Marxism and, therefore, of modernity. Thus, his delinking was proposed at the level of the content rather than at the epistemic level that sustain the logic of coloniality. (Mignolo 2007: 502, n. 10)

This type of claim also organises Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2022: 7–9) reading of Amin. A number of issues arise from the above quote. First, the epistemic, according to Mignolo and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, is the key to unlocking

the oppressive structures of colonial modernity and thus may be more important than the material or economic. Second, one gets the impression that Mignolo is claiming to be outside the 'mirage of modernity' and that epistemic activism can keep one out of it.

This is a vulgar *epistemism* that submits everything to the epistemic. By epistemism, I refer to the ideological belief in the primacy of epistemology and its construction as the primary factor or moving force of anticolonial liberation, individual autonomy and societal regeneration. And this is held to outstrip and organise all others. Epistemism is a major problem of decolonial thinking. By centring the epistemic and positing a vision of politics grounded on it as the route to anticolonial liberation and transcendence, epistemism both fractures the mutually constituted oppressive structures of colonial modernity and problematically constructs a hierarchy that subsumes the material, political and economic under the epistemic (and with that the cultural, corporeal and identitarian insofar as decolonial epistemic activism proceeds through the body politics and geohistoric location of the decolonial subject) as if there are no material dimensions to the epistemic or cultural.

As Fanon warned us a long time ago, anticolonial liberation cannot be reduced to an autochthonous yearning for the revival of a cultural past. In the wake of Negritude and its desire to recuperate the glorious African past and culture, Fanon told us that he was not interested in the revival or exaltation of an African past and its glorious civilisations at the expense of the material present and its future. Speaking in this context, of his lack of desire to direct his energies to reviving an African cultural past at the expense of a suffocating present of colonial domination and a possible anticolonial future, he referred specifically to the people of Indochina and their anticolonial rising: 'It is not because the Indo-Chinese has discovered a culture of their own that they revolted. Quite simply this was because it became impossible for them to breathe' (Fanon [1967] 2008: 201).

One can extend the lessons of this injunction to contemporary China and argue that it has not emerged as a major global power solely because it has discovered some essential epistemic or cultural truths about its past. Rather, it is because marshalling its productive and material forces allowed China to claim political and economic power in the world. Culture is important and is obviously a key factor in China's success story, but China is respected and feared primarily because of its economic and political might, rather than its cultural differences. By not taking the material seriously as a site for the working of political possibilities, and especially as an instrument of challenging colonial capitalist social formations, political

hierarchies and global inequalities underpinned by the logics of coloniality, we miss one of the primary forces that informs and sustains the historical quest for decolonisation and subaltern struggles against exploitative forms of everyday power.

Amilcar Cabral's (1974) warning remains relevant and compelling: 'the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children' (Cabral 1974: 70). How this future is secured and guaranteed, what strategies are employed or adopted to bring it forth, is what is at stake in this cavalier dismissal of Marxism and its Third World iterations. One may be critical of Amin and raise questions about the condition of possibility of the politics of delinking. One can even question the way he frames it and the strictures within which this politics plays out. However, the idea that his Marxist leanings implicate him in the mirage of modernity and thus rob him of transformational potency, as if Mignolo or Ndlovu-Gatsheni are outside of it, is not valid. As a matter of fact, the same can be said of decolonial theory, which is also captive of the cultural politics of modernity and the linguistic, epistemic and discursive protocols of its knowledge systems.

The appropriation of the concept of delinking by Mignolo and other decolonial theorists, and its re-presentation as an epistemological strategy disembedded from its materialist groundings and linkage to the historical struggles of Southern societies as they negotiate the precarity of colonial capitalist exploitation and dependency, as if the material questions have been exhausted or have resolved themselves, also inaugurates its own problems. Since 'the epistemic locations for delinking come from the emergence of the geo- and body-politics of knowledge' (Mignolo 2007), the materiality of political economy (as originally framed by Amin) gets replaced by the materiality of the corporeality of subalternised experiences, according to which delinking proceeds via the biographic inscriptions of the subject's location (i.e., 'the body politics of knowledge').

The Challenge of Translation

Let me now turn to the issue of how Indigenous knowledge is encountered and translated into the conceptual categories and epistemic systems of the modern disciplines, and the challenge this poses for decolonisationist strategies that rely on Indigenous knowledges and local texts for their own praxis. To recuperate Indigenous voices and experiences, local texts and idioms, silenced histories and (or) the practice of everyday life, and use them for decolonial praxis—that is, represent them as the foundation for

new knowledge—they must first be converted within modern epistemic systems that are themselves vectors of modernity. Such a process, however, is never able to unveil local realities within the contexts of their own rationalities. What it does instead is transmute them into the imprimatur of the intellectual fields and conceptual categories of the very modern systems being challenged.

These efforts to make the experiences intelligible and useful for disciplinary preoccupations are ultimately unable to escape the modernising gaze and discursivity of the modern disciplines and their fetishes. Neither can they escape the power of objectifying discourses that reconstruct them in the language and conceptual systems of disciplines which have themselves been complicit in the historical silences and foreclosures of these groups. Put differently, beneath the symbolic orders of the recuperative efforts of decolonial practices are the very modern epistemic systems and knowledge practices from which they cannot cut themselves off completely.

The method of accessing and translating Indigenous knowledge into the conceptual categories and epistemic systems of modern disciplines is anthropological; its epistemological locus is the ethnographic foundation and the demands of colonial anthropology, as well as and its apprehension of local experiences. Constituting its own structural ambit of power, it raises questions about power, the positionality of the theorist, and the credibility of disciplinary procedures and formulations and the discourses they make possible, irrespective of the self-conscious definition of the theorists or the perspective they adopt or privilege. Such a practice does not and has never been able to resolve the validity problem regarding disciplinary constructions and gnostic practices. Nor does it resolve the question of power and privilege. Ultimately, such a construction, whether based on the interpretation of ethnographic or archival material, or on theoretical speculations and abstractions, or I may add, even the body politics of knowledge *à la* decolonial theory, will always fall back on its own reconstructed logic that must, through the use of 'concepts and grids coming from outside the local language and place', reorganise and reformulate the material for its own purpose (Mudimbe 1991: 102).

In the end, 'a dialogical confrontation' will take place 'between the native original place that the concepts exceed and, on the other hand, the scientific space in which they valorise themselves'. This determines the extent of appropriative violence and highlights the power relations within which such disciplinary procedures and interpretations are caught. On the one hand, local texts and idioms, Indigenous knowledge systems or subaltern speeches and experiences neither exist by, nor submit to, the logics

of disciplinary procedures that they do not know or even care for. They become disciplinary knowledge only through the importation of foreign concepts and the imposition of a disciplinary will that must manage them as objects subjected to the curiosity, gaze, and authority of disciplinary procedures that colonise them within their own schemas while purporting to represent them as new knowledge. But in the attempt to institutionalise an interpretation for political or academic purposes, these local experiences and knowledge systems are removed from the contexts of their own rationality and reorganised, rearranged and re-presented as new knowledge according to the logics of conceptual or analytical systems whose locus of emergence lies not in these local systems themselves but in systems that are the apparatus of the modern epistemes being challenged, and which ultimately distort their *chose du texte* (Mudimbe 1988, 1991).

Even border gnosis that results from delinking must transcend not only the modern colonial knowledge systems but also the local subalternised knowledges, and resignify them into a new locus of enunciation outside European and Indigenous cognitive patterns. The consequence is the removal of the local experiences, texts, cosmogonies and knowledges from the contexts of their own rationality and their subsumption under the rules of scientific procedures, disciplinary practices and epistemic and conceptual power of a conquering episteme. To generate or actualise an interpretation, decoloniality must not only mediate the tensions between local cultural realities, or texts that purport to interpret them, and their inscriptions in disciplinary discourses, which have their own rules and rationalities, but must also conceptually bridge and convert those realities/experiences 'with the "space" of scientific discourse' and concepts that come from outside the local place and language (Mudimbe 1991: 101).

It is this issue of 'conceptual bridging' or translation that constitutes a far greater challenge for decolonial recuperative attempts. This is because disciplinary descriptions or constructions are never simply a reproduction of the dialogic material but an elaborate system of reconstruction dependent on foreign concepts, languages, and procedures. This dialogic tension must be conceptually bridged to make the local texts and experience intelligible for disciplinary procedures and discourses. In this attempt to conceptually bridge, however, a violence is done to the primordial text or speech. This is because disciplinary procedures, which are dependent on their own rationalities and reconstructed logics, entrap local speeches and experiences within their own discourses and purport to represent them as new knowledge or as instruments of decolonial praxis. It is partly for this reason that Mudimbe suggests that we treat every disciplinary construction with

suspicion. What these issues highlight for me is the challenge of translating subaltern, Indigenous or local texts, knowledges, and experiences into the conceptual systems and categories of the social disciplines.

By translation, I do not refer simply to the practice of rendering a text intelligible from an original language of inscription or enunciation into another but to the politics of conceptual and epistemic bridging. Specifically, I refer to the practice, and its conditions of possibility, of converting a place, script, idiom, speech, reality, experience, knowledge system and so forth from the contexts of its rationality into the conceptual categories and epistemic systems of the modern disciplines. This politics, which seeks to transmute or transcend an original experience, text, speech or locality and encode it within the conceptual matrices of the modern disciplines, is one of the major ways that Indigenous knowledge is encountered and incorporated in decolonial praxis. It is partly through the politics of translation that decolonisation and decoloniality attempt to transcend coloniality and bring forth decolonial futures. Put differently, every form of decolonial praxis, beyond mere critique, must attempt to retrieve and translate local experiences and realities into the knowledge capitals of the modern disciplines.

But the politics of translation is a parallax. Rather than being a simple process of rendering a text, idiom or experience intelligible from one context to another, it constitutes its own structural ambits of power. This can be seen, for example, in the distance that separates the social scientist and the community that is the object of their gaze, irrespective of whether they originally come from that community or not. Despite protestations to the contrary, there are real power differentials and hierarchies between the two, in the same way that the author of a biography differs from the subject of the biography. As Talal Asad (1993) teaches us: a life or experience may produce a script, but ultimately it is the person with a claim to authorial authority who has the power to inscribe it, that is, authorise a particular kind of narrative about that life or experience. Even when both 'authors' are the same person, in the case of an autobiography, the basic structuration of this injunction is not impeached. It would still require an elaborate system of temporalising a life, choosing elements, reorganising and rearranging the way it is lived in order to produce a particular narrative or fit it into a particular analytical or narrativising grid.

Indeed, no matter how compelling, narratives are never the experiences or realities they are based on or purport to explain: they are always 'necessarily emplotted in a way in which life is not. Thus, they necessarily distort life, whether or not the evidence upon which they are based could be proved correct' (Trouillot 1995: 6). That every narrative or disciplinary formulation

and construction is arbitrary goes without saying. They are basically political and subjective attempts at imposing order on the disorderliness or messiness of phenomena. And they are dependent on the subjective will of the practitioner and on the constraints of the frames of discursivity and disciplinarity within which they operate. In other words, even when practitioners protest otherwise and claim that their work is informed by local experiences, histories, or knowledges, it is they who ultimately get to decide which of those experiences, knowledges, or histories are important for disciplinary purposes. It is they who get to conceptually organise and rearrange those histories and experiences into particular types of narratives in ways that are congruent with their own subjective will and with what is intelligible to the fidelity of 'scientific' practices.

In this process, a kind of violence is done to the original text, which, as the prehistory or pre-text of the disciplinary exegesis it is used to fashion, is taken out of the context of its own rationality and submitted to the power of a conquering episteme that purports to represent it as new knowledge for whatever purpose. It is for this reason that every disciplinary formulation is conceptually different from the material on which it claims to be based; it is always metaphorically designating 'a new space' of iteration or new configuration. Put differently, the material being reconstructed may have come from any source—fieldwork, archival depositories, local cosmographical texts or even speculative abstraction or personal lived experiences—but it always must go through an elaborate process of rearrangement and reorganisation to generate a narrative and thus function as disciplinary knowledge.

The point I am making is that translation and conceptual bridging are ghosts in the machine of the modern disciplines and thus a menace to attempts at retrieving local texts and Indigenous knowledge. Every disciplinary formulation, construction, or description is confronted by questions about power and the conditions of conversion or conceptual bridging, as well as its practical constraints, irrespective of what ethical or unethical intentions may animate its politics. Put differently, translating one space, text, knowledge, system, experience, culture, and idiom into another is always fraught. Attempts to convert Indigenous knowledges and local experiences into disciplinary praxis are challenged by questions about power and the conditions that make such conversion possible.

First, a translation is not an innocent act but also a will to power or domination, that is, an intellectual consciousness conveying an experience, text, idiom, and so on within specific disciplinary procedures and through an external relation. In other words, it is the violence that we do

onto things: 'Someone,' Robert Young (2003) reminds us, 'is translating something or someone. Someone or something is being translated, being transformed from a subject to an object' (2003: 140). Second, a translation will always remain a translation. At once a moment and site of rupture, it is always, despite methodological or theoretical precautions, a recreation, an interpretation, an originary reconstruction that can never really reproduce or recreate the pre-text on which it claims to be based. Put differently, in disciplinary reconstructions, subaltern experiences, local texts, and knowledge systems are always the pre-texts for such constructions. Third, a dialogic tension will always exist between local texts and idioms and the way they are mediated, interpreted, or conceptually converted in disciplinary discourses and preoccupations.

Drawing attention to the difficulties that fraught gnostic attempts at rethinking Africa through the recuperation and centring of the Indigenous or local knowledge systems, cultural practices and identities is to caution against hasty and often superficial resolutions of the contradictions of colonial modernity and its cultural, identitarian and epistemic effects on African societies as well as against parochial commitments to essentialist visions of politics and postcolonial transcendence.

Conclusion

Clapperton Mavhunga (2017) has suggested that we take Africa seriously as a site of knowledge traditions and science, technology and innovation, and understand African histories, voices and existence not just as an empirical site for confirming our theories or cannon fodder for theory formation but as a legitimate world-historical region in its own right. What if we took what Africans know seriously and imagined the world from the location of that knowledge tradition, he asks. What kind of knowledge practices would this require, but more importantly, what type of knowledges would this make possible? Here, Mavhunga is inviting us to take Indigenous knowledges in Africa seriously.

Paulin Hountondji (2009) has also suggested the need to ground our pedagogical and scientific activities in endogenous systems, from our African locations and situatedness: 'Our scientific activity', he writes, 'is extraverted, i.e. externally oriented, intended to meet the theoretical needs of our Western counterparts and answer the questions they pose. The exclusive use of European languages as a means of scientific expression reinforces this alienation' (Hountondji 2009: 128). For this reason, suggests Hountondji, the 'final goal' should be 'an autonomous, self-reliant process of knowledge production' deeply rooted in the embodied histories and

grounded normativity of African experiences and cultures, a 'capitalisation that enables us to answer our own questions and meet both the intellectual and the material needs of African societies' (Hountondji 2009: 128). This knowledge system must, however, Hountondji cautions, be 'grounded in a solid appropriation of the international intellectual legacy and deeply rooted in the African experience' from an African situatedness (Hountondji 2009: 129). What this means is that we must engage the world and 'formulate original "problematics," original sets of problems' from our African location but must be open to the idea of borrowing and incorporating a multiplicity of influences, ideas, knowledges, and not be limited by static conceptions and essentialist notions of indigeneity, culture, and knowledges.

Thinking Africa through the recuperation and centring of Indigenous or local knowledge systems requires an expansive strategy beyond parochial commitments to essentialist visions of knowledge production. What this means in essence, and to put it analogically in Mudimbean terms, is to 'invent' another future; a future that, while grounded in African situatedness is not limited by a nativist commitment to primordial cultural essentialisms and static conceptions of identity and culture. Indigenous cultures are never static but dynamic, undergoing constant transformations and being constantly reimagined. While important for this politics of 'invention', retrieving Indigenous knowledges should involve what Mudimbe (1994) calls *reprendre*: to re-apprehend, recapture, resume, take back. It should be a recuperative process of 'taking up an interrupted tradition, not out of a desire for purity, which would testify only to the imaginations of dead ancestors, but in a way that reflects the conditions of today' (1994: 154).

In other words, any attempts at reimagining Africa via Indigenous knowledges, cultures and texts must also, as Mudimbe insists, involve 'a methodological assessment … beginning, in effect, with an evaluation of the tools, means and projects' that are being used, as well as inviting a 'pause, a meditation, a query on the meaning' of these preoccupations and what they mean and for what purpose (Mudimbe 1994: 154). We have to assess the very project, practice and meaning of recuperation, since much of what passes as radical critique of colonial modernity also functions within its historicity.

Let me end by referring, even if briefly, to the example of Fela Kuti, the Nigerian Afrobeat pioneer, and the lessons that his creative will teaches us about the possibility of alternative knowledges and futures in Africa. Fela named his music Afrobeat, though it is a fusion of diverse sounds and influences: Yoruba percussion, West African highlife, American jazz, funk and soul. While the music is intelligible to jazz and funk lovers, for example,

it is not reducible to these genres of music, neither can it be confused with them. Fela proudly called his music Afrobeat (African beat) because he wanted to stress the location and situatedness of its producer, as well as the way he imagined Africa, from where he viewed and made sense of the world. No one can listen to Fela's music and not understand he is African. Despite the diverse influences he blended to produce his sound, his African situatedness shines through. By choosing elements from different locations to incorporate in his world, he was able to interpret those sounds from his African location, producing timeless music that is as much 'authentically' African as say mbalax from Senegambia or rumba from the DRC.

Like Fela, African creativity needs not be constrained by autochthonous essentialisms and nativist yearnings for cultural purity; it can blend diverse influences while remaining distinctly African. With the grounded normativity and embodied experiences of African situatedness as our guide, we can adapt diverse knowledge systems to our unique conditions, integrating them with local traditions, interpreting them from an African perspective. The point I am making is that embracing a more flexible approach to Indigenous knowledge, recognising its dynamic and evolving nature, and integrating it with global knowledge traditions from our African situatedness is more useful than the rigid essentialisms that govern much talk about Indigenous knowledges in Africa.

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Contract Farming and Multidimensional Poverty in Low-Income Countries: An Analysis of Smallholder Farmers

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Abstract

Poverty is prevalent among rural smallholder farmers in low-income countries. A substantial body of literature suggests that contract farming can enhance smallholders' welfare by improving market access and promoting rural development. Existing studies usually focus on single welfare components and on a single crop, contract scheme or geographical area. 'Big picture' analyses remain scarce. We develop a new multidimensional poverty index and examine the relationship between contract farming and poverty in six low-income countries. We find that contract farming is associated with decreased poverty among smallholders in low-income countries. Yet, major differences appear between countries, indicating that the contract farming-welfare link is contingent on many national and regional factors. We also find that food-crop farming households are more likely to benefit from contract farming than if they farmed cash crops, which tend to be linked to global value chains by default. Since richer farmers can self-select into contracts and bargain better under market conditions, we argue that policy room exists to promote contract farming for low-resourced farmers in low-income countries.

Keywords: contract farming; multidimensional poverty; smallholder; farmers; welfare

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Résumé

La pauvreté est répandue chez les petits exploitants agricoles ruraux des pays à faible revenu. De nombreuses études suggèrent que l'agriculture contractuelle peut améliorer le bien-être des petits exploitants grâce à un meilleur accès au marché, et favoriser le développement rural. Les études existantes portent généralement sur des composantes individuelles du bien-être et sur une seule culture, un seul système contractuel ou une seule zone géographique. Les analyses globales restent rares. Nous construisons un nouvel indice multidimensionnel de pauvreté et étudions la relation entre agriculture contractuelle et pauvreté dans six pays à faible revenu. Nous constatons que l'agriculture contractuelle est associée à une réduction de la pauvreté chez les petits exploitants des pays à faible revenu. Cependant, des différences importantes apparaissent entre les pays. Elles indiquent que le lien entre agriculture contractuelle et bien-être dépend de nombreux facteurs nationaux et régionaux. Nous constatons également que les ménages s'adonnant aux cultures vivrières sont plus susceptibles de bénéficier de l'agriculture contractuelle que ceux pratiquant des cultures de rente, qui tendent à, par défaut, être liées aux chaînes de valeur mondiales. Puisque les agriculteurs les plus riches peuvent eux-mêmes choisir les contrats et mieux négocier dans les conditions du marché, nous soutenons qu'il existe une marge de manœuvre politique dans la promotion de l'agriculture contractuelle auprès des agriculteurs à faibles ressources dans les pays à faible revenu.

Mots-clés : agriculture contractuelle ; pauvreté multidimensionnelle ; petits exploitants agricoles ; bien-être

Introduction

Contract farming (CF) is important for modernising agricultural value chains. In sub-Saharan Africa, the growing role of supermarkets has led to significant increases in the incomes of smallholders who engage in contract farming, ranging from 40 to 50 per cent (Arouna, Michler, and Lokossou 2021). CF remains important for its other perceived benefits, in food security, better yields and rural transformation, broadly (Bellemare and Bloem 2018; Ruml and Qaim 2021). Although contracts in the agricultural sector can be lucrative, power imbalances can lead to losses and unfair outcomes for smallholder farmers in low-income countries (LICs) (Mwambi et al., 2016; FAO, 2020; Vicol et al., 2022). For those in rural poverty in LICs, the full benefits of CF remain untapped. This is particularly so because those with a higher income tend to benefit more from CF than the poorer farmers (Ogutu, Ochieng and Qaim 2020). According to Ruml and Qaim (2021), a

paradox for poorer farmers is that income benefits notwithstanding, farmers remain unhappy and continue to exit from CF. There are documented cases among farmers of covert, indirect and direct resistance to some aspects of CF (Hambloch 2022; Shonhe and Scoones 2022).

Several studies have investigated the impact of CF on smallholder farmers' income in LICs. Earlier studies on the topic are Glover and Kusterer (1990), Little and Watts (1994), Porter and Phillips-Howard (1997) and Singh (2002). They all found that incomes become more reliable with CF. More recently, studies based on micro data have investigated the income effects of CF (Bellemare 2012; Birthal, Joshi, and Gulati 2005; Miyata, Minot, and Hu 2009; Rao and Qaim 2011; Simmons, Winters, and Patrick 2005), and have found higher incomes for farmers engaged in CF. According to Ruml and Qaim (2020), the major problem of focusing on income or profits as welfare proxies is that other economic activities and income sources may be affected by contracts through the reallocation of household resources. We provide an intervention through a multidimensional poverty index that is consistently constructed for the countries in the sample to explore the relationship between CF and poverty. The study's novelty thus broadens the welfare measure to capture potential resource reallocation when farmers engage in CF. Our study is consistent with Little and Watts (2022: 204), who make 'a plea for more systematic comparisons and "big picture" analyses of CF'. We achieve this by utilising a nationally representative dataset of smallholder farmers from six LICs: Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, and Mozambique. The analysis is based on experimental survey data from the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) in 2015 and 2016.

We investigate the relationship between CF and multidimensional poverty by studying households without CF, those with informal CF and those with formal CF arrangements. We also explore the differences between households that produce cash crops and those that farm food crops. The entire sample indicates that CF is positively correlated with poverty reduction among smallholder farmers across all six countries. Most importantly, in more vertically integrated formal contract schemes with input provision and large retailers or buyers, the poverty alleviation is estimated to be three times stronger. This is highly important because most rural farmers are too poor to farm (Fibæk 2021), and these vertically integrated contracts may open more than marginal improvements to their welfare conditions.

We also find country-specific nuances in contract formality, in that formal contracts show varying magnitudes of potential welfare benefits of CF. Furthermore, our analysis indicates that, on average, cash-crop farming

households are less afflicted by poverty. Nevertheless, the discrepancy in poverty outcomes between those without contracts and those with contracts is more pronounced among households whose primary focus is on food-crop production. That being said, our results show that the CF-welfare link is contingent upon country settings. Although the overall relationship between CF and the poverty index is significantly positive, important between-country differences prevail. Still, these do not negate the overall positive outcomes in the whole sample.

Our results thus partly support the case study findings of deep dissatisfaction with CF and the high incidence of dropping out (Arouna et al. 2021; Ruml and Qaim 2021). Indeed, the positive relationship between CF and the constructed poverty index is significant in Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda, whereas Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire and Tanzania exhibit insignificant results. This signals that, despite the compelling case of CF, policymakers need to consider contextual factors given that heterogeneity is likely the norm: cultural contexts, crop types, soil types and so on will require idiosyncratic adjustments in these contracts.

Although these factors have hindered the development of a general CF theory (Vicol et al. 2022), our analysis supports the argument that having CF leads to better welfare outcomes, particularly through the channel of input supply in vertical contract schemes. We therefore argue that whereas richer farmers are likely to enter into CF unassisted, poorer farmers, with assistance, may expect positive benefits from CF. This is so even though actual contracts may not be mobile or off-the-shelf transferable. Given the inherent power dynamics in CF, there is room for these contracts to be mediated or facilitated by government agencies working in collaboration with large firms in the value chain.

This article is divided into five main sections. Having given an introduction, the next section reviews theories and existing literature in the field. The following section describes the data and the methodology. The results are then presented and discussed. The final section concludes with some policy implications.

Theory and Literature Review

This section explores definitions, theories and the evolution of empirical approaches to understanding CF. It utilises empirical studies on CF to address some methodological challenges, particularly the issue of publication bias and survivor bias, which tend to overemphasise the positive impacts of CF.

What is contract farming?

In this section, we not only explore theoretical lenses rooted in the neoclassical understanding of CF but also briefly introduce balance by incorparating the radical criticism that emanates from agrarian studies. Defining CF is a controversial undertaking, as there is yet no consensus on the definition (Rehber 2007). Bellemare and Lim (2018) underscore that contracts come in 'all shapes and colours', and similar contracts may have different structures depending on who decides on what in the contractual agreement. Eaton and Shepherd (2001: 2) define CF as 'an agreement between farmers and processing and/or marketing firms for the production and supply of agricultural products under forward agreements frequently at predetermined prices'. In their seminal work, which influenced many in the political economy of agrarian change, Little and Watts (1994: 6) define CF as 'a constellation of institutional and production relations that represents … a crucial means by which agriculture is being industrialised and restructured'.

In their groundbreaking book, *Vertical Coordination in Agriculture*, Mighell and Jones (1963) differentiated three types of agricultural contracts, which also apply to agreements concluded within the realm of CF. Market specification contracts guarantee outlet, time for sale, and sometimes price structures for farmers, and farmers remain independent in terms of production processes. Resource-providing contracts agree to the procurement of resources (technical or physical). This type of agreement is particularly common for complex crops, when specific quality standards must be met, or in cases of imperfect input markets. In these contracts, farmers give up some of their decision-making power (Prowse 2012). In production management contracts, the contracting company determines the production processes and the farmers have no decision-making power. Supposedly, the burden of higher costs that the contracting company must bear for compliance control is offset by the sale of higher-quality output. In this article, all types of contractual arrangements between smallholder farmers and buyers are captured. Since our interest is on broad welfare in a cross-country framework, we adopt a wider definition, which includes any preharvest agreement between farmers and buyers or processors (Bellemare and Lim 2018).

Transaction cost approach

Theoretically, the transaction cost approach is the most prominent in explaining CF. Its starting point is Coase's (1937) idea that any firm's existence can be explained by its search to reduce transaction costs. In this case, firms integrate backward production processes as soon as this becomes cheaper than purchasing these same products on the market. CF is also

seen as a workhorse of agricultural value chains, a process that takes a basic agricultural product through a series of value-addition steps, locally and globally (Bellemare and Lim 2018). Whereas neoclassical approaches deem that spot market prices provide all relevant information for decision-making (Rehber 2007), transaction cost approach proponents, such as Williamson (1979), view market transactions as hazardous endeavours in which substantial losses occur because every actor maximises their self-interest (Da Silva 2005). Transaction costs are especially high in imperfect markets, such as agricultural markets in many LICs, where imperfect markets can cause market failures (Prowse 2012).

Vertical integration offers an opportunity to reduce transaction costs and thus can be understood as a remedy for various risks in CF. CF can reduce uncertainty by providing farmers with guaranteed marketing channels and assuring the company of the quality and quantity of the contracted crop (Da Silva 2005; Prowse 2012). Moreover, it could facilitate investments in productive capital, where guaranteed purchases could serve as collateral for accessing credit. It thereby also favours repeated exchange. Additionally, CF can reduce uncertainties related to credibility, as retailers and firms can gain valuable insights into production processes that may be necessary for meeting traceability requirements (Moyer-Lee and Prowse 2015).

The transaction cost approach posits a voluntary-based CF, which has been criticised radically for its narrow focus that privileges legality and efficiency but does not deal with other issues that emerge when powerful firms interact with underresourced farmers. The transaction cost approach argues that CF integrates farmers into global value chains, but it is accused of seeing 'agribusiness as a "win-win" rural development strategy for smallholders and agricultural corporations' (Vicol et al. 2022: 5). This view posits that power imbalances not only affect negotiations in CF but also structurally disadvantage smallholders through high indebtedness to big monopsony firms (Hambloch 2022). CF is thus seen, through this lens, as 'a legal fiction that imagines formally equal and voluntary relations between large firms and small farmers' (Cohen, Vicol and Pol 2021: 179). This radical view was embedded in the general critique of the Washington Consensus and its development agenda for the LICs, in the 1980s and 1990s.

In its Marxist orientation, the criticism posits that fairness in CF is structurally impossible, that smallholders become 'proletarians in disguise' or 'wage-labour equivalents' (Vicol et al. 2022). Since then, however, progress in CF has meant differentiation and even more favourable CF arising from forces above and below as farmers have gained more bargaining powers (Zhang and Zeng 2022).

Over the years, CF proponents have brought in power imbalance as an accompanying issue in CF. In doing so, it has been argued, CF proponents have 'domesticated the critique, rendering it tractable—a problem to be solved for contract farming rather than a fundamental indictment of contract farming' (Cohen et al. 2021: 180). Accordingly, most official reports from development organisations, such as the World Bank, FAO, and the Asian Development Bank, ensure that their documents cover power imbalance as an issue to be addressed in all CF arrangements (Cohen et al. 2021). According to agrarian political economy studies, the problem is that this does not constitute a fundamental solution because it leads to only a piecemeal solution to a structural problem. Some of the proposed solutions include the need for state regulation and the aggregation of smallholders into associations (Vicol et al., 2022). In this study, we interpret our results, acknowledging their limitations, as espoused in these critical agrarian studies. We turn to empirical literature in the next section to explore existing knowledge.

Empirical literature and its evolution

CF and its welfare implications have enjoyed scholarly attention over the past four decades. Bijman (2008) discerns two waves of econometric analysis of the effect of CF on farmers' income. The first wave was in the 1980s to the mid-1990s. To analyse the income effect of CF, large cross-country studies were conducted (Bijman 2008). CF's other socioeconomic impacts, such as gender relationships and communal development, were also considered (Porter and Phillips-Howard 1997; Singh 2002; Glover and Kusterer 1990; Little and Watts 1994). Generally, the studies found positive effects for contract farmers, the most import of which was more reliable income.

The second wave of studies sought to critique the first, using micro-level data. The availability of extensive survey data facilitated a broader analysis of CF. These studies usually concentrated on a certain area or crop for their analysis (Ton et al. 2018). Miyata et al. (2009) found that contract farmers of apples and green onions in China earned significantly more than non-participating farmers. Additionally, they observed differences in farm incomes by crop types. In contrast, apple contract farmers benefited from CF through higher yields, green onion farmers with contracts sold their produce at higher prices because of increased quality. This showed that input provision and technological assistance potentially improve farmers' income through increased yields and improved crop quality.

Similarly, Khan et al. (2019) found heterogeneous effects of CF on land productivity and the income of maize and potato farmers in Pakistan. For potato CF, they recorded positive price and income effects, whereas for maize CF, no impact on income and productivity was found. Birthal et al. (2005) studied the impact of CF on dairy farmers in India and found that it yielded a significantly higher income. The same goes for Warning and Key (2002) who studied peanut production in Senegal.

Simmons et al. (2005) observed contracts for three types of produce in Indonesia: poultry, rice and maize kernels. They found that poultry and maize agreements yielded increased returns for farmers but that rice contracts did not. Increased efficiency in production is another aspect but it does not always translate into higher income, as Ramaswami et al. (2006) showed for Andhra Pradesh, India. They found that production under contract was more efficient than not, but that most of the production surplus in the case of poultry production was appropriated by the contracting firm. In this regard, Hazell et al. (2010) highlight the potential for multiplier effects that may benefit individuals outside the CF household, potentially to the detriment of those directly involved in CF.

Some studies focus on CF's impact on welfare other than income. In their systematic review of CF impacts, Wang, Wang and Delgado (2014) computed that 92 per cent of all relevant impact studies showed positive effects of CF on farm productivity. They also found that three-quarters of the studies indicated positive income effects. These studies show that, on an income basis, CF is indeed beneficial, but more recent studies reveal that this depends on contract type, sector and crop type, among other variables and factors that can lead to disappointments in CF (Ruml and Qaim 2021). Table 1 captures some recent empirical studies related to our study's countries.

Studies in CF also face a methodological problem. Ton et al. (2018) published a meta-analysis of impact studies on CF, which detected the presence of publication and survivor bias. The latter occurs 'when studies … neglect the empirical instances of CF that failed in the first few years' (Ton et al. 2018: 50). Indeed, it is conceivable that CF agreements fail because of poor performance. Therefore, only CF schemes that 'survived' are studied, which introduces a positive bias. The publication bias occurs because studies with significant results are more likely to get published (Ioannidis and Trikalinos 2007). Hence the academic literature tends to be biased towards significant results (Ton et al. 2018).

Table 1: Studies examining the relationship between contract farming and farmers' welfare

COUNTRY	STUDY	CROP	RESULT
Bangladesh	Islam et al. (2019)	Dairy	CF is associated with increases of 42% in household expenditure, 35% gross margin, 34% net margin per cow and 9% in food safety practice adoption rate.
	Meemken and Bellemare (2020)		No significant relation between CF and income.
Côte d'Ivoire	Meemken and Bellemare (2020)		Significant 12% income increases for contracting households.
Mozambique	Chambati et al. (2019)	Sugar	CF led to social differentiation between farmers and increased food insecurity among contracting farmers.
	Meemken and Bellemare (2020)		Significant 35% income increases for contracting households.
Nigeria	Awotide et al. (2015)	Rice	CF increased productivity by 80%, reduced poverty by 14%, and significantly increased crop income by 64%.
	Meemken and Bellemare (2020)	Rice	No significant relation between CF and income.
	Yusuf et al. (2021)	Maize	The average effect of treatment shows that CF increased income from maize production by $97.53/hectare. However, CF can have negative consequences if food security concerns are not considered in the contract.
Tanzania	Herrmann (2017)	Rice and sugar	Significant household welfare benefits for agro-industry workers and out-growers.
	Meemken and Bellemare (2020)		No significant relation between CF and income.
Uganda	Bolwig, Gibbon and Jones (2009)	Cocoa	CF related to an increase in net coffee revenue of around 75%.
	Meemken and Bellemare (2020)		Significant 29% income increases for contracting households.
	Jones and Gibbon (2011)	Cocoa	Contracts increased real net cocoa farming income by 58-168%, varying according to the econometric model.

Source: Author's table

Meemken and Bellemare (2020) and Ton et al. (2018) also note methodological limits to previous impact studies on CF. Indeed, many of the studies mentioned above highlight the limited generalisability of their findings (Dedehouanou, Swinnen and Maertens 2013). Data availability allowed for impact studies in only limited geographical areas or crop types (Ton et al. 2018; Meemken and Bellemare 2020). In addition, statistical instruments such as instrumental variables, propensity score matching or Heckman approaches often present flaws (Ton et al. 2018).

Recent studies also reveal that, despite positive outcomes, there is a general lack of trust when smallholders enter into contracts with larger firms (Ruml and Qaim 2021). The unfortunate outcome is a high dropout rate, which is commonplace (Ruml and Qaim 2021: 1107). From producing nothing, CF will likely allow income benefits for smallholder farmers, but the contracts can get bedevilled with other issues, including power dynamics between processors and poor farmers (Vicol et al. 2022). The need for transparency, simplicity and mutually beneficial contractual terms remains important (Smaller, Speller and Brewin 2018; Arouna et al. 2021).

The literature has not done enough to research overall welfare improvements, especially for smallholder farmers, who tend to be at the lower end of the income distribution. This is crucial for unravelling the counterintuitive phenomenon of high dropout rates and the observed persistence of the agrarian underdevelopment status quo (Arouna et al. 2021; Ruml and Qaim 2021). Many people in LICs remain employed in agriculture, even though value addition in the sector has declined continuously relative to other sectors.

Figure 1 shows this reality for the countries in our sample. For Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda, around 70 per cent of total labour works in agriculture. If CF is beneficial, can it be possible that farmers win on farming income and lose elsewhere in the process to warrant the desire to exit contracts? As Ruml and Qaim (2020) note, the major problem of focusing on income or profits as welfare proxies is that other economic activities and income sources may be affected by contracts, through a reallocation of household resources. We contribute to this area of research through a multidimensional poverty measure. By doing so in a manner that allows for greater generalisability than previous case studies, this article adds to ongoing debates about the need to consolidate CF theories.

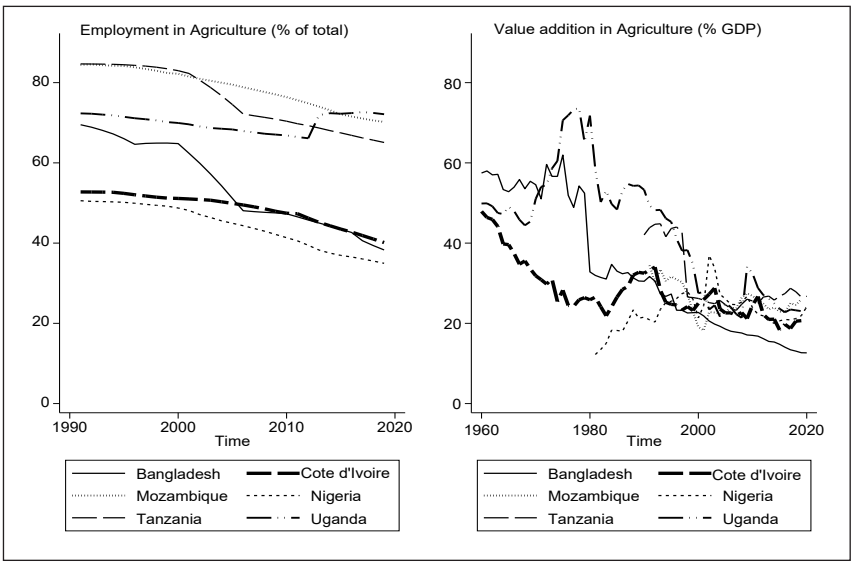

Figure 1: Employment and value addition in agriculture for the six study countries
Source: World Bank Indicators (WDI)

Data and Methodology

Source material

One problem of exploring CF in 'big picture' style is the general lack of consistent data. In this instance, we used experimental data from the CGAP's smallholder household survey, 'Building the Evidence Base on the Agricultural and Financial Lives of Smallholder Households', collected between 2015 and 2016 in six LICs (Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda). The limitation of the data is that it is cross-sectional, which does not allow for a longitudinal perspective; however, the data are rich across the six countries and various crop types.

Such a study spanning different countries implies that the cross-sectional approach is necessary to inform future studies. Also, with the data publicly accessible on the World Bank's microdata library, it is inexpensive. Given inadequate research resources and data challenges in Africa, all the available datasets have to be used, including replications that are necessary for robust scientific progress in the face of the current bias towards 'new' or 'novel' data (Bryman 2016). We use the data in a novel way by constructing a multidimensional poverty index and thus further contribute to the literature on income.

The samples are nationally representative of the smallholder household population, and the given set of countries reflects a high degree of diversity. The World Bank (2020) classifies three of the six countries as LICs (Tanzania, Uganda and Mozambique) and the other three as lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) (Nigeria, Bangladesh and Côte d'Ivoire). The variety of these countries allows us to move towards generalisable patterns of CF in the developing world. Table 2 shows that the countries also vary in terms of crops and crop prevalence in different types of contracts. This enables us to move beyond crop-specific mechanisms and focus on CF's presence and its relationship to multidimensional poverty.

Table 2: Most important crop by contractual status

Country	**Without Contract**		**Any Contract**		**Formal Contract**	
	(1) Crop	(2) %	(3) crop	(4) %	(5) crop	(6) %
Bangladesh	Rice	58.65	Rice	64.04	Rice	62.5
	Jute	7.27	Maize	12.36	Maize	14.29
	Irish potatoes	5.67	Irish potatoes	2.81	Irish potatoes	4.46
Côte d'Ivoire	Cocoa	34.6	Cocoa	42.89	Cashew	43.75
	Cashew	16.91	Cashew	16.21	Cocoa	15.63
	Cassava	11.64	Cassava/ peanuts	5.86	Peanuts	9.38
Mozambique	Maize	37.52	Maize	46.46	Maize	46.97
	Cassava	12.65	Cassava	7.89	Rice	13.64
	Beans	9	Tobacco	7.02	Beans	9.09
Nigeria	Cassava	28.64	Cassava	29.97	Cassava	31.5
	Yams	10.49	Yams	11.15	Yams	8.9
	Beans	10.14	Rice	6.97	Rice	8.5
Tanzania	Maize	26.67	Maize	16.66	Sunflowers	14.76
	Rice	12	Rice	13.32	Peas	13.86
	Tomatoes/ Sunflowers	5.3	Beans	9.82	Maize	13.25
Uganda	Maize	24.1	Maize	30.46	Maize	27.84
	Beans	16.27	Beans	16.7	Beans	19.59
	Coffee	12	Coffee	8.26	Coffee	12.37

Source: Data from the CGAP datasets

In the CGAP surveys, nationally representative samples were obtained using a multistage stratified sampling strategy. Stratification was achieved by subdividing each geopolitical zone into urban and rural areas. Thus, 6 to 14 strata were created within which the sample was independently selected depending on the country. With regard to multistage sampling, the primary sampling frame included enumerated areas. Weighted by their population size, 200 randomly selected areas were enumerated in the sample (CGAP 2016). Within each enumerated area and with equal chances, 15 households were randomly selected. This study follows the CGAP definition of smallholder farmers, as farmers with less than 5 hectares of land or fewer than 50 head of cattle, 100 pigs, sheep or goats or fewer than 1,000 chickens, and for whom agriculture must provide a meaningful contribution to the households' livelihood, income or consumption.

Empirical approach

Using a non-causal approach, we followed the method of the standard CF and welfare analysis (Gatto et al. 2017; Meemken and Bellemare 2020; Ogutu et al. 2020), but in our treatment of poverty we used a multidimensional poverty index (see below for further details and rationale). The benchmark model is:

$$Y_{jk} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C_j + \beta_2 HH_j + \delta_k + \varepsilon_{jk} \quad (1)$$

where Y_{jk} is the dependent variable, the multidimensional poverty index, it describes the poverty levels of the households $_j$ within the specified geographical location $_k$.The treatment variable C_j is a dummy variable indicating whether household $_j$ participates in CF or not. HH_j is a set of household *j's* characteristics that may simultaneously determine a household's propensity to participate in CF and poverty (see Table A1). Furthermore, δ_k represents the unobserved geographical effects (country, administrative or cluster unit) that are constant over time. ε_{jk} is the error term. Standard errors are clustered at the country, administrative or cluster level, conditional on the fixed-effects unit.

We took advantage of the hierarchical structure of the CGAP data and applied household and location fixed effects, in line with other recent studies (Dedehouanou et al. 2013; Meemken and Bellemare 2020). Thanks to improved data quality in terms of external validity, the data allowed for a fixed-effects framework. In particular, the data permits a comparison between contracting and non-contracting smallholding households within the specified hierarchical structure (cluster, administrative level or country). This approach overcomes the difficulties related to selection—and omitted variable bias—that prior studies using IV and propensity matching approaches faced (Ton et al. 2018; Meemken and Bellemare 2020).

Regarding the independent variables, households were considered to be contracting households when at least one adult household member (above 15 years) reported having a selling contract. Consequently, all types of contractual agreements that CF potentially covers were included. Further, the literature suggests that different agricultural agreements might have heterogeneous welfare implications for smallholder farmers (Ochieng, Veettil and Qaim 2017). Aiming to capture these, we constructed a proxy for formal contracts. Households were assumed to be in a more formal contract if they simultaneously (1) had a selling contract, (2) sold to large retailers or buyers and (3) were provided with input.

Multidimensional poverty index

Poverty measures can be classified as direct and indirect (Sen 1981, 1999). Indirect measures, such as income, establish a poverty line and offer insight into the income level at which a specific set of basic needs can be met. But these measures are inherently unable to capture whether the basic needs in question are actually met. Therefore, significant discrepancies in the assessment of poverty remain unaddressed by indirect poverty measures. These include the impact of local prices, gender, age, health, climate, disabilities, intrahousehold distributions, and the affordability of quality services such as water, healthcare, and education (Callan, Nolan, and Whelan 1993; Klasen and Wink 2003; Sen 1981).

On the other hand, direct measures concentrate on whether and to what extent an individual or household fulfils their needs, capabilities or functionalities (Sen 1992). In this regard, the multidimensional poverty index proposed by Alkire and Santos (2014) represents a measure of acute multidimensional poverty. This conceptualisation of poverty is based on the premise that an individual is unable to meet the minimum international standards and core functioning (UNDP 2010). The index comprises 10 indicators, distributed across three equally weighted dimensions: health, education and living standards.

We created a multidimensional poverty index (MPI) to estimate the relation between CF and a broad poverty measure. Rather than using existing MPIs (for example, Alkire and Santos 2014), we built an MPI that was consistent with the dataset using variables in our dataset for internal validity. This index is intended to capture poverty in a broader sense than income or expenditure alone, as these measures cannot account for the multidimensional plight of the poor (Hanmer, Pyatt, and White 1999). Instead, it integrates five variables available in the CGAP surveys across

all six countries: income per capita; expenditure per capita; water supply; mobile phones per capita; subjective financial wellbeing. Thus, the index includes direct and indirect poverty measures.

Apart from the commonly used income and expenditure measures, we included mobile phones. These are an essential household asset for smallholder farmers, as they provide access to important information for agricultural activities and other aspects of farmers' lives (Sife, Kiondo, and Lyimo-Macha 2010). Water supply was included for instrumental and intrinsic reasons, given its significant impact on health (World Bank 1993). Further, access to water is increasingly regarded as a right on its own. Continuous water supply frees up time that would have been spent on accessing water (Klasen 2000). Additionally, the water supply measured here extends beyond household water access to include water supply for agricultural activities. Lastly, subjective financial well-being measures the outcome of the financial situation on the utility that the household is able to acquire with its financial resources.

The index allocates equal weight to every component. Every component can take up to three points, allowing the index to reach a maximum of 15 points. Income and expenditure are continuous variables, whereas mobile phones, water supply and subjective financial status are categorical variables. To include all five variables in the index, the continuous variables maintain their continuous character. To maintain maximum precision in the analysis, their distribution is continuously distributed between 0 and 3. The interquartile range method was applied to determine outliers (Vinutha, Poornima and Sagar 2018). Thus, observations are excluded that lie 1.5 times the difference between the median of the upper and lower half of the frequency distribution below the 25th and above the 75th quintile. Excluding outliers in each country for the variables 'income per capita and day' and 'minimum expenditure required per capita and day' allows for less variation of the observations within the variables. Therefore, the statistical power of the analysis is increased since outliers can be assumed to significantly differ. For illustration, Table A2 indicates that the share of those individuals with a waged job as the main source of income is approximately 8 per cent higher among the outliers. This shows that the outliers are less reliant on farming.

Further, the observations of non-outliers, at 23,982, are still high enough and do not present any threat to statistical power. Therefore, it is reasonable to exclude them. The same holds for the variable minimum expenditure needed per day, where the observations amount to 24,791, excluding outliers. As to the number of mobile phones per household, the per capita indication was computed to ensure comparability between households. The

distribution of mobile phones per capita was then distributed between 0 and 3 to be included in the index. Here, the outliers of each country were excluded for the same reasons as above.[1]

Two variables included in the poverty index are categorical, namely 'water supply' and 'subjective financial situation'. For both variables, the survey question offered four response options which were transferred to the index. Per the response, one point was allocated to the index. Zero points were given to those with the worst water supply (or financial situation), and three to those with the best. One and two points are assigned to intermediate water supply (or financial) situations, respectively.

Empirical Results

This section presents the results and positions them in the existing body of literature. Table 3 displays varying shares of contracting households by country. Usually, household participation rates in CF are below 16 per cent. Lower shares were observed in Bangladesh (4.3%) and Mozambique (5.7%), whereas Tanzania displayed a high household participation rate of 80.8%. These high shares for Tanzania may be explained, at least partly, by the Tanzanian Agriculture Sector Development Programme (2006 to 2013). Its policy of *Kilimo Kwanza* (Agriculture First) emphasised the need to establish institutional arrangements to increase agricultural production, and allocated particular importance to CF (Kuzilwa et al. 2019: 121). This high variability in participation rates suggests that CF is widespread in some countries, extending beyond large, formal, and export-oriented contract schemes (Meemken and Bellemare 2020). Further, it is important to highlight that, in all countries, more than one in three clusters and over three in five administrative units contained at least one contracting household, indicating that CF is a geographically dispersed phenomenon.

Figure 2 indicates the share of households living with less than USD 1.9 per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP) daily, separated by type of contract, revealing that fewer contracting households live below the poverty line. At the same time, in four out of six countries, formally contracting households indicate the lowest poverty shares, showing the potential benefit of CF.

Figure 3 displays the frequency distribution of the poverty index. Although differences appear across nations, the average outcome of the index across all countries is 5.2.[2] The index becomes the important dependent variable in our relationship of interest, namely the relationship between CF and poverty.

Table 3: Sample size and prevalence of contract farming

Country	Individual		Households		Clusters*		Admin. Units	
	N	% CF	N	% CF	N	% CF	N	% CF
Bangladesh	3,951	3.2	2,689	4.3	201	31.8	61	63.9
Côte d'Ivoire	5,354	10.5	2,912	15.0	210	73.3	151	79.5
Mozambique	3,979	4.2	2,331	5.7	206	36.9	11	90.9
Nigeria	4,532	13.2	2,737	15.9	214	66.4	199	68.3
Tanzania	4,742	77.3	2,706	80.8	209	99.5	135	100
Uganda	5,203	7.0	2,765	10.0	215	66.0	104	74.0
Total	27,761	19.8	16,140	22.2	1,255	62.6	661	78.2

Notes: * Several clusters exist within single administrative units, which is why there are different clusters and administrative units with at least one CF household

Source: Data from the CGAP datasets

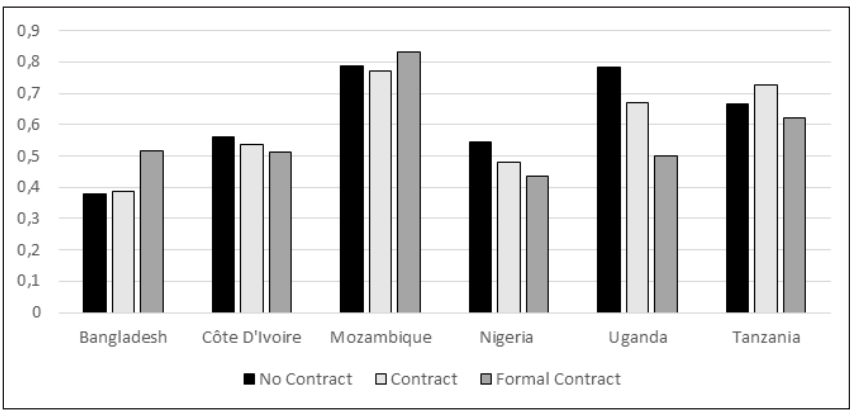

Figure 2: Share of households below the international poverty line (USD 1.9 PPP)
Source: Data from the CGAP datasets

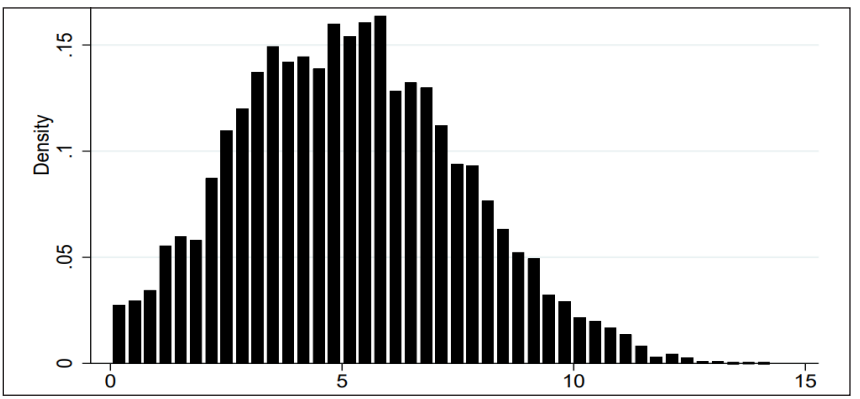

Figure 3: Frequency distribution of poverty index

Source: Data from the CGAP datasets

Table 4 shows the results of the study. At the administrative unit level, households engaged in CF are associated with a statistically significantly 0.177 higher outcome on the index. Although the association is not significant at the country-level fixed effects, it is significant at the cluster level. Indeed, given the cross-sectional structure of the data, it is plausible that comparing groups of 15 neighbouring households—which constitute a cluster—yields the most interesting results because they are likely to share unobserved characteristics. This is less so at the national level, explaining the insignificance of the relationship at the country level. The results are robust to alternative specifications (tables A3 and A4) and consistent with major trends in the literature on the welfare improvements of smallholder farmers participating in CF (Barrett et al. 2012; Bellemare and Novak 2017; Dedehouanou et al. 2013; Ogutu et al. 2020; Rao and Qaim 2011; Meemken and Bellemare 2020).

Table 4: Contract farming and multidimensional poverty index

	Country Fe	Admin. Unit Fe	Cluster Fe
The dependent variable is the poverty index			
Contract household (1/0)	0.233 (0.168)	0.177** (0.070)	0.145** (0.065)
Female-headed household (1/0)	-0.298** (0.090)	-0.397*** (0.059)	-0.411*** (0.053)
Age of household head	0.002 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)
Household head ever attended school (1/0)	0.780*** (0.106)	0.543*** (0.052)	0.481*** (0.043)
No. of household members	-0.222*** (0.014)	-0.198*** (0.008)	-0.197*** (0.008)
Land owned (ha) by household	0.028*** (0.003)	0.030*** (0.004)	0.031*** (0.004)
Rural (1/0)	-1.118*** (0.158)	-1.039*** (0.126)	-1.739** (0.866)
Constant	6.822*** (0.255)	6.949*** (0.127)	7.619*** (0.744)
Observations	11914	11914	11914

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Further, we find that the different components of the poverty index relate differently to CF (Table 5). Heterogeneous associations also prevail between country samples. On average, we see a significantly positive association with CF at administrative and cluster levels regarding income per capita. This finding aligns with prior studies (Ogutu et al. 2020; Otsuka, Nakano, and Takahashi 2016; Ton et al. 2018), indicating a positive relationship between CF and farmers' income. However, the results are driven by two countries, which contests the notion of CF's unambiguous income improvements and thereby supports Meemken and Bellemare's (2020) results. In Meemken and Bellemare (2020), as in our study, this most likely stems from the nationally representative nature of the data, which allows for results that are not subject to publication or survivor biases.

Regarding household assets (access to water and mobile phones per capita), the results indicate that engaging in CF relates to an increase in the number of mobile phones per capita (column 4 of Table 5). Given that the minimum expenditure per capita required is not significantly associated with CF, which would indicate a significant increase in the living standard, but the number of mobile phones per capita is, the results are in line with Michelson's (2013) findings of a positive association between productive household assets and CF.

Regarding water supply, its association with CF is not significant at the country level. However, the supply of water that households can acquire is dependent on the surrounding infrastructure. It is interesting to look at the smallest entity included, the cluster level, because neighbouring households are likely to have similar access to infrastructure. Here, in three countries (Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda), better water supply is significantly associated with CF.

Participation in CF is associated with an increase in the subjective financial situation (column 6, Table 5). The response options of that variable include whether the household has enough financial resources to acquire sufficient food and whether they can afford to save money. Therefore, an increase in that variable can be perceived as improved food security, given that one in every three households reported not having enough money for food. Thus, the present results align with Bellemare and Novak (2017), finding a positive relationship between CF and food security. Additionally, the analysis corroborates the results of Dedehouanou et al. (2013), who revealed a positive association between CF and subjective farmers' wellbeing. Although subjective financial wellbeing cannot be put at the same level as subjective wellbeing in general, the two are still related to each other (Kruger 2011).

Table 5: Components of poverty index and their respective significance

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT FE						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Country	Index[a]	Income	Expend.[b]	Phone	Water	Financ.[c]
All	0.177***	0.073***	0.022	0.035*	0.049	0.084***
Bangladesh	-0.111	0.007	-0.039	-0.008	-0.089	0.065
Côte d'Ivoire	-0.202	0.098*	-0.028	0.005	-0.231***	0.005
Mozambique	0.851***	0.144	0.213	0.029	0.308	0.082
Nigeria	0.492***	0.051	-0.052	-0.009	0.268***	0.213***
Tanzania	0.079	0.020	0.068**	0.065	-0.018	0.058
Uganda	0.551***	0.127**	0.047	0.112**	0.181**	0.091
CLUSTER FE						
	Index[a]	Income	Expend.[b]	Phone	Water	Financ.[c]
All	0.143**	0.067***	0.013	0.031	0.035	0.089***
Bangladesh	0.131	0.063	0.019	-0.006	-0.051	0.120*
Côte d'Ivoire	-0.286**	0.071*	-0.042	0.000	-0.248***	-0.008
Mozambique	0.587**	0.051	0.140**	0.027	0.299***	0.113
Nigeria	0.490***	0.047	-0.054	-0.003	0.260***	0.209***
Tanzania	0.043	0.011	0.061*	0.056	-0.038	0.065
Uganda	0.514***	0.125***	0.045	0.102**	0.153**	0.075

Notes: [a] MPI; [b] Minimum daily expenditure needed; [c] Subjective financial wellbeing.
Standard errors in parentheses $^{*}\ p < 0.1$, $^{**}\ p < 0.05$, $^{***}\ p < 0.01$

Moreover, national differences in the relationship between CF and the poverty index can be observed. Positive and significant associations between CF and poverty were found in Mozambique, Uganda and Nigeria, whereas insignificant relationships were detected in Bangladesh and Tanzania (Table 5). In Côte d'Ivoire, the estimated association is significantly negative, stemming from the negative relationship between CF and water supply (Table 5). Although a negative relationship between CF and water supply is counterintuitive, an explanation might be that Ivorian contract farmers cultivate more water-intensive crops, thereby worsening their water situation by increasing their demand. This reasoning is supported by the data, which suggests that Ivorian CF households reported cultivating cocoa (which is very water-intensive) (Vanham and Bidoglio 2013) (43% of CF and 35% non-CF).

Whether CF is formal or not matters. Here we trace the poverty outcome with non-formal and our proxy for formal CF, where households simultaneously have a selling contract, sell to large buyers and are supplied

with inputs. Figure 4 is a graphical representation of the results (see tables A5 and A6 for the data). At all levels, the association is found to be statistically significant. Overall, at the administrative unit level, formal contracts are associated with a 0.603-point increase in the poverty index, which is a significant increase compared to the 0.177-increase in the case of all contracting households, whether in formal or non-formal contracts.

Thus, the results suggest that more vertically coordinated contract schemes tend to be more beneficial to smallholder farmers in poverty alleviation. This supports the transaction cost approach, which contends that more vertically integrated value chains reduce risks for farmers and decrease transaction costs, thereby benefiting the contracting households (Hennessy 1996; Martin 1997). It may hint at a situation in which CF facilitates the technologically driven intensification of smallholder farming (through input provision) while combining it with sustainable, socially driven intensification (Van der Ploeg 2012), which would be associated with a reduction in multidimensional poverty.

Further, looking at the different countries more closely, we see changes in the relationship between CF schemes and poverty based on contract formality. Indeed, the association between the more formal contracts and poverty is greater than with non-formal ones, except for Bangladesh and Côte d'Ivoire. The results show that CF with formal contracts has better outcomes despite the pessimism on formalisation in the literature (Goldfinch 2015; Alhola and Gwaindepi 2024). This is subject to the caveat that formal CF tends to be recorded more frequently than informal arrangements, which are often not fully documented.

Female farmers frequently encounter disadvantages in the agricultural sector (Croppenstedt, Goldstein, and Rosas, 2013; Navarra 2019; Yaro, Teye, and Torvikey 2017). It is therefore essential to integrate a gender perspective into the analysis. Despite their significant involvement in CF, women often fail to receive or retain a proportionate share of the income generated to the same extent as men in the same households (Von Bülow and Sørensen 1993; Dolan 2002). In Table A7, the dataset is divided into two sections, one comprising male-headed households and the other female-headed households. This allows for a detailed examination of the relationship between CF and the poverty index, with a particular focus on gender-specific nuances. The results are heterogeneous, exhibiting no discernible trend across the six countries included in the sample. The findings are consistent with those of Machio and Meemken (2023), who found that women participate less in CF than men and that the importance of female contract participation for household living standards remains inconclusive.

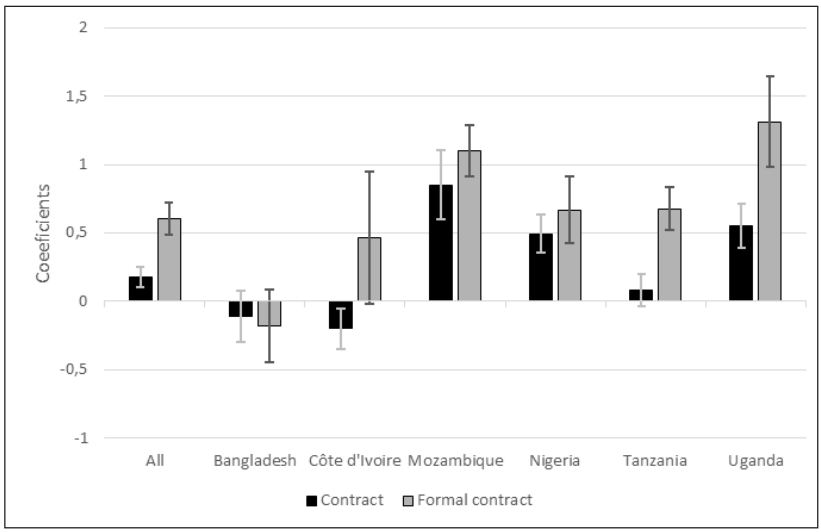

Figure 4: MPI and formal vs any contracts
Source: Administrative unit FE regression with data from the CGAP datasets

The dataset reveals that approximately 14 per cent of households are headed by women, and that the proportion of female-headed households that hold a contract (24.8%) is comparable to that of their male-headed counterparts (23.4%). A potential trend may be obscured by factors that are already known to influence welfare outcomes, such as the type and characteristics of the contract crop (Oya 2012; Verhofstadt and Maertens, 2014), the type of contract (Bellemare and Lim 2018; Ruml and Qaim 2021), and the institutional environment (Sulle and Dancer 2020), which we were unable to control for.

The type of crop smallholders cultivate has been demonstrated to be a significant factor in the realm of CF (Oya 2012; Verhofstadt and Maertens 2014). Indeed, farmers specialising in cash crops intended for export tend to have higher income potential, because prices are generally higher for crops sold on local markets (Glover and Jones 2019; Jha et al. 2022). However, concerns have been raised about the potential impact of increasing food insecurity caused by farmers focusing on cash crops, but the evidence is inconclusive (Hashmiu, Agbenyega and Dawoe 2022; Kuma et al. 2019).

To incorporate this dimension into our analysis, we have classified households into two categories: cash-crop households and food-crop households. The categorisation is based on the household's most important cultivated crop and is constrained by the fact that households typically

cultivate multiple crops, both food and cash crops.[3] Table A8 investigates the disparities in poverty outcomes between households that cultivate food crops and those that cultivate cash crops. A comparison of food-crop households reveals a greater disparity in the poverty index attributed to contract status between contracting and non-contracting households, relative to cash-crop households.

In other words, the existence of a contract for a cash-crop farming household is less influential in determining the poverty outcome than it is for a food-crop cultivating household. Simultaneously, in five out of six countries, cash-crop farming households exhibit higher mean welfare levels. This supports existing evidence showing that smallholder commercialisation can be pro-poor (Geffersa and Tabe-Ojong 2024). At the same time, cash crop farmers show better welfare outcomes in absolute terms, because they are likely to be already better integrated in GVCs global value chains. It is important to exercise caution in interpreting these results. We were unable to track the contracted crops of the households in question, but only whether a household had a contract and their most important crop.

Conclusion

We have explored the relationship between CF and multidimensional poverty in LICs. Unlike most previous studies, the aim was to provide generalisable results beyond a single crop, contract scheme or geographical area. This is in line with recent debates on the need to provide more systematic and 'big picture' analyses on the journey towards robust CF theories. Indeed, the most prominent proxy for poverty in the literature is income-based poverty and misses the household's reallocation of resources, especially when total household income is not considered. Consequently, our goal was to investigate the relationship between CF and a more broad-based definition of poverty, using a consistent MPI for Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique. One novelty of the study is the construction of an internally valid MPI, which has allowed for a broader analysis of the association between CF and poverty.

Taking advantage of the hierarchical structure of the data, household and location, fixed effects were used to explore the relationship. We also go beyond existing studies by using a nationally representative cross-country dataset likely not affected by survivor bias and publication biases. Overall, this study demonstrates that CF is positively associated with poverty alleviation among smallholder farmers in LICs. The results support previous research indicating that CF is positively associated with higher incomes,

more productive household assets and increased subjective financial wellbeing. Contributing to the debates on formalisation, the results also show that formal CF is positively associated with poverty alleviation with a magnitude three times higher than non-formal CF. Furthermore, regarding the commercialisation debate, it can be observed that the poorer group of farmers, whose most important crops were food crops, tended to derive a relatively greater benefit from CF compared to farmers whose most important crop was a cash crop. Yet, the results also challenge the notion that CF unambiguously improves the welfare of smallholder households. While the overall association between CF and the poverty index is significantly positive, important between-country differences prevail. For formal contracts, Tanzania, for instance, shows higher magnitudes of benefits since the association coefficients are significantly larger.

In light of these findings, the study proposes the following recommendations for further research. New opportunities to better comprehend the heterogeneous relationship between CF and poverty should be explored through improved data availability. Future studies could focus on potential sources of heterogeneity, such as contract schemes, crop types, or CF models. Further, in the context of CF, our MPI should be broadened and continue to be applied to different contracts, countries, crops or other forms of agricultural CF practices. This is because capability studies have emphasised the need to go beyond incomes to fully understand the plight of the poor. Additionally, although the present results indicate a significant relationship between CF and multidimensional poverty, it would be interesting to quantify that impact more precisely by examining different stages, such as farming input contracts and selling contracts.

This study's important policy recommendation is that CF is likely to benefit smallholders when measures are implemented to insulate poorer farmers from exploitative contracts. In light of possible reverse causality and self-selection into CF, we note that the CF-poverty reduction is likely due to the strong association with formalised contracts and input supplies. This suggests that vertical contracts provide inputs and possibly better know-how. They are also more likely to be formalised, reducing the chance of unfair agreements. The outcome is better welfare through poverty reduction. Those farmers at the lowest income levels are likely unable to enter into such contracts, and if they do, they enter at poorer terms than their better-resourced counterparts. This implies that policy room exists for the poorer farmers not to face big firms alone but through mediated forms of CF through government agencies that reduce exploitation and unfair exchange emanating from power imbalances.

Notes

1. In the Nigerian observations, the distribution of mobile phones per household is imprecise for all households with more than three mobile phones, as here all households with three or more mobile phones are grouped together. Nevertheless, in order to exclude outliers, we used the same threshold for outliers as in Côte d'Ivoire, because the data suggests a fairly similar distribution of mobile phones in both countries.
2. It is important to highlight that the index is constructed using assets from the CGAP dataset for consistency. This is partly a limitation in that the data does not have other important assets, such as access to own transport, and farming equipment, among others.
3. The following are classified as cash crops: avocado, cashew, cassava (a food crop in Nigeria), cloves, cocoa, coconut, coffee, cotton, groundnuts, hevea, jute, karite nuts, mango (a food crop in Tanzania), mustard, palm oil, peanut, pigeon pea, pyrethrum, rapeseed, rice (a food crop in Bangladesh), sesame, simsim, sisal, soybeans, sugarcane, sunflower, tea and tobacco. It should be noted that some crops can be both food and cash crops; this distinction is made based on the primary use of the crops in each country.

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Appendices

Table A1: Set of control variables

Variable	Type of Variable	Definition
Female-headed household	Dummy	Is the head of the household female?
Age of head of household	Continuous	Age of head of household.
Education of head of household	Dummy	Has the head of the household ever attended school?
Number of household members	Categorical	How many persons live in the household?
Acres of land owned by household	Continuous	How many acres of arable land is owned by the household?
Rural household	Dummy	Is the household rurally located or urban?

Source: CGAP datasets

Table A2: Is the main source of income a waged job? Income outliers and non-outliers

Main source of income is a waged job?	Frequency No outliers	Percentage No outliers	Frequency Outliers	Percentage Outliers
No	21,385	89.17	3,474	81.05
Yes	2,597	10.83	812	18.95
Total	23,982	100	4,286	100

Source: CGAP datasets

Table A3: Contract farming and multidimensional poverty (incl. outliers)

	Country Fe	Admin. Unit Fe	Cluster Fe
Contract	0.252	0.165***	0.153***
	(0.179)	(0.048)	(0.045)
Female-headed household	-0.056	-0.159***	-0.153***
	(0.095)	(0.036)	(0.035)
Age of household head	-0.000	-0.002*	-0.002**
	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Household head ever attended school (1/0)	0.435***	0.268***	0.239***
	(0.063)	(0.036)	(0.030)
No. of household members	-0.095*	-0.068***	-0.067***
	(0.039)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Land owned (ha) by household	0.014***	0.015***	0.015***
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Rural (1/0)	-0.492***	-0.525***	-1.009*
	(0.085)	(0.090)	(0.569)
Constant	3.820***	3.929***	4.381***
	(0.108)	(0.094)	(0.489)
Observations	14420	14420	14420

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses $^{*}p < 0.1,^{**}p < 0.05,^{***}p < 0.01$

Table A4: Contract farming and multidimensional poverty (excluding outliers and land owned as control[a])

	Country Fe	Admin. Unit Fe	Cluster Fe
Contract household (1/0)	0.274	0.217***	0.182***
	(0.164)	(0.070)	(0.066)
Female-headed household	-0.326**	-0.421***	-0.436***
	(0.095)	(0.059)	(0.053)
Age of household head	0.003	-0.000	-0.001
	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Household head ever attended school (1/0)	0.774***	0.545***	0.483***
	(0.112)	(0.052)	(0.043)
No. of household members	-0.211***	-0.186***	-0.185***
	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Rural (1/0)	-1.098***	-1.026***	-1.593*
	(0.153)	(0.125)	(0.831)
Constant	6.800***	6.929***	7.485***
	(0.240)	(0.126)	(0.714)
Observations	11914	11914	11914

Notes: [a] Land owned (ha) by household potentially stands in reverse causation with having a contract. Despite this, the relationship of interest holds.
Standard errors in parentheses: $^{*}p < 0.1,^{**}p < 0.05,^{***}p < 0.01$

Table A5: Formal contract farming and multidimensional poverty index

	Country Fe	Admin Fe	Cluster Fe
Formal contract	0.693*	0.603***	0.627***
	(3.09)	(5.09)	(5.38)
Female-headed household (1/0)	-0.304*	-0.404***	-0.413***
	(-3.59)	(-6.87)	(-7.78)
Age of household head	0.00209	-0.00128	-0.00184
	(0.50)	(-0.89)	(-1.31)
Household head ever attended school (1/0)	0.789***	0.549***	0.493***
	(7.35)	(10.51)	(11.41)
No. of household members	-0.222***	-0.198***	-0.197***
	(-14.69)	(-24.26)	(-24.25)
Land owned (ha) by household	0.0275***	0.0296***	0.0305***
	(8.99)	(8.19)	(8.45)
Rural (1/0)	-1.107***	-1.039***	-1.680*
	(-7.02)	(-8.17)	(-1.98)
Constant	6.839***	6.970***	7.574***
	(28.23)	(53.09)	(10.38)
Observations	11914	11914	11914

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses $^{*}\ p < 0.1,^{**}\ p < 0.05,^{***}\ p < 0.01$

Table A6: Formal contract farming and components of poverty index administrative unit FE

Country	Index[a]	Income	Expend.[b]	Phone	Water	Financ.[c]
All	0.603***	0.086**	0.047	0.090**	0.167***	0.255***
Bangladesh	-0.178	-0.032	-0.066	0.004	-0.016	0.121
Côte d'Ivoire	0.462	0.182	0.014	0.002	0.229	0.061
Mozambique	1.102***	0.248**	0.407**	0.104	0.517**	0.201***
Nigeria	0.667***	0.009	-0.085	-0.007	0.116	0.355***
Tanzania	0.676***	0.138***	0.055	0.190***	0.083	0.247***
Uganda	1.313***	0.150	0.239**	0.105	0.447***	0.343***
CLUSTER FE						
	Index[a]	**Income**	**Expend.[b]**	**Phone**	**Water**	**Financ.[c]**
All	0.627***	0.085***	0.043	0.084**	0.170***	0.272***
Bangladesh	0.107	0.024	-0.032	0.019	0.035	0.184**
Côte d'Ivoire	0.633	0.192	0.038	0.037	0.240	0.130
Mozambique	0.656*	0.077	0.280***	0.030	0.591***	0.269*
Nigeria	0.678***	0.010	-0.079	0.004	0.107	0.345***
Tanzania	0.715***	0.144**	0.072	0.196***	0.085	0.262***
Uganda	1.329***	0.179*	0.239**	0.097	0.375**	0.327***

Notes: [a] MPI; [b] Minimum daily expenditure needed; [c] Subjective financial wellbeing
Standard errors in parentheses: $^{*}\ p < 0.1,^{**}\ p < 0.05,^{***}\ p < 0.01$

Table A7: Contract farming and multidimensional poverty by gender of head of household

	Country		Admin		Cluster	
	Female	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**
All	0.52***	0.13***	0.58***	0.06**	0.32***	0.04*
Bangladesh	-0.48	0.03	0.34	0.00	1.88**	0.28***
Côte d'Ivoire	1.43***	-0.15***	1.89***	-0.22***	0.51*	-0.29***
Mozambique	1.07***	0.56***	1.19***	0.58***	2.14***	0.47***
Nigeria	-0.65***	0.48***	-0.29	0.49***	-0.34	0.45***
Tanzania	0.87***	-0.08	0.93***	-0.14**	0.52***	-0.14**
Uganda	0.22	0.46***	-0.34**	0.26***	-0.18	0.25***

Notes: * $p < 0.1$,** $p < 0.05$,*** $p < 0.01$

Table A8: CF and multidimensional poverty by cash vs food crop [a]

	Country		Admin		Cluster	
	Cash	**Food**	**Cash**	**Food**	**Cash**	**Food**
All	-0.12***	0.31***	-0.14***	0.26***	-0.21***	0.23***
Bangladesh	1.95***	-0.05	1.75***	-0.07	1.68***	0.22***
Côte d'Ivoire	-0.33***	0.46***	-0.30***	0.38***	-0.39***	0.11
Mozambique	0.18	0.69***	0.14	0.75***	0.43	0.59***
Nigeria	0.40***	0.45***	0.11	0.78***	0.03	0.78***
Tanzania	-0.01	0.17***	0.47***	0.09	0.43**	0.01
Uganda	0.37**	0.47***	0.36**	0.22***	0.39***	0.18***

Notes: [a] Households are categorised according to their most important crop

* $p < 0.1$,** $p < 0.05$,*** $p < 0.01$

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The Social Demands Behind the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis of 2016 and the Government's Response: Exploring the Origins of Post-colonial Conflicts in Africa

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Abstract

In 2016, some Anglophone civil society organisations and university students in Cameroon began to protest peacefully against the dominance of the French language and the Francophone system in English schools and courts. The protest was the culmination of over fifty years of frustration among those who accused the Francophone-dominated government of undermining Anglophone identity in a bicultural country that had, at independence, been a union between former British Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon. This paper posits that the Anglophone conflict is rooted both in the legacy of European colonisation in Africa and the flawed policies of the Ahidjo and Biya regimes. Both regimes manifested apparent blindness to the cherished colonial identity of Anglophones and violated protective provisions of the Federal Constitution that established the union. Although colonialism created an Anglophone minority, successive Francophone-led administrations neglected Cameroon's biculturalism and bijuralism, leading to Anglophone marginalisation, disillusion, and protests. Current government attempts to resolve the conflict are flawed because they do not address the root structural causes of the conflict.

Keywords: Colonialism, language, marginalisation, secession, protest, armed conflict, Cameroon

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Résumé

En 2016, des organisations de la société civile et des étudiants anglophones du Cameroun ont commencé à manifester pacifiquement contre la prédominance de la langue française et du système francophone dans les écoles et les tribunaux anglais. Cette manifestation marquait l'aboutissement de plus de cinquante ans de frustration de ceux qui accusent le gouvernement, dominé par les francophones, de saper l'identité anglophone dans un pays biculturel qui, à l'indépendance, était une union entre l'ancien Cameroun méridional britannique et la République du Cameroun. Cet article postule que le conflit anglophone trouve ses racines à la fois dans l'héritage de la colonisation européenne en Afrique et dans les politiques défaillantes des régimes Ahidjo et Biya. Ces deux régimes ont fait preuve d'un aveuglement manifeste à l'identité coloniale chère aux anglophones et ont violé les dispositions de la Constitution fédérale qui a instauré l'Union. Une minorité anglophone est le résultat du colonialisme, mais les administrations francophones successives ont négligé le biculturalisme et le bijuridisme du Cameroun, entraînant marginalisation, désillusion et protestations des anglophones. Les tentatives actuelles du gouvernement de résoudre le conflit sont défaillantes, car elles ne s'attaquent pas aux causes structurelles profondes du conflit.

Mots-clés : Colonialisme ; langue ; marginalisation ; sécession ; manifestations ; conflit armé ; Cameroun.

Introduction and Context

Several global and continental attempts including poverty alleviation programmes from Africa's Western partners and the continent's 'silencing of the gun' initiatives, have been pursued as ways of dealing with incessant conflicts in Africa. However, the results have been dismal. The numbers of conflicts across the continent is growing. This is partly because some of the programmes to silence the guns on the continent are both shallow and ill-conceived, focusing on the symptoms of a problem largely rooted in Africa's colonial past. Whether in Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or Cameroon, sustainable peace will require national and continental leaders to confront some of the ugly historical facts with honesty and seriousness, and to carry out the potentially painful redress measures that are required for true healing to follow.

The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon is an example of an African conflict whose origin and solutions must come from historical analysis of the root causes. Unfortunately, this reality has been sidelined by national authorities who misconstrue the origin of the conflict as a social matter, and

prefer to adopt a social focus on 'convenience' measures that have proven their inadequacies over the years. In so doing, successive administrations have squandered numerous opportunities to address structural deficiencies created by the post-World War II international relations environment, which resulted in the establishment of Cameroon with a federal structure of government that was never given enough time to be tested.

Key causes of the conflict are the greed and arrogance of some Francophone leaders who, for the longest time, underestimated the drive and resolve of their oppressed Anglophone brothers to stand up against injustice. On 12 October 2016, a peaceful protest by lawyers, teachers and university students in the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, challenging the use of the French language and system in Anglophone schools and courts soon spiralled into uncontrollable violence that has plagued the country and derailed development in both French- and English-speaking parts of the country for about seven years. At the time of writing, no resolution was yet in sight.

The 2016 protest was the culmination of more than five decades of frustration felt by many Anglophone Cameroonians who accused the nation's two post-colonial presidents, Ahmadou Ahidjo (1959 to 1982) and Paul Biya (1982 to the present time), of well-orchestrated policies that had led to the marginalisation of the minority Anglophone Cameroonians, economic deprivation in the Northwest and Southwest regions, and the devaluation of Anglophone identity (Campbell 2018; Eyoh 1998; Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997, 2004, Konings and Nyamnjoh 2000). By early 2017, what started as a call for socio-political reforms had evolved into demands for secession and the establishment of an independent 'Ambazonia republic' among some Anglophone Cameroonians (O'Grady and Lee 2019). The evolution of the peaceful protest into armed conflict has resulted in the displacement and deaths of thousands of Cameroonians at the hands of government security forces, non-state armed groups (NSAGs) or Ambazonia fighters, also known as Amba boys,[1] and rogue elements who have taken advantage of the resulting chaos and lawlessness to extract revenge for personal grievances. Not only has this rendered life and movements within the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon challenging and dangerous because of the activities and harassment from government security forces, Ambazonia armed groups or rogue elements (Amin 2018; Bone 2021), it has also devastated the local economy.

The above narrative is indicative of how most African governments have failed to quickly and effectively address issues that have an impact on a critical group or sector of its population, which could destroy the

political and socio-economic fabric of a nation. While a lot of the recent scholarship on the Anglophone conflict has focused on the human cost and other tragedies of the conflict (Amin 2021; Willis et al. 2019; Pommerolle and De Marie Heungoup 2017; Bang and Balgah 2022), this paper emphasises its historical origins and the Biya regime's inability to resolve the crisis. It argues that: (1) the genesis of the crisis can be traced to Cameroon's colonial history and the errors and ambiguities of the 1961 Federal Constitution that was intended to create a union of the former German Kamerun and undertake a unique experiment in nation-building in post-colonial Africa (Kofele-Kale 1980); and (2) the escalation of the conflict is the result of a leadership that has abdicated responsibility for dealing with the real problems.

To make the discussion systematic, the paper is divided into four sections. The first section uses examples from other African countries to frame the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon in a broader context of ethnicity, dismemberment, suffocation, and other challenges that Africans inherited from colonisation. It is followed by a brief narrative of the colonial history of Cameroon, which started as a union of the former British Southern Cameroons and the French Republic of Cameroun under a Federal Constitution. This is the root of the problem. Section three examines how both Ahidjo and his successor Biya exploited the vagueness of the Cameroon Federal Constitution to dismantle the architecture of what was supposed to be a union of equal partners, creating conditions for Anglophone marginalisation and the resulting grievances and disenchantment. We examine in the final section how this disillusion escalated into violence in 2016, and some of the dismal government responses to the conflict.

Methodology

This study deals with both historical and current issues and involves multiple actors and stakeholders operating from within the Anglophone regions, in Cameroon as a whole, and from the Cameroonian diaspora. To address this complexity, and to avoid bias and other shortcomings, we opted for triangulation, which allow us to use a combination of research methods to gather information. Several historical works, especially those of Albert Mukong and Piet Konings, who have written extensively on the 'Anglophone problem', were reviewed. These and other works of scholarship on European colonisation in Africa allowed us to appreciate the historical context of the Anglophone problem in Cameroon alongside other, similar, experiences on the continent.

This was followed by a review of local newspapers, and other academic and grey literature to understand the failure of the Cameroon federation and the widening of Anglophone dissatisfaction. This information provided the framework to extensively interrogate news reports from traditional, local, international (audio, visual and print) and social media, following the October 2016 outbreak of the crisis and its evolution into a civil conflict. Information gathered from both traditional and social media has been instrumental in analysing the Cameroon government's response to the crisis and reactions from Anglophone activists and NSAGs.

Finally, in-depth phone interviews with some self-exiled Anglophone lawyers who were present at the beginning of the 2016 demonstration, as well as other self-proclaimed leaders in the diaspora who had been identified from our preliminary analysis. The objective of these interviews was to corroborate or refute information and perceptions of Anglophone reactions to the Cameroon government's efforts to defuse the crisis, gathered from traditional and social media. We have been able to discuss the results from these interviews alongside the Cameroon government's policies and institutional responses to explain what is missing in government efforts to address the Anglophone problems and meet the aspirations of most Anglophones.

The Legacy of European Colonialism in Africa

African states are largely a product of European colonialisation when, following the 1884 Berlin Conference, European powers partitioned Africa and divided it among themselves, creating colonies that had little regard to kinship, ethnicity, or other sociological or anthropological considerations. This meant that specific ethnic and cultural identities of Africans were sacrificed for European economic and political interests. This situation was further complicated at the end of World War I, when the German colonies were divided among the Allied powers. German-ceded territories like Cameroon became known as League of Nations-mandated territories after World War I and as United Nations trust territories after World War II.

At the end of nearly a century of colonial rule, African states emerged, weakened by ethnic fragmentation and tensions, divided by many different local languages, and further segmented by the influence of foreign religions – Islam and Christianity. Although national unity was the political slogan of almost every post-colonial administration, the quest for ethnic identity has prevailed as one of the forces fuelling civil conflicts in post-independence Africa. To put it differently, civil conflicts in Africa are part of the legacies of the Berlin Conference and European colonialisation of the continent. Ethnic identity politics manifesting as civil conflicts in Africa are proof

of the extent of the damage caused by the Berlin Conference and the shortsightedness of post-independent African countries wanting to maintain boundaries imposed by the colonialists. The Berlin Conference created African states with ethnic minorities and majorities within their borders which, in addition to several other ethnic differences, were important sources of ongoing conflict (Bates 1990).

The analysis by Englebert et al. (2002) of how groups that existed before the colonial era were partitioned ('dismembered') and forced to live together with other groups of distinct political cultures to form a state ('suffocated') shows how this set of circumstances can only increase the likelihood of civil wars, secession struggles, and political instability, as can be seen in the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon.

As Boyd (1979) has noted, post-colonial African states inherited artificial boundaries that grouped different ethnicities in one state, making those states susceptible to socio-economic and political instability. These boundaries, according to Ajala (1983), are the origin of multiple conflicts. States without nations were created from the European partition of Africa as has been admitted by some African statespersons like the veteran Nigerian politician, Obafemi Awolowo who contended in 1947 that Nigeria was 'a mere geographic expression' and not a nation (Young 1999) because colonial-inherited arbitrary boundaries neglect ethnic and cultural identities, and in some cases, even kinship ties. Maiese (2003) believes that self-esteem and [ethnic] identity are not only intricately linked to each other, but they also establish how one views the world. Any threat to this identity is likely to produce a strong, aggressive, or defensive response, leading to conflict. When groups believe that 'their sense of self-esteem is threatened, or denied legitimacy and respect', this creates conflict. This can become ugly when identity conflicts are linked to national sentiments that could create a national superiority complex and eventual domination by one group over other groups, as has been seen in civil conflicts throughout Africa.

The decision by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to advocate for maintaining the artificial colonial boundaries of the continent unchanged has been costly in countries such as Cameroon, Rwanda, Sudan, and Nigeria. The Nigerian civil war of 1967 is an example of a nationalistic resistance to the ethnic secession declaration of the Republic of Biafra by the Igbo ethnic group of the Southwest who did not have a sense of national belonging and security in the Federation of Nigeria (Norwich University n.d.). Scholars, including Boyd (1979) and Paine (2019), posit that Africa would have experienced fewer conflicts if the colonialists had allowed African states to evolve organically with boundaries that recognised ethnic contours.

Blanton et al. (2001) support this argument, submitting that not only did the system of colonial rule create fertile grounds for competition and conflict in post-colonial Africa, but that conflict is one of the legacies of the system of indirect rule implemented in British colonies. The British colonial policy of 'divide and rule' created administrative units along ethnic lines and laid the foundation for many post-independence conflicts as seen in the deadly 2007–2008 post-electoral violence in Kenya that claimed about 1,300 lives and displaced 350,000 people (Mwaura 2010). The fact is that ethnic competition sometimes produced leaders who are ready to exclude people from other ethnic groups to protect their power (Paine 2019). This may work only for a short period because politically excluded groups are more likely to fight back against political marginalisation, giving rise to instability (Wucherpfennig et al. 2016), as seen in cases such as Cameroon or apartheid-era South Africa.

From the foregoing, we argue in this paper that the ethnicisation of political power (Paine 2019) creates a dilemma for the dominant group about whether to advocate for ethnic inclusion or exclusion to protect power in post-independence Cameroon. Excluding other ethnic groups completely may risk disenchantment and rebellion from those excluded, and this may bring about the overthrow of the ruling group by the excluded group. Including other ethnic groups may work well for a while, but it may also create conditions where the dominant group's hold on power is lost to people from other groups who have been included in the power structure.

Although Anglophones in Cameroon do not constitute an ethnic group, they form a minority with a distinct cultural identity that differs from that of the Francophone majority. Paine's (2019) words about the dilemma of whether it is better for the dominant group to include others or exclude them are relevant here. While a small group of Anglophones have been coopted into power, the Francophone-dominated government is 'unwilling' to allow them to lead powerful ministries like defence, the interior, finance, or foreign affairs, from where it is feared they could 'overthrow' the regime from within. Many Anglophones who have been excluded from political and economic power are asserting their identity and rights as Cameroonians through protests. The lack of immediate answers from the government serves to fuel the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon. This has led to the call by some Anglophones for secession – the establishment of a separate state for people with their specific colonial cultural identity. This is in accordance with the belief of Sambanis (2001) that the solution to ethnic conflicts in Africa is the physical separation of warring parties along ethnic lines.

Anglophone Conflict and Identity Struggles in Africa

Anglophones, particularly activists, draw a parallel between the current conflict in Cameroon and other similar situations on the African continent. For example, they cite the case of how the failure of the apartheid state in South Africa to establish a fair and equitable non-racial society contributed to decades of violence that ultimately led to the collapse of white minority rule in 1994. A similar argument pertains to the failure of the dominant Americo-Liberian ruling elite to include Indigenous people in the government. Failure to address many of the concerns of Indigenous people brought about the rise to power of Sergeant Samuel Doe, the first Indigenous President of Liberia. Doe's ruthless rule ultimately led to the first Liberian civil war (1989–1997) and the deaths of thousands (Conteh-Morgan and Kadivar 1995; Hogan 2021). Anglophones also point to the situation in the former Sudan where decades of struggle by southern Sudan against exploitation and domination by the predominantly Muslim government in the north (Deng 2005) culminated in the independence of South Sudan in 2011.

Other examples that can be traced back to the European colonisation of Africa include the Eritrean Liberation Front's struggle against Ethiopia (1961–1991), the Lord's Resistance Army war against the Ugandan government (1987), the civil war in Somalia (1991), the Rwanda genocide (1994), and the establishment of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

The birth of the Cameroon nation as the root the Anglophone conflict

The defeat of Germany during World War I brought an end to that country's occupation of Kamerun. The territory was shared between France and Britain. France received four-fifths of the territory (French Cameroun), and Britain the balance in the form of Southern British Cameroons and Northern British Cameroons along the western border with Nigeria. Although these territories were administered under League of Nations mandates and later as United Nations trust territories for nearly four decades, France administered French Cameroun under a highly centralised structure as it did in its other colonies on the continent. By contrast, Britain administered its portion as an integral part of its Nigeria colony, a system that continued until 1954, when Southern Cameroons was recognised as a separate entity within Nigeria (Rubin 1971: 80). France ultimately granted the former UN trusteeship independence on 1 January 1960 as the Republic of Cameroon. However, when it granted

Cameroon independence, France supported Ahmadou Ahidjo, leader of the Union Camerounaise, because he was seen as malleable and likely to protect France's interests (Johnson 2015; Rubin 1971).

Unlike in the former French trust territory, where the challenge at independence was more about the nature of post-independence Franco-Cameroon relations, citizens in the British Southern Cameroons, like their counterparts in the British Northern Cameroons, were not granted the option of self-determination and independence. In fact, despite petitions and visits from representatives of British Southern Cameroons to London and the United Nations demanding independence, both the United Nations and the British Colonial Office objected to the request on the basis that an independent Southern Cameroons could not be a viable economic entity since Britain was reluctant to provide continued financial support after independence (Phillipson 1959; l 2019). Moreover, during the mandate, Britain believed that both the Northern and Southern British Cameroons should move toward eventual integration with Nigeria (Le Vine 1964: 200). In a UN-organised plebiscite held on 11 February 1961, British Southern Cameroonians voted overwhelmingly (235,571 to 97,741) in favour of joining the Republic of Cameroon, while the British Northern Cameroons voted to join the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Stevenson 1964).

A Federal Constitution was later negotiated in July in the town of Foumban in the Republic of Cameroon to establish the relationship between the Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon. This constitution created two federal states of East and West Cameroon, replacing the former Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons, respectively, represented on the national flag by two stars. Although the Federal Constitution granted the Francophone-controlled federal government and President broad powers and jurisdiction over all important state institutions, including defence, the economy, foreign policy, higher education, and the judiciary, each of the federated states operated its own legislative, executive and judicial institutions according to its respective colonial heritage. The Federal Constitution protected the rights of Anglophone minorities as evidenced in Article 47, which considered any proposed constitutional modifications that would touch on the federal nature of the state to be inadmissible.

Nevertheless, President Ahidjo (1959–1982) exploited the weaknesses in the federal Constitution to buttress his power by introducing policies that would gradually erode Anglophone socio-economic and political culture. Similarly, his successor, President Biya (1982–present) continued to undermine and marginalise Anglophones, culminating in the current

Anglophone conflict. We examine below some of the key decisions and policies that ultimately precipitated the crisis in the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions.

Ahidjo ended the multiparty politics enjoyed in Anglophone West Cameroon by outlawing multipartyism and establishing the Cameroon National Union (CNU) as the only party in Cameroon in 1966. In 1972, Ahidjo abolished the federation in favour of a unitary state (United Republic of Cameroon) in gross violation of Part X Article 47:1 of the federal Constitution, which states that 'Any proposal for the revision of the present Constitution which impairs the unity and integrity of the federation shall be inadmissible'.

Bayart (1978: 89) posits that:

> The 1972 Unitary Constitution can therefore be seen as the logical crowning of the twin process of harmonizing the administration of the two federal states and the maximizing of presidential power. Western (West) Cameroon autonomy, especially in matters of legislation and political institutions, was now a dead letter, and the authority of the Head of State extended to every corner of the country.

Biya changed the name of the country in 1984 from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon and replaced the two stars on the flag that symbolised the two federated states with a single star. The change in name was seen as the proverbial slap in the face and the last step in the assimilation of Anglophone culture since the new name (Republic of Cameroon) harkened back to the name of the former French territory when it gained its independence on 1 January 1960.

Beyond the political machinations that effectively deprived the former British Southern Cameroons of its Anglophone institutions, both the Ahidjo and Biya administrations also instituted other policies that led to the demise of many West Cameroon economic institutions, including the collapse of the Cameroon Bank, West Cameroon Marketing Board, Tiko Airport and Victoria and Tiko Seaports. This made West Cameroon a less economically viable entity that was more dependent on the former French territory (Amin and Takougang 2018).

While these changes might have caused some opposition and resistance among the Anglophone population in the 1970s and 1980s (Mukong 1985; 1992; Pommerolle and De Marie Hungoup 2017), it was not until the early 1990s that resistance gathered steam with the establishment of the Anglophone-led Social Democratic Front (SDF) during the pro-democracy movements that swept the country and Africa more generally (Krieger 1994, Takougang, 2019). The birth of the SDF in May 1990 and subsequent

political liberalisation created space for other movements and organisations, including the All Anglophone Movement (AAM), the Free West Cameroon Movement, the Southern Cameroons Restoration Movement, the Cameroon Anglophone Movement, the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) and the Southern Cameroons People's Conference (SCPC). These organisations promoted the Anglophone struggle, which ultimately crystallised the crisis that has plagued the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions since October 2016.

The 2016 Anglophone crisis

As noted above, Anglophones protesting injustices and oppressions in Cameroon is not new. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Anglophones resisted government attempts to privatise the giant Cameroon Development Corporation based in the region, and to harmonise the General Certificate of Education (GCE) exam with the Francophone examination system. They also fought to establish the Cameroon GCE Board and the first English university – the University of Buea. But rarely have any of their struggles involved arms and huge domestic and diaspora adherents, like what began in 2016.

On 12 October 2016, Anglophone reaction to the union and Francophone-led dominated government took an unimaginable turn. Anglophone lawyers and teachers rose against the devaluation of the English judicial and educational sub-systems in Cameroon through the 'Francophonization' of courts[2] and schools. They argued that the appointment of Francophones who barely spoke the English language to Anglophone courts and schools not only undermined the administration of justice in the courts, but was intended to destroy the Anglophone educational system, especially considering that bilingualism in Cameroon had become a farce. Indeed, to coordinate their efforts against the marginalisation of the Anglophones, the teachers and lawyers established the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) in 2016, commonly referred to as the Consortium. The Consortium's demands included an end to Anglophone marginalisation, the recognition and respect of the distinct bijural and bicultural nature of Cameroon's legal and education systems, and a return to the 1961 two-state federation.[3]

The Consortium and its leadership became the face of Anglophone resistance. It was led by Barrister Agbor Balla representing the lawyers, Dr Neba Fontem (Secretary-General) representing universities and other higher institutions, and Wilfred Tassang (Program Coordinator), from the secondary educational sector. This broad and inclusive leadership

enabled the Consortium to easily gain momentum, convince Anglophones to support its cause, and secure their support for strikes, lockdowns and school boycotts. These actions that were intended to pressure the Cameroon government into addressing the demands of the people of the Anglophone regions subsequently turned deadly.

It is estimated that, by 2020, 900,000 people in the Northwest and Southwest regions had been rendered homeless by the crisis, while another 60,000 had fled to neighbouring Nigeria. Over 600,000 children were unable to attend school on a regular basis during the same period (Craig 2020). In 2018, the conflict had led to 1.5 million people needing assistance (Lamarche and Fox 2021: 4). The threat from both the government forces and Ambazonia militias in the region increased. Travelling to the region became high risk for many Anglophones in the diaspora and those living in Francophone regions. Many activities, including wedding and funeral celebrations in the region often carried out by Anglophone Cameroonians in the diaspora, are increasingly becoming things of the past (Amin 2018).

Because of the human rights abuses and lack of security in Anglophone regions, there have been mixed reactions from Cameroon's international partners. In late October 2019, US President Donald Trump announced the exclusion of Cameroon from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). This Clinton-era policy was intended to increase Africa's economic engagement with the United States from 1 January 2020 (United States Department of State, 2019, Paquette, D., 2019). Cross-cultural academic exchange visits between some American and Cameroonian universities in the Anglophone regions were discontinued (Amin 2018). Meanwhile, on 15 April 2022, the administration of US President Joe Biden granted an 18-month temporary protected status (TPS) to more than 40,000 Cameroonians who were in the United States by 14 April 2022 because of the armed conflict and extreme violence in the Cameroon perpetrated by government forces, armed separatists, and Boko Haram (Sacchetti 2022).

The Cameroon Government's Failed Response to the Anglophone Conflict

Despite the human costs and other negative impacts of the Anglophone conflict on the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions (United States Department of State, 2022; HRW, 2022), the Cameroon government has been unable to take effective action to mitigate the crisis. In this section, we discuss how the government's failure to persuade Anglophone activists to discontinue their peaceful resistance led to numerous administrative blunders, which eventually transfromed the crisis into an armed conflict.

Some of these costly mistakes include outlawing the Consortium and arresting its leaders, shutting down the internet in the Anglophone regions, creating common law departments in Francophone universities, and the unilateral move to organise the Major National Dialogue without securing effective Anglophone participation.

The ban on the Consortium and the arrest of its leaders

Initially, rather than take Anglophone demands seriously, the government, as was customary, tried to ignore and downplay the seriousness of the Consortium's demands and its ability to mobilise the masses. It rejected the existence of 'an Anglophone problem', delegitimised the leaders of the Consortium, and used security forces to intimidate Anglophone groups who supported the course and activities of the Consortium. The government also used media propaganda to try to neutralise broad Anglophone support for the Consortium without success. Meanwhile, the Consortium organised strikes and lockdown actions that stopped the activities of schools, courts, and the economy in the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions for weeks. The situation forced the government to enter talks with the Consortium leaders in the main Northwest town of Bamenda. However, to neutralise the influence of the Consortium during the talks, the government deliberately broadened the number of participants to include pro-government Anglophone syndicates that had never been involved in the strikes and protests.

There is little evidence to support the idea that the government had any interest in addressing the grievances put forward by the Consortium; it simply wanted to minimise the impact of the strikes and protests and restore normal life in the Anglophone regions. Nevertheless, the government made several short-term concessions but rejected any discussions on the core question of returning to the federal system established under the Federal Constitution. It argued that federalism was political and outside the scope of demands by the lawyers and teachers. The Consortium remained adamant about its demands and tried to extend the strike action to Anglophone primary and nursery schools in the Francophone regions.[4] The Consortium rejected government sentiments and argued that a return to a two-state federation was a precondition to guarantee that government concessions made in Bamenda would be honoured (WCA Association 2016).

On 17 January 2017, the Cameroon Minister for Territorial Administration banned the Consortium and arrested some of its leaders. Other leaders fled into exile. Barrister Bobga, President of the Northwest Lawyers' Association at the time argued that:

> The Cameroon Government had thought that by arresting and mistreating the leadership of the revolution they would psychologically torture the rest of the 'colonized' out of their revolutionary project.[5]

It was this government action that moved the conflict from peaceful protests and strikes by lawyers and teachers to the bloody conflict that has claimed the lives of over 4,000 Anglophones and government force members (HRW 2022).

Shutdown of the internet

Following these actions against the Consortium, President Biya created the National Commission on the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism by Decree No. 2017/13 of January 23, 2017 to resolve the Anglophone crisis. Rather than pacifying Anglophone leaders, the decision angered many who believed the government was trying to reduce their problem to a simple language issue; as a result, they intensified the lockdowns and school boycotts. Anglophone leaders who escaped had regrouped under the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia *Consortium* United Front (SCACUF) (Nna-Emeka Okereke 2018) and continued to lead the protest from Nigeria, which was considered safe at the time.

With the leadership of the Consortium having been dispersed, and with the media in Cameroon having been heavily censored, the social media became an important tool for mobilisation, protests, demonstrations, activism, and reporting about human rights abuses and other activities associated with 'the Anglophone struggle', as it had become known to sympathisers throughout the country and in the diaspora. There were live and regular Facebook broadcasts and posts on the progress and setbacks of the struggle, which were followed by many people, including Francophone sympathisers. Many Anglophones organised themselves into WhatsApp and Facebook groups and were very active on Twitter, which facilitated the flow of information. Anglophone activists seemed to be winning the propaganda war, despite government control of the traditional media.

Rather than addressing the masses by providing alternative and convincing information about government responses to the plight of the Anglophones and the deteriorating human rights situation in the Anglophone areas, the government saw the internet as the problem. Cavaye Djibril, President of the Cameroon National Assembly described the social media as 'a new form of terrorism' ('*cette nouvelle forme de terrorisme, toute aussi insidieuse*') (Dahir 2016). Cameroon's Communication Minister argued that the internet was used for the '… propagation of false information on social media capable of inciting hate and violence in the crisis-hit regions…' (Mukeredzi 2017).

Similarly, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication warned internet subscribers of the risk of jail terms of up to six months and fines for sharing false information (Nchewnang-Ngassa 2017). Finally, in January 2017, the government shut down internet access in the two Anglophone regions.

The internet shutdown was a total debacle in the government's attempt to defeat the Anglophone struggle. Not only did it have a negative impact on businesses, banks, and the economies of the two regions, but it also generated anger among Anglophones who had previously been unaware of the protests but were now eager to join in. Anglophone activists in the diaspora portrayed the shutdown as another example of discrimination and marginalisation by the Francophone-dominated government that was depriving Anglophones of internet access while the Francophone regions had regular access. As the deputy spokesperson for the Ambazonia Defense Force (ADF) noted: '…it further showed how Anglophones have suffered from marginalization over the years, as it was only in their areas where internet was shut down…'.[6]

The decision to shut down the internet was criticised by prominent Anglophones, including former Transparency International President Barrister Akere Muna, Kah Walla, leader of the Cameroon People's Party (CPP), and civil society and international organisations, which joined the '#Bring back our internet' hashtag campaign. Indeed, Anglophones used the internet blackout as a recruiting tool and a way of mobilising international sympathy. One wonders how much thought the regime might have put in before taking this action. It is worth noting that in 2016 the United Nations declared the internet a basic human right. Cameroon was not the only African country where the internet was shut down at this time to stifle the voices of opposition politicians and activists using social media to advocate for change. The BBC reported that during the same period, Ethiopia, Morocco, Uganda, Gabon, and the Gambia shut down the internet for similar reasons (BBC 2017).

Establishment of common law departments in Francophone universities

Another effort by the government to mitigate the crisis occurred on 21 April 2017 when it created departments of French law at the two Anglophone universities in Buea and Bamenda, and departments of common law in Francophone universities of Douala, Dschang, Maroua and Ngaoundere (Bainkong 2018). Following their establishment, Jacques Fame Ndongo, Minister for Higher Education and other progovernment supporters hailed the measure, in part, as recognition of the double heritage that characterises

Cameroon's constitutional and administrative history. Others saw in the creation of Common law departments in Francophone universities as an opportunity for Francophone lawyers and officials who are often assigned to Anglophone regions to study the Common Law (Caxton 2017).

One could only wonder why these institutions were created at this time or why it took denials, strikes, and protests for the administration to realise the importance of their institutions to nation building, considering that Cameroon's political and constitutional history is characterised by a double heritage. Some Anglophone activists rejected any claim that this measure had a positive impact on the crisis. Rather than being perceived as a positive move, it only confirmed to Anglophones that the French language was being brought more closely into 'their' English universities.[7] A law professor at the University of Buea who wanted to remain anonymous expressed the view that the establishment of common law departments in Francophone universities was irrelevant, noting that the cause of the crisis was not the paucity of common law departments.[8] In fact, the crisis was caused by a lack of respect for available common law *practices*.

Organisation of the Major National Dialogue

After three years of unresolved bloody conflict that claimed the lives of several civilians and military officers in the Anglophone regions (ICG n.d.), Biya's government convened what it called the Major National Dialogue from 30 September to 4 October 2019, chaired by Prime Minister John Ngute (Report of the Rapporteur General of the Major National Dialogue). In the absence of genuine and inclusive pre-conference consultations and consensus to determine the modalities of participation and the agenda of the meeting, the Biya government arrogated to itself the sole power to determine the nature and agenda of the conference.

In the end, the Major National Dialogue was yet another failed attempt to resolve the conflict due to the government's bad intentions (Munzu 2021). Ambazonian groups advocating for secession and other Anglophone leaders refused to attend the meeting because they were not involved in its planning. They further argued that, due to the lack of safety in Cameroon, and to establish trust, such a dialogue should take place in a foreign country with neutral mediators, a demand that the government rejected. Some opposition parties and leaders like Maurice Kamto of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM) and Kah Walla (CPP) boycotted the conference, describing it as a monologue of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) (the ruling party), which lacked inclusion and which was characterised by the organisers' lack of good faith.

Although the SDF (the main Anglophone political party) and other prominent Anglophones like Barrister Akere Muna agreed to participate, some eventually walked out of the proceedings when they realised that it was simply a 'staged CPDM event'. The largely CPDM-dominated conference recommended, among other things, the granting of a special status to the Anglophone regions, the establishment of the House of Chiefs and Regional Councils, and the implementation of a decentralisation process.[9]

The government's failure to address the Anglophone question was evident. Describing the outcome of the conference to the Africanews agency, three Anglophone activists, including Justice Ayah Paul, indicated that 'only negotiation between the two sides can put an end to the war'. On the 'Special Status' matter, Ebenezer Akwanga, leader of the armed wing of the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces, noted that '…the inhabitants of Ambazonia do not need a special status. We are not part of Cameroon'. Similarly, Chris Anu, then spokesperson of the self-declared Ambazonian Interim Government (IG), asked whether the government had granted both regions 'special status' because it thought that they were handicapped, noting that the focus of any discussion should be nothing less than total independence for the people of the Southern Cameroons (Africanews 2019).

It was clear before the conference that the Major National Dialogue would not be able to address the Anglophone conflict. Firstly, there were more Francophone than Anglophone participants. How could one explain the fact that the representatives of the aggrieved party for whom the meeting was called were outnumbered by those who did not have a problem? Secondly, a discussion on the nature of the state or the Federal Constitution arrangement, which was the central question raised by the lawyers and teachers in 2016, was excluded from the agenda. So, what was the Major National Dialogue about, and which problem was the conference discussing? Finally, if the Ambazonian self-proclaimed leaders and armed groups fighting for separation against the government and military of Cameroon did participate part in the dialogue, who was the government dialoguing with at the conference, and on what topics?

Continental implications

The Cameroon Anglophone conflict is just one of a number of current internal conflicts in Africa. It has been fuelled by an error in the British decolonisation process in 1961, which refused to grant independence to Anglophones in Cameroon. A few examples of serious historical internal conflicts in Africa are discussed below.

The attempt of the Igbos of southeastern Nigeria to secede into a country called Biafra in 1967 cost the lives of over two million civilians (Curtis 2020). Originally colonised by Italy in 1890, the British defeated and ousted the Italians from Eritrea in 1941 during World War II. Rather than achieve self-government like other former colonies in the Horn of Africa, the British wanted Eritrea to be partitioned along religious lines and given to Sudan and Ethiopia (Embassy of the State of Eritrea). United Nations Resolution 390 A (V) compelled Eritrea to form a federation with Ethiopia in 1950 (Haile 1987). The complete annexation of Eritrea in 1962 by Ethiopia triggered a 30-year war between the Ethiopian forces and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) that eventually led to the independence of Eritrea after a UN-supervised referendum in 1993 (Parmalee 1993). The Cameroon government and the international community cannot afford to let Southern Cameroon follow the same route to independence.

In fact, the Anglophone pro-independence struggle in Cameroon is not dissimilar to that of Somalia, which was also nurtured by ethnic tensions and the end of a strong federation after 30 years of dictatorship. Like Cameroon, the concept of a Somalian nation is a colonial invention, following the unification of the former British colony of Somaliland (1884) and Italian Somalia (1889), which achieved independence in July 1960 as the Somali Republic. Some scholars (e.g. Mudane 2018 and Lewis 1988) have argued that not only were some Somali clans 'lost' in the original colonial borders between Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya, but the unification of the British and Italian colonies to create the new country also neglected the long-standing colonial notion of traditional clan identity. This has led to the instability still plaguing Somalia.

The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon is also characterised by the kinds of atrocities (massive killings and displacements, kidnapping of civilians, and to some extent the use of child soldiers) that were seen in other African armed conflicts like that of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) of Joseph Kony against the government of Uganda (Rice 2007). While Anglophone armed groups are seeking the restoration of the former British Cameroons, the LRA partly arose from ethnic grievances born out of colonialism, that is, the LRA wants the restoration of power to the Acholi people (Counter Terrorism Guide n.d.). Although there are fundamental religious disagreements between the LRA and the Museveni regime in Uganda, the LRA believes Museveni's rise to power brought an end to the post-colonial rotation of power between Milton Obote's northeast and Idi Amin's southwest, an arrangement it wants restored. This can be compared to the Anglophones' clamour for the restoration of the 1961 two-state federation in Cameroon.

Unlike other conflicts in Africa, the 2016 Cameroon Anglophone crisis is not a result of miscommunication, but rather of a lack of action from the government. It is an example of what happens when the governing class does not listen to the people they govern, when the majority despises a minority. In fact, despite persistent complaints from Anglophones against 'marginalisation' following the dissolution of the federation and the creation of the unitary state in 1972 (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997; Bayart 1978), the government has failed to address the 'Anglophone problem'. Instead the Anglophones have been vilified as 'enemies in the house',[10] galling even moderate Anglophone leaders.

In his letter of resignation from the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement on 9 June 1990, John Foncha, former Prime Minister of Southern Cameroon who led Anglophones into the union with Francophones on 1 October 1916, expressed his disappointment with the current state of affairs. He noted that instead of addressing the real grievances of the Anglophones, the authorities ridiculed them and referred to them as 'enemies in the house', 'traitors', and 'Biafrans'[11] (Konings and Nyamnjo 1997; Kah 2019). Similar declarations and memoranda about the 'Anglophone problem' in Cameroon from Anglophone elites and politicians during the pro-democracy movement in the early 1990s were also met with government inaction (Takougang and Krieger 1998).

From the foregoing, the proliferation of civil conflicts in Africa suggests a common diagnosis and treatment that may differ slightly across different geographies and local contexts. The African Union, like any serious continental body, should play a crucial mediation role if a peaceful Africa is to be one of its top priorities. We are by no means predicting that the Anglophone conflict will evolve into a protracted and costly war with huge human and economic losses; hopefully that does not become the case. The examples we cite above are intended to emphasise the need for urgent negotiations by both sides and acceptable compromises to achieve peace in Cameroon.

Conclusion

Few experts on Cameroon's post-colonial political history could have predicted that a protest by lawyers, teachers, and students in the Anglophone regions in October 2016 would lead to a prolonged conflict that has disrupted normal life and negatively impacted the economy of both the Anglophone and the Francophone parts of the country for over seven years.

This represents a more significant attempt by aggrieved Anglophones than Cameroon has ever seen. Not surprisingly, the government's initial response was dismissive, hoping that the protests would fizzle out just as past challenges to the Biya's administration had done, especially since the pro-democracy movement in the 1990s collapsed. However, the resolve of most citizens in both Anglophone regions to achieve meaningful change saw the regime respond by carrying out mass arrests of leaders of the protest and their sympathisers; deploying the military to the Anglophone region; and shutting down the internet because it was seen as a recruiting tool and a way of mobilising support for the struggle at home, from the international community, and from the Cameroonian diaspora. Rather than breaking the resolve of Anglophone protesters, these actions led to more protests, radicalisation, and violent responses from hitherto peaceful protesters, some of whom resorted to armed resistance, while others called for an outright, separate, and independent Anglophone state, known as Ambazonia.

By mid-2017, the government was forced to admit that the protests represented a challenge to the way it was administering Cameroon. Nonetheless, it failed to confront the core issues of the crisis i.e., the demise of the Federal State of 1961 which has resulted in the perceived marginalisation of Anglophone culture and institutions by successive administrations. Indeed, unlike pre-2016 Anglophone agitations for change, the 2016 protest created a rally in favour of the Anglophone cause that had never been seen before. Whether this can be attributed to the social media or several policy blunders by the administration, it is evident that the need to deal with the 'Anglophone problem' has gained such wide support that it can no longer be ignored. Going forward, achieving peace requires opening multiple channels of communication between the parties to build mutual trust, negotiate in good faith, put a cessation of hostilities in place, and commit to reconciliation to give peace and development a chance.

If any lesson can be learned from other conflicts in Africa rooted in the colonial past, the Cameroon government must act quickly by implementing long-term solutions to the crisis through genuine political reforms rather than its current lip service and cosmetic solutions for selfish ends. True reforms must take into account:

(1) the concerns of a new generation of Anglophones and Francophones who are questioning the history of Cameroon they have been told for long;

(2) the growth of Anglophone awareness of their Anglophone identity and quest for self-determination;

(3) the power of Anglophone pressure groups at home and in the diaspora;

(4) the proliferation of arms and armed groups in the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions; and
(5) the economic and educational devastation of the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions which have resulted to the closure of several educational institutions.

Each of these areas represents a set of stakes. The Cameroon government must make sincere efforts to bring to the table all stakeholders (protestors, secessionists, and pro-government stakeholders) to discuss and address the real problems of Anglophones that are fundamentally political – they are about Anglophone identity in Cameroon and steps to provide adequate support for Anglophone schools and courts. Unless this is done, the Anglophone conflict is likely to get worse. The future of the Cameroon that was born when the former British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroun were unified remains uncertain. What is, however, certain is that at a time when much of the world is coming together to form stronger blocs, Africa does not need more conflicts, it needs as many new nations as are necessary.

Notes

1. Ambazonia is the name commonly used especially after 2016 by Anglophone activists, armed groups and sympathisers advocating for the secession of the former British Southern Cameroons (which became West Cameroon at the time the federation of Cameroon was established). The Anglophone parts of Cameroon are today known as the Northwest and Southwest regions.
2. At the time of the protest, Cameroon's Minister of Justice reported that there were 27 magistrates in Bamenda, the capital of one of the two Anglophone regions, 21 of whom (77.8%) were Francophones (ACCORD 2017).
3. Interview with Barrister H. Bobga. Barrister Bobga is a long time SCNC activist, president that of the Northwest Lawyers' Association that began the street protest that led to the establishment of the CACSC, and former leader of Anglophone Interim Government that replaced the Consortium. He is current in exile in the United States.
4. However, the extension of the strike action to schools in the Francophone region had no significant impacts, partly because of fear and likely intimidation from government, and partly because of the lack of support from Francophones who did not understand Anglophone grievances.
5. Interview with Barrister H. Bobga,18 August 2022, Maryland, USA.
6. Interview with the Deputy Spokesperson, ADF, July 2022, Maryland, USA.
7. Interview with activist and Chairperson of IG Momo County, 2019–2022, 3 September 2022, Maryland, USA.

8. Anonymous telephone interview with a professor of law at the University of Buea, October 2022.
9. For details on the Major National Dialogue see Republic of Cameroon (4 October 2019): Report of the Rapporteur General of the Major National Dialogue.
10. Emah Basile, Lord Mayor of Yaoundé, once called Anglophones '…les ennemis dans…la maison' (enemies in the house) for protesting in Yaoundé.

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From the Spectacular to Oral Spectacle: Towards a New Paradigm for Creating the *Mise-en-Scèn*e in Zimbabwean Film

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Abstract

This article explores the use and adaption of oral spectacle in Zimbabwean film as an innovative measure in filmmaking using Tsitsi Dangarembga's film, *Everyone's Child* (1996) as a case study. Drawing on insights from speech act theory, this article examines filmmaking techniques that incorporate African indigenous storytelling techniques methods to engage the audience's imagination and represent spatialities. The study employs a qualitative research methodology, including critical discourse analysis and semiotic analysis, to analyse the selected film. The researchers explore the use of rich oral spectacle drawn from traditional African as a powerful and inexpensive alternative to expensive Western Hollywood-style spectacular special effects. This represents a radical innovation with both aesthetic and ideological implications. The findings establish that Zimbabwean filmmakers employ indigenous epistemologies that draw on traditional oral storytelling techniques to effectively replace physical representations and locations, such as landscapes. By centring their work on oral spectacle and drawing on narrative traditions, filmmakers are able to engage audiences in a more authentic, relatable and immersive experience of the stories they tell.

Keywords: Orality, Spectacle, Film, Storytelling

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Résumé

Cet article explore l'utilisation et l'adaptation du spectacle oral dans le cinéma zimbabwéen comme une mesure innovante en cinéma, prenant comme exemple le film de Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Everyone's Child* (1996). S'appuyant sur la théorie des actes de langage, cet article examine les techniques cinématographiques qui s'inspirent des techniques narratives autochtones africaines pour mobiliser l'imagination du public et représenter les spatialités. Pour analyser le film sélectionné, l'étude utilise une méthodologie de recherche qualitative, une analyse critique du discours et une analyse sémiotique. Les chercheurs explorent l'utilisation d'un riche spectacle oral, inspiré de la tradition africaine, comme alternative puissante et peu coûteuse aux onéreux et spectaculaires effets spéciaux du style hollywoodien occidental. Il s'agit d'une innovation radicale aux implications esthétiques et idéologiques. Les résultats démontrent que les cinéastes zimbabwéens utilisent des épistémologies autochtones qui s'appuient sur des techniques traditionnelles de narration orale pour efficacement remplacer les représentations physiques et les lieux tels que les paysages. En centrant leur travail sur le spectacle oral et en s'appuyant sur les traditions narratives, les cinéastes parviennent à impliquer le public dans une expérience plus authentique, plus accessible et plus immersive des histoires qu'ils racontent.

Mots-clés : oralité ; spectacle ; film ; récit

Introduction

Cinema is necessarily a spectacular art. It relies on heightened visual appeal to convey the imagined story it seeks to tell. Hollywood studio productions began this visual spectacle approach and took it to unimaginable heights, which is why America has undoubtedly dominated world cinema (Bordwell and Thompson 2010).According to Cutting et al. (2010), Hollywood's dominance in film is largely based on visual momentum and the attractive placement of shots.Bordwell and Thompson (2010) assert that the success of the American filmmaking style is grounded in its ability to conjure up diverse scenes and styles, which gives it international appeal. By contrast, Bollywood arguably takes this focus on the visually spectacular, replicates it, and re-presents it using very cheap iconic imagery that is made to *look* spectacular, arguably to compensate for its lack of Hollywood sophistication. Bollywood's re-invention of the spectacular informs the work of African filmmakers who lack the significant financial resources needed to create a technologically rich, visually spectacular look. Instead, they rely on using what Diawara (Diawara 1992; Harrow 2007) calls the 'primary resources' of the performer to present

an *imagined* spectacle. Innovative African filmmakers deploy financially affordable strategies such as the use of the spoken word to 'set' the stage, resulting in *oral* spectacle (Mukwara 2019: 24).

This article examines the use of oral spectacle as an innovative element in Zimbabwean film. Innovation here broadly refers to the introduction of a unique filmmaking technique and valorising it (Palanimurugan et al. 2024). In essence, this means the practical use of oral forms, such as song, dance, speech, folktales, movement, and gesture, in film narratives to create an oral spectacle.

'Practical use' refers to the way the film under study deploys oral forms for aesthetic appeal, dramaturgical purposes, and cinematic appeal. Existing studies on visuality in Zimbabwean films (Rwafa 2011, 2015; Mboti 2016; Mukwara 2019; Ureke 2016, 2020) discuss innovation in the context of technology, but overlook non-technological aspects, such as distribution, production, and consumption. While recognising the interconnections between communication technology and orality, the current article interrogates the use of orature as a radical transformation of cinema as a technology-based art form and the impact this has on the ideological, aesthetic value and ethical aspects of film (Pratt and Gornosteva 2009; Killingsworth 1993).

This article uses Tsitsi Dangarembga's film, *Everyone's Child* (1996) as a case study. The authors of the current article argue that this film employs oral spectacle to imagine spatiality, fantasy, and make-believe, thereby diverging from Hollywood cinema's reliance on technologically driven, expensive visual spectacle to offer a distinct kind of spectacle through the spoken word. In this article, the researchers tried to accomplish three tasks. Firstly, they considered the relationship between visuality and orality in the case study. Secondly, they investigated various forms of oral spectacle used in the case study. Thirdly, they theorised the implications of adopting oral spectacle in Zimbabwean films.

The study postulates that the aesthetics of the Zimbabwean film industry is arguably a poor imitation of Hollywood aesthetics. Instead of using stunt action and extravagant computer-generated images (CGI), such as exploding cars or collapsing buildings, in an effort to be 'spectacular', which requires huge financial budgets, local filmmakers can rely on rich, low-budget local storytelling traditions that utilise the spoken word and accompanying body language for their impact.

The term 'oral spectacle' is conceptualised in this article as an innovative and alternative approach to filmmaking, a process in which observation, knowledge, and creative uses of language are made available to the performer in space. The particular case of *Everybody's Child* was carefully selected for

study because it avoided using expensive stunts and lavish sets to set the scene and tell the story; instead, its power comes from telling the story using oral spectacle.

Film Studies and Debates in Zimbabwe

Film research in Zimbabwe largely focuses on ideological influences and donor-funded initiatives. Specific attention has been paid to the development of the film industry, the state of affairs, and the political economy of the Zimbabwe film industry (Ureke 2020; Hungwe 2000; Mahoso 2000; Mboti 2016; Mukwara 2019) and how these influences have contributed to the aesthetic values and film techniques adopted by Zimbabwean filmmakers. The role of oral spectacle in Zimbabwean filmmaking has not been given much academic attention, despite being the backbone of the filmmaking value chain. To date, very little academic research has investigated the extent to which Zimbabwean filmmakers have innovatively replaced mainstream filmmaking techniques with oral spectacle. The visual text of Zimbabwean film is largely unexplored. Few attempts have been made to look into the visual presentation of films in Zimbabwe. This is a problem because film styles are arguably the most important part of the film production process, as filmmakers have to balance the relationship between visuality, orality and the aesthetics of the film to stand any chance of being successful.

Africans are great storytellers. They have been using storytelling methods, such as dance, song, and poetry, since time immemorial and usually employ the same narrative traditions in filmmaking. Ncube and Tomaselli (2019) argue that pre-colonial Zimbabwe was characterised by participatory communicative models which encouraged rich stories to flourish through oral traditions. Ancient writing traditions do not exist on the African continent, but most Africans today, as in the past, are primarily oral people and their art flows are oral. Taking this study into account, the researchers explore various oral forms practised during *Dariro* and *Dare* in pre-colonial Zimbabwe to compare with the styles used in the film selected as a case study. Film as a storytelling technique, therefore, relies on the spoken word to convey the narrative. The visual world is declared in words and this is supplemented by vocal inflections, vocal emphases, and appropriate gestures.

Film in Africa remains a colonial legacy and a product of Western capitalism (Okome 1996; Haynes 2011). This might be because, prior to the era of colonialism, numerous efforts were made to produce educational, propaganda, and war films (Ureke 2016). This has been made even more difficult by the paucity of critical research on the local film industry. It

is therefore essential to conduct further research on the studies by Rwafa (2011) and Ureke (2020), both of whom have highlighted the lack of identity in Zimbabwean films by exploring the notion of innovation and its ideological, communicative, ethical, and aesthetic implications.

This article stems from a background where film critics, such as Mbewe (2013), contend that there is no Zimbabwean film industry worth discussing. Such Eurocentric, partial and racist claims have since been dismissed by scholars like Ureke (2020) who strongly believe that the Zimbabwe film industry is steadily growing, in spite of economic challenges. Ureke further argues that the small budgets Zimbabwean filmmakers have to work with encourage them to make films differently, using indigenous ideas. The current study aims to expand Ureke's encouragement of local filmmakers remaining grounded in indigenous ideas and means. The present research hence aims to commit what Mignolo (2009) termed as epistemic disobedience by encouraging filmmakers to use rich oral storytelling techniques instead of traditional, expensive Western Hollywood-style visually spectacular ways of making films.

Several Zimbabwean films are thought by some to be of 'poor' quality with very low production values. This may be because some Zimbabwe filmmakers have tried to imitate visually spectacular Hollywood films without the necessary financial backing to do so. The current study aims to contribute to the debate by encouraging filmmakers to employ innovative low-budget filmmaking techniques that incorporate traditional verbal and visual narration elements adapted from African oral culture.

Chivandikwa and Muwonwa (2011) examine the way in which oral spectacle such as song and dramatic performance styles have been incorporated in the construction of engagement with national and ethnic identities in Zimbabwe. In this study, they focused on a local television drama, *Sinjalo,* aired in 2002 by the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. Through ethno-linguistic tensions within the drama, these oral performances reflected political and social conflicts between Shona and Ndebele people. The scholars examined how this television programme employs oral forms, such as gesture, dance, and song, to promote Ndebele nationalism and identity in Zimbabwe. They observe how the use of Ndebele orature subtly challenged ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front) and Shona hegemony, as can be seen, for example, in the use of a song played during on-screen football matches: "*Ishona ngiyalizonda lile wawa"* (I hate a Shona person). Clearly, the use of this kind of song in this drama showed some of the major differences between Shona-speaking and Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans.

This study is significant because it shows how the use of orature can be directly and indirectly linked to political consciousness. This is significant for the current study, which seeks to demonstrate the adoption of orature that both tries to preserve the traditional heritage, and is also a deliberate effort to challenge Western film aesthetics in the interests of making Zimbabwean films with limited budgets. The current research seeks to expand Chivandikwa and Muwonwa's findings beyond linguistic performances to enhance knowledge of other oral practices adopted in Zimbabwean films.

Mukwara (2019) contends that emerging Zimbabwean films have been criticised for overusing theatrical techniques. Nevertheless, Zimbabwean filmmakers have adopted the success of oral spectacle as used in the theatre for their films which have restrictive budgets. Zimbabwean films cannot be compared to Western visually spectacular films with massive budgets. The authors of the current article deliberately encourage the innovative use of oral traditions to make powerful local films that do not require huge budgets to be successful.

Conceptualising Oral Spectacle through the Speech Acts Theory

This article uses the speech acts theory to examine the use of oral spectacle in the film under study. In *How to do Things with Words*, Austin (1975: 12) describes the power of orality and explains how words are not just items of speech but, when spoken under certain conditions, 'do things'. In other words, speaking about something can be the same as actually doing it. For example, the words 'I pronounce you husband and wife' spoken by a designated marriage officer in an official marriage ceremony is more than an illocutionary act. It is what makes the bride and the groom husband and wife. This concept can be invoked on the screen, allowing words to set the scene without the need for explicit visual representations. This is possible because people use their imaginations to derive meaning from that which they see and that which remains unseen, but implied, as they tap into the '…remarkable power our minds have to form a mental image of something unreal or not present and to use this power creatively – to invent new images or ideas' (Berger 2008: 13).

The idea of oral spectacle is clearly defined by Bere (n.d.) who introduces the concept of oral spectacle in theatre. The word 'spectacle' was derived from the Latin word *spectare,* which means to look at, as well as anything presented to the sight or view (Bere n.d.). Spectacle refers to the visual elements, including the setting, costume, lighting, makeup, and the action of the character (Bakare 2025). Bere (n.d.) indicates that oral spectacle arises

from the oral dynamics of storytelling using the human body, not necessarily showing objects in the story, but using oral cues. Similarly, *mise-en-scène*, a French term meaning 'place on stage', refers to all the visual elements of a theatrical or film production within the space provided by the stage itself. The current study contends that filmmakers borrow the concept of oral spectacle to present the *mise-en-scène*, and have extended the meaning to refer to the control the director has over the visual elements within the film image. Thus, much of the visual imagery in this study is a creation of oral spectacle, not of explicit visual representation.

Borrowing from African oral practices, which primarily utilise the spoken word and bodily expressions, the speech acts concept can be invoked on the screen, allowing words, rather than visual cues like expensive stunts, to set the scene. Austin showed that language could be used not only to describe states of affairs (as in 'This kitchen is very clean!'), but also to do things (in this case, to note that this kitchen is very clean). This means that, in a film setup, one does not necessarily need to see a particular action or object, but when such an action or object is referred to orally, the audience can imagine it. This article goes beyond this theory by analysing words uttered under certain conditions in the film under study to signify things that could not be shown on screen. It goes beyond examining uttered words by also focusing on other forms of oral practices like songs used in the film.

By making reference to the concept of speech acts and the necessary conditions for performing them, the present study illuminates that to utter a performative sentence is to be evaluated in terms of what we might call the conventionality, actuality, and intentionality of uttering the sentence. Against this backdrop, the speech act theory is important in this study. It is an alternative practice to utilise the power of the spoken word as a substitute for potentially expensive external adjuncts that might be beyond the reach of local filmmakers (Ureke 2020). This means that resources utilised in storytelling go beyond the words, but include paralinguistic practices that accompany words including prevocalic sound, music and movement made by hands, face and the oral performer and actor, thus enabling the audience to recognise an excellent range of film characters.

The use of oral spectacle in filmmaking is possible because people use their imaginations to derive meaning from that which they see and that which remains unseen (Berger 2008). For Berger, seeing comes before words. It is seeing that establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words. The relationship between what we see and what we know is never settled. It gives us an unlimited imagination of the world unseen but explained or spoken about and therefore visualised.

We use our imaginations to derive meaning from what we see and what remains unseen but is implied, tapping into the remarkable power of our minds. The present study contends that people form a mental image of something unusual or not present. Literate cultures stress the visual and store knowledge in written and other kinds of documents made possible by recording and retrieval technologies. By contrast, oral cultures encode knowledge in the popular communal memory, thus giving rise to the idea of oral spectacle, which can evoke imaginative responses beyond oral practices. This is used to identify the various speech acts employed by the filmmaker in the film under study to represent fantasy, spatiality, and sexual encounters that the filmmaker was unable to create in physical space.

Methodology

Since this article is grounded on how society lives, it was designed using the dictates that apply to qualitative research (see Bryman 2012). Case studies are typically preferred when posing how or why questions, when the investigator has limited control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context.

A case study design was best for examining the different spatial-temporal contexts Tsitsi Dangarebwa used in her film *Everyone's Child*, which was chosen as a case, using purposive sampling. The analysis was subjected to visual and critical discourse analysis. Since this study examines the use of oral practices in Zimbabwean film, it was crucial to select a key film for analysis. This type of analysis was explored in this research to uncover meaning in songs and spoken words through an examination of the film under study.

Foucault (1972: 49) introduces a different view of discourse in terms of his concept of knowledge or 'episteme'. He does not think of discourse as a piece of text, but as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak'. By discourse, Foucault means 'a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a way of representing the knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment' (Hall 1981: 291). This account utilises discourse as a type of social practice, including visual images, music, gestures, and the like, that represent and endorse it. On the other hand, socially situated speakers and writers produce texts. The researchers in the current study employed critical discourse analysis to analyse diction in communication applied in the film, and lyrics from the background music in the film. The study findings are presented thematically below.

Representing/ Imagining Spatiality in *Everyone's Child*

The study seeks to establish the extent to which local filmmakers use indigenous epistemologies that arise from storytelling techniques. These methods focus on the performer in space and time, rather than the expensive external adjuncts that are based on the notion of promoting the use of verbal invocation, gesture, mime, and movement. The oral spectacle technique gives prominence to the oral spectacle, identity, and aesthetics of local films, which will then be effected through oral rather than physical means.

This section draws on visual analysis of selected scenes in *Everyone's Child* to argue that the film represents and imagines spatialities in ways that have a profound impact on the aesthetic, technical and ideological aspects of the film. Spatiality refers to how places and spaces are not just physical entities, but 'social' actors in the sense that spaces both inform and are informed by social and political relations such as gender, class and race (see Bhattacharyya 2015). In the current article, the researcher shows how replacing graphic and special effects with oral forms to represent the material or physical aspects of places in *Everyone's Child* enables audiences and critics to experience a much-nuanced exploration of the spatialities of gender, class and religion/ spirituality – that is, the way religion, gender and class relations/ conflicts are reflected in everyday spatial practices.

A plethora of relevant research findings suggest that space and spatial issues have been an important innovation in *Everyone's Child* to stand in for geographic locations and objects that might not be shown on the screen but rather imagined. For example, the analysis shows how urbanisation transforms and complicates gender and class relations relating to sexuality and poverty. Such an analysis involves recognising the deeper aesthetic, ethical, cultural and ideological implications of using orature to take the place of visual images.

Representing the Imagined through Story Telling

Through a description and analysis of the scene at timecode 15:15 in *Everyone's Child*, discussed in the next paragraph, this section demonstrates how the film employs storytelling techniques to represent the physical landscape. This means instead of showing the spectacular physical buildings, the film uses oral images to 'depict' the physical environment in which the conflict takes place. The larger context of the scene is that the urban environment is characterised by significant spatial inequalities in terms of educational facilities, access to modern amenities, and wealth distribution. The oral narratives then serve the purpose of humorously and provocatively bringing out the nuanced relationships between physical space, social decay, and conflict.

Agnew (2002) argues that places are sites where wider economic and political processes are played out. Social and organisational relations develop to mediate micro responses to macro level processes, and spatial imaginaries form to give people a sense of meaning in their particular worlds. This implies that narratives vividly call attention to the reality that people living in specific spaces are exposed to, as well as the impacts of inclusionary and exclusionary politics in relation to markets, employment opportunities and services. In this regard, the substitution of physical urban landscapes with oral images amplifies and reinforces the observation that the formation of urban/ rural poverty and extreme wealth has distinct spatial dimensions (see Grant 2019: 25).

Everyone's Child uses the technique of storytelling on two occasions. The first time is to show how power relations play out between urban and rural dwellers. In the film, it is assumed that rural people view the town as a place where all problems disappear; a place where milk and honey metaphorically flows in the streets. During Tamari's mother's funeral, Uncle Jimmy tells the story of a man who earned a thousand dollars by selling garbage in the city.

Figure 1: Uncle Jimmy narrating Harare stories in *Everyone's Child*

This analysis takes note of the speech act theory, which suggests that some words can be used as actions, and helps the audience members 'construct reality' using their imaginations. From the concept of gestures embedded in the speech act theory, the storyteller's verbal and non-verbal expressions evoked the imagination of his audience. The audience shown sitting around the fireplace in the film imagines being in Harare earning that kind of money, as can be seen from their facial expressions. The audience watching

the film also imagines earning that kind of money in Harare. According to Bere (1999), the role of the storyteller is to evoke thinking and endless imagination in the audience.

Figure 1 shows Itai listening to his uncle talking about experiences in the city. According to Kabira (1983), the oral artist storyteller in the Shona culture focuses on oral composition or performance. The joy on Uncle Jimmy's face as he tells the story about how easy it is to make money in Harare evokes a desire in the audience to also experience the good life in the city.

Figure 2: Itai in deep thought in *Everyone's Child*

Figure 2 shows Itai in deep thought, his mind stirred by the endless possibilities of the city and the good life he could offer his siblings. Berger (2008) contends that people use their imagination to derive meaning from what they see and that which remains unseen but is implied as they tap into the remarkable power of their minds.

This scene did not need to show any scenes of people earning a good living in Harare to evoke the imaginations of the audience gathered in the *dare* (sitting around the fire in the film), and the imaginations of the people watching the film. Simply by telling the story in the film, Uncle Jimmy managed to convince the audience around the fire and Itai in particular that life is very easy in Harare, and that everyone in the city knows him. Following on his telling of this story, Uncle Jimmy hands out business cards to anyone who seems interested in visiting the city to experience a good life.

Figure 3: Itai smiling as he gets a business card in *Everyone's Child*

The look on Itai's face in Figure 3 reveals a sense of relief, as if he is close to winning a jackpot prize. The business card seals what seem to be the 'truths' about what Uncle Jimmy does to earn a living, how his life in the city seems to be established, and just how secure his life is. Itai has confidence in his uncle and a sense of conviction that he has a place to start. Itai is smiling because the business card confirms what he has imagined about the city after Uncle Jimmy's story. His hope now lies in the city.

Figure 4: Uncle Jimmy handing out business cards in *Everyone's Child*

Another person in the audience asks Uncle Jimmy if he can find him a job, and Uncle Jimmy's reply is that he can help when the man gets to Harare. The man should get in touch with Uncle Jimmy upon arrival in the city. This scene avoids the need to explicitly show a visual representation of what life in Harare is really like.

Figure 5: Itai goes to town in *Everyone's Child*

Figure 5 shows Itai hitchhiking to Harare without any luggage. It is clear from this scene that Uncle Jimmy has convinced Itai to travel to the big city, where he believes there are greener pastures. Itai is shown without any luggage, which suggests he has so much faith in Uncle Jimmy's story about how easy life in the city will be that he will get everything he wants. From the preceding paragraphs, it can be seen that storytelling is a powerful tool to evoke imagination beyond what an explicit representation might convey, one that explicitly considers the spatial context within which emotional experiences occur.

Using Song to Stand in for Sexual Encounters

This section analyses the use of various songs to depict sexual encounters that could not be shown on screen for reasons that may include avoiding government censorship, self-censorship on the part of the filmmaker, and avoiding the creation of physical scenes that are expensive to film. Stoler (1995) contends that sexuality is one of the central technologies of both modernisation and imperialism. For this reason, filmmakers tend only to use the spoken word to convey a sexual encounter. In this way,

Zimbabwean filmmakers rearticulate, negotiate and localise Western-invented technologies in the service of African themes, stories, forms of oral storytelling, and cultural expression (Tomaselli and Eke 1995). This technique necessarily entails utilising real events, such as different colours of thread, that metaphorically weave a fictionalised fabric relevant to the people, giving them a sense of dynamic hopefulness and profound identity.

Sexual encounters in *Everyone's Child* have been created by using the oral form of songs to substitute actual representations of such encounters. Rwafa (2011) asserts that song is a tool that creates mood and setting for the audience. The present study expands on Rwafa's opinion about the use of songs in filmmaking by arguing that *Everyone's Child* largely uses songs to evoke emotions. This section focuses on how the director uses songs as a technique to depict the spatialities of sex-related crimes, such as rape, and to demonstrate how space is gendered. The analysis examines the aesthetic, and ethical implications of this innovative venture of oral spectacle.

This section draws on literature (e.g., Bhattacharyya, 2015) that recognises that space is theorised in three categories, namely: (a) spatial practices (subjective, concrete, material and physical space); (b) representations of space (mental representations of space abstracted and conceived by elite urban planners and scientists); and (c) spaces of representation (points of contact between real and mental space). Songs in the film replace the use of physical images in depicting rape or other sexual crimes. In other words, songs replace/ substitute representations of space with spaces of representation in ways that empower the audience to actively assume roles that are ordinarily played by elite urban planners. The songs, therefore, become points of contact between mental/ abstract and real/ material spaces.

Shiri yakangwara (The clever bird) by Leonard Dembo

The lyrics of this song warn people that they should make hay while the sun shines. In the film, the filmmaker uses the song as warning. The song plays in the background of the store while Tamari buys food from Shaggy. This song is warning her that he is a villain. Because it is a well-known song, the audience can relate to its meaning and understand the danger Shaggy poses. Simply by using the song, the filmmaker has depicted the tragedy that lies ahead for Tamari.

Shiri yakangwara inovaka dendere rayo nguva iripo
A clever bird built its nest whilst the sun shines
iyo mwana iwe newewo ngwara iwe eeeh
Be clever like the bird my child
Mujuru unovaka imba yawo mvura isati yaturuka
The termites built its house before it rains
iyo,mwana iwe, newewo ngwara iwe eeeeh
Be clever like the bird my child

The translation shows that a wise bird builds its nest while there is time. In the film narrative, as in real life, people should prepare for future troubles by planning ahead. The song's message is to follow your dreams by being prepared, and this affects the film audience's response to the main characters Tamari, Itai, and Thulani.

Taking note of the speech act theory, most utterances are performative in nature. The song shows that Shaggy is a womaniser and a sex-starved rapist. It represents the spatial spaces where abuses of women occur. Bhattacharyya (2015) contends that violence against women – assault, rape, and sexual abuse – is often considered to be either a private or a public matter rather than both a private and public matter. Explicitly showing Shaggy's attack on Tamari would have been a violation of women's rights. The song depicts the social realities of danger to women in certain social contexts, whose consequences could not be shown on screen, but the filmmaker has left a wide space for the audience to imagine what might happen (see Austin 1975). In this regard, speech act theory is employed to argue that the song "*Shiri yakangwara*" serves as a means to portray the villain character without explicitly showing his aggressive actions on screen, thereby enabling the film audience to imagine what he is like and what he might do.

Character by Tendai Muparutsa

The issue of lust is explored through music lyrics in "*Everyone's Child.*" The lyrics of the song *Character* shows how lustful Shaggy feels towards Tamari as it talks about a man admiring a woman's *'immaculate character'.*

Figure 6 shows Shaggy leering at Tamari. The speech act theory on gestures suggests that gestures or body actions are nonverbal actions which stand in for explicit words in daily interaction. In this scene, Shaggy exhibits a lustful desire towards Tamari without explicitly stating it. When the song is played, Shaggy's thoughts are synchronised with the song lyrics. The song, hence, represents women as objects of commodification.

Figure 6: Shaggy looks lustfully at Tamari in Everyone's Child

Muparutsa's song solidifies the love story and directs the audience's attention towards the love affair that is about to happen. Although the relationship is to be unfair, Muparutsa's song talks about an '*immaculate*' character. Another angle is that the song could be suggesting that the cultural expectations of a woman are based on her character. The singer starts by narrating an ideal woman and later says, '*Your character turns me on…*'. This verse coincides with the lustful eye the shopkeeper casts over Tamari. Shaggy says to Tamari, *"If I was as nice to everybody as I am to you, I would have been out of business'.*

The statement is a clear indication that the shopkeeper is forcefully suggesting to Tamari that he is also a good man with a good character and is making significant sacrifices for her. Austin (1975) explains how words are not just items of speech but, when spoken under certain conditions, 'do things'. In other words, spoken words can be performative; saying them is equivalent to doing the things the words say. In this scene, Shaggy's statement above suggests that he is indeed doing Tamari favours, and that he expects to be 'repaid' in kind.

The above analysis shows how the songs powerfully suggest the extent to which social relations between men and women are reflected, reproduced or challenged in space. In this regard, the use of songs to stand in for physical representations as an innovative articulation of the *space of representation* in which audiences may be encouraged to imagine and map sites of sexual crime. This can potentially empower the audience in two major ways. Firstly, audiences can vicariously assume positions of experts by becoming agents of *representations of space*.

Secondly, by becoming agents of *representations of space*, the audience may be encouraged to challenge the dichotomy of private and public spaces in which there are assumptions that sexual crimes are only committed in public spaces such as streets, when in fact, many sexual crimes happen in private spaces such as homes (Bhattacharyya 2015). The songs invite the viewer to consider a complex spatial context beyond the physical geographies of sexual crimes and to reflect on how social actions are influenced by space and how space, in turn, informs action. Beyond this, there are also ethical benefits of not showing graphic images of sexual abuse since, in some instances, films have presented images of rape that are socio-emotionally damaging to viewers (Bhattacharyya 2015).

Negotiating Censorship through Song

Mugove wangu by Leonard Zhakata

This section demonstrates how the use of the song '*Mugove*' (reward) is employed to communicate the spatiality of poverty, and specifically, to subtly challenge the oppression of workers, given that workers can produce place-specific forms of identity, consciousness, and knowledge). The analysis demonstrates the implications of this strategy in relation to the agency of workers and evading censorship, given that unemployment has significant political connotations. In other words, the use of this song enabled the director to avoid showing specific material places or sites of worker oppression, which could attract the attention of the state and its censorship apparatus. In particular, the song also highlights the disparity between the rich and the poor, and how the wealthy often exploit the less fortunate.

Zhakata's song talks about being used 'like a cloth' by those who have money. The song reveals how the world is unfair to those who have no money and are desperate. In particular, Tamari is used by Shaggy, starting with a scene in a car in which he forces her to drink some beer. Tamari tries to refuse but, because Shaggy has been giving her money and clothes, she believes she can no longer refuse. The song reveals Tamari's perspective on the world and her bitterness stemming from poverty.

Figure 7 shows Tamari dancing with Shaggy whilst Zhakata's song *Mugove wangu* plays at the background. The scene contradicts the lyrics of the song. Zhakata sings about lamentations in Tamari's heart, asking God for a share of her inheritance while she is still alive:

> …Tarirai ndosakadzwa sechipfeko, nevanemari ndisina changu, Ndinongo dzvinyirirwa, ndichingoshandiswa nhando Ndichingofondotswa…
>
> Look I'm being used and abused like a useless cloth by those with money.

Figure 7: Shaggy dances to Mugove wangu with Tamari in *Everyone's Child*

The lyrics review the sexual exploitation that Tamari is experiencing. The filmmaker does not show sexually explicit scenes between Tamari and Shaggy, but the song speaks volumes to the audience without any visual representation of these events being necessary. Furthermore, it is a way of showing Tamari's sorrow. The audience can relate to this song beyond its representation of hegemony in the film because it reflects how the unequal capitalist system has affected people in Zimbabwe. It may be argued that workers worked with no reasonable rewards and many people were languishing in poverty as a result.

In short, instead of showing dilapidated buildings and infrastructure that could be directly linked to specific geo-political sites, the use of song evokes the imagination of the viewer to explore how power and economic resources are unequally distributed in geographical space. At the same time, by having the song sung in a car, the use of song can also suggest that space is also an enabler of human liberty (see Gotham 2008), challenging the poverty and deprivation that is imposed by political elites, without showing the political elites in their usual spaces of oppression. This cleverly evades state censorship. Later in the film, Tamari liberates herself from the oppression of Shaggy by hitting him in the groin with a beer bottle.

Presenting/ representing spiritual spectacle

Drawing from literature on the spatiality of religion and spirituality, such as Kerestetzi (2018) Finlayson (2012) and Bartolini et al. (2017), this section shows how the film under study deploys bodily forms of orality to

replace material objects/ spaces of spirituality in ways that complicate the relationship between spatiality and religion, given that generally, the '… configuration of space gives order to the spiritual experience and constrains interpretation, perception and feeling…." Finlayson (2012: 1763). In other words, religious places do not come from beliefs, beliefs come from places or spiritual sites such as temples, sanctuaries and other material objects (see Kerestetzi 2018). Itai communicates with his dead father in his grave at timecode 06:28 in *Everyone's Child*. By replacing material places and objects with oral forms such as sounds, movement and gestures, *Everyone's Child* facilitates the exploration of the complex relationship between spirituality and material objects and places.

Spiritual traditions produce a variety of sacred ritual materials, and these entities become intertwined in the lived religious experience (Keane 2008). The scene shows a grave which represents the spiritual being of Itai's father. Normally in African tradition religion, certain items and objects are associated with communicating with the dead, for example, drums, clay mugs and traditional beer. As noted above, these objects are creatively substituted by Itai's actions when he kneels down and lowers his head as a symbol of respecting the grave. Thrift (2004) highlights the existence of an affective relationship in this type of situation. If this relationship exists between objects and agents, between doing and becoming, then it exists between effect and emotion as well.

Figure 8: Itai kneels to talk to his dead father in *Everyone's Child*

While it is obvious that the scene takes place in a physical material cemetery, many substantive elements are communicated through movement, sound and gestures. This dematerialised setting ironically resonates with the recognition that religion can take place in dematerialised form through auditory space with sensory effects (see Kerestetzi 2018). In other words, Itai uses auditory space to communicate with his father. Orature then creates the co-presence between humans (Itai) and the deity (*vadzimu*).

This is a space '…where real space and mythical and imagined places meet and interlink, the residence of gods, or the sites of mythical events…' (Kerestetzi 2018: 89). Hence orality creates the existence of Itai in two worlds. More interestingly, while material sacred spaces are expected to have a transcendental quality that evokes powerful feelings that affect human interactions (Finlayson 2012), the use of orature in this scene still manages to evoke aesthetic sensory responses. In this scene therefore, orature arouses sensations that could help the audiences to vicariously see, smell, hear and touch the spiritual experience, giving rise to the complexity that religion can be lived from a sensory as well as a material concrete perspective (Finlayson 2012; Bartolini et al. 2017). This is because auditory spaces can also transform, as they are affective, and thus can move participants and even 'audiences' into another world (see Finlayson 2012). Nhamo distracts Itai just as he kneels at his father's grave. Nhamo asks Itai to tell their father that he needs new tyres for his toy.

It is by the auditory space that one can imagine hierarchy within African traditional religion. From the above it is evident that effectual encounters are often spatially mediated and that individuals attach meaning to and derive meaning from sacred spaces. For this reason, the director avoided showing specific objects associated with African spirituality.

Conclusion

The current study is a significant contribution to film studies of visuality and orality, as it illuminates innovative filmmaking techniques in an African context. Using the film *Everyone's Child* as a case study, this article demonstrates the extent, nature, and impact of 'oral spectacle' practice in the Zimbabwean film industry. This article recognises Tsitsi Dangarembga's deployment of oral spectacle in *Everyone's Child* as a radical transformational reformulation of oral forms into a good product that creates value for African film consumers without having to depend on expensive Hollywoood-style special effects.

In the current study, the researchers explored the movement from Western, external, and expensive adjuncts in filmmaking to rich, traditional, oral spectacle practices as a radical innovation with aesthetic and ideological implications. The researchers focused specifically on the potential for oral spectacle to awaken the filmmaking space in Zimbabwe.

Finally, the study was confined to filmmaking techniques. Given the paucity of studies on visuality and orality in Zimbabwe, future studies could also look at other powerful and inexpensive techniques that can be deployed in Zimbabwean films.

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Beyond Numbers: Unveiling the Subjective Well-Being of South Africa's Informal Sector Workers

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Abstract

The informal sector plays a modest but notable role in South Africa's economy, but the living standards and financial circumstances of individuals in this sector often lead to prolonged entrapment. Despite these challenges, individuals employed in the informal sector exhibit average subjective well-being (SWB). Some studies have shown that the usual determinants of SWB have little impact on people employed in South Africa's informal sector. This study aimed to confirm these findings by utilising a comprehensive dataset and concentrating on the informal sector as a whole. Employing an Ordered Probit model, we analysed the determinants of SWB in informal employment in South Africa using the merged Wave 5 (2017) dataset from the adult National Income Dynamics Study. The results revealed that only certain factors, including age, income, relative income, health status, and marital status, have a significant impact on SWB in the informal sector. Specifically, older age, lower health levels, above-average income, and experiences of divorce or separation are associated with a negative impact on SWB. Conversely, average income levels have a positive effect on SWB. We recommend targeted age-sensitive interventions, income enhancement programmes, as well as financial literacy and savings initiatives to help to improve the well-being of informal sector participants.

Keywords: South Africa, informal sector, subjective well-being

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Résumé

Le secteur informel joue un modeste mais notable rôle dans l'économie sud-africaine, même si les personnes qui y travaillent sont piégée, parfois pour longtemps, par leur niveau de vie et leur situation financière. Malgré ces difficultés, les personnes employées dans le secteur informel affichent un bien-être subjectif (SWB) moyen. Certaines études ont montré que les déterminants habituels du bien-être subjectif ont peu d'impact sur les personnes employées dans le secteur informel en Afrique du Sud. La présente étude a pour objectif de confirmer ces résultats en utilisant un ensemble exhaustif de données et en se focalisant sur le secteur informel dans son ensemble. À l'aide d'un modèle Probit ordonné et à partir des données fusionnées de la vague 5 (2017) de l'étude nationale sur la dynamique du revenu des adultes, nous avons analysé les déterminants du bien-être social dans l'emploi informel en Afrique du Sud. Les résultats ont révélé que, dans le secteur informel, seuls certains facteurs, notamment l'âge, le revenu, le revenu relatif, l'état de santé et le statut matrimonial ont un impact significatif sur le bien-être social. Plus précisément, un âge avancé, un état de santé précaire, un revenu supérieur à la moyenne et des expériences de divorce ou de séparation sont associés à un impact négatif sur le bien-être social. À l'inverse, un revenu moyen a un effet positif sur le bien-être social. Nous recommandons des interventions ciblées et adaptées selon l'âge ; des programmes d'amélioration des revenus ; et des initiatives d'éducation financière et d'épargne pour contribuer à l'amélioration du bien-être des participants du secteur informel.

Mots-clés : Afrique du Sud ; secteur informel ; bien-être subjectif

Introduction

South Africa's urban landscape has seen a proliferation of informal settlements due to migration from rural areas to urban areas, placing considerable strain on major cities and the formal wage sector. These settlements, often situated in peri-urban areas, serve as refuge for disadvan☺taged urban residents (Rogerson 2016; Yuki 2007; Even-Zahav 2016). Although informal settlements host many workers employed in the informal sector, this sector is not confined to informal settlements; diverse informal businesses are found across urban spaces. The informal sector comprises self-employed individuals and small enterprises that often lack formal contracts, tax registration, and financial stability, resulting in their largely operating outside the formal regulatory framework (SME South Africa 2023; Thwala 2022).

Despite enduring challenges such as low education levels and precarious working conditions, the informal sector remains a vital source of employment and economic activity in South Africa. This phenomenon reflects the

country's urbanisation trajectory, which has resulted in steady expansion of the informal sector compared to the formal sector (Yuki 2007). Despite the adversity often associated with informal sector employment, certain activities offer pathways to sustainable livelihoods and income generation (Rogerson 2016; Skinner 2019).

Subjective well-being (SWB) is a crucial metric for assessing individuals' quality of life and livelihoods in the informal sector (Diener 1984; Cramm et al. 2010). SWB is a person's subjective judgement of the quality and circumstances of their own life, depending on their psychological situations, success, and life purpose, based on standards they imposed on themselves (Diener 1984). Understanding the determinants of SWB among marginalised populations can inform targeted interventions to enhance their welfare and foster inclusive growth.

While existing research has explored various facets of SWB in different contexts, gaps persist in understanding the determinants of SWB, specifically those of individuals employed in South Africa's informal sector. This study addresses these gaps by focusing exclusively on South Africa's informal sector employees and using a comprehensive dataset to analyse determinants of SWB. Unlike previous studies that have examined specific demographic groups or provinces, this study offers a holistic assessment of SWB drivers across the informal sector participant landscape. Furthermore, this study adopts a nuanced approach by integrating social, material, and racial dimensions of SWB, thereby expanding the scope of existing research. By utilising a combination of direct and indirect methods to identify informal sector participants, this study provides a robust framework for assessing SWB in this context.

Drawing on prior literature, this study hypothesises that social and material factors significantly influence SWB among informal sector workers in South Africa. Specifically, variables such as gender, education, marital status, income, and working relationships are expected to be significant determinants of SWB (Mahadea and Ramroop 2015; Cramm et al. 2010). The study utilises data from the Wave 5 merged National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) dataset, encompassing cross-sectional data from 2017. The analysis employs an Ordered Probit regression model and focuses on the social, material, and racial determinants of SWB among informal sector workers in South Africa (Alfers and Rogan 2014; Morton et al. 2018).

The remainder of the paper reviews existing literature on SWB determinants, outlines the methodology, presents descriptive statistics and empirical findings, and concludes with policy recommendations.

Literature Review

SWB has been extensively studied from both psychological and economic perspectives, offering unique insights into individual happiness and life satisfaction determinants.

Theoretical framework of SWB

In psychology, SWB is understood as a multidimensional construct comprising affective and cognitive components. Diener (1984) proposed a hybrid theory of SWB, incorporating hedonistic, life satisfaction, and emotional state theories. This perspective emphasises the subjective nature of well-being, highlighting the importance of emotional experiences and cognitive judgments in assessing overall quality of life (Eid and Larsen 2008). Diener's work also differentiates between top-down and bottom-up theories of SWB. Bottom-up theories posit that satisfaction in specific life domains contributes to overall life satisfaction, while top-down theories suggest that a positive life outlook influences perceptions of individual life domains (Andrews and Withey 1976; Brief et al. 1993; Heller et al. 2004; Schimmack and Oishi 2005).

By contrast, the economic model of SWB, which is rooted in welfare economics, examines the relationship between income distribution, economic efficiency, and societal well-being. This perspective views well-being in terms of welfare, utility, and satisfaction, focusing on the impact of leisure and consumption on individual happiness (Headey 1993).

Empirical framework for the determinants of SWB

Empirical studies have identified consistent trends in the determinants of SWB across different nations and regions. Socio-demographic variables such as income, age, gender, health, education, employment, and marital status have been found to influence SWB significantly (Diener and Seligman 2002). For example, research by Blanchflower and Oswald (2004), Easterlin (2003), Frey and Stutzer (2002), Graham et al. (2009), Diener et al. (2010), and Helliwell et al. (2012) has underscored the significance of these factors in influencing individual well-being.

Given the focus of this study is on identifying the determinants of SWB in South Africa's informal sector, the Ordered Probit model has been employed. Previous studies utilising similar methodologies in the South African context are examined to provide insights and comparisons. Table 1 presents the results of these studies for reference and comparison.

Table 1: SWB studies on the informal sector of South Africa

	Botha & Booysen (2013)	Blaauw & Pretorius (2013)	Ebrahim et al. (2013)	Hinks & Gruen (2007)	Powdthavee (2003)	Posel & Casale (2011)
	SA as a whole	Car guards in SA	Each race group in SA	SA as a whole	SA vs. Rich countries	SA as a whole
Income	+ & significant		+ & significant	+ & insignificant	+ & significant	+ & significant
Relative Income						
Much below average income	Base		Base			
Below average income	+ & significant		+ & significant		- & insignificant	
Average income	+ & significant		+ & significant			
Above Average income	+ & significant		+ & significant			
Much above average income	+ & significant		+ & significant			
Age	- & significant	+ & insignificant	- & significant	- & insignificant	- & significant	- & significant
Age- Squared	+ & significant	- & insignificant	+ & significant	+ & insignificant	+ & significant	+ & significant
Health						
Excellent	+ & significant		+ & significant			+ & significant
Fair	+ & significant		+ & significant			+ & significant
Poor	base		Base			Base
Gender	- & significant (F)	- & insignificant (M)	- & significant	- & insignificant (F)	+ & insignificant (M)	+ & significant (M)
Marital status						
Never Married	Base	base	Base	base		Base
Married/ living together	+ & significant	- & insignificant	+ & significant	+ & insignificant		+ & insignificant
Divorced/Separated	+ & significant	- & insignificant	- & insignificant	- & insignificant		+ & insignificant
Widowed	+ & insignificant	/	- & insignificant	- & insignificant		+ & insignificant
Race						
Asian/Indian	+ & significant		+ & significant	+ & significant	+ & significant	- & insignificant
White	+ & significant		+ & significant	+ & significant	+ & significant	Base
Coloured	+ & significant		+ & significant	+ & insignificant	+ & significant	+ & significant
African	Base		Base	Base	Base	- & significant
Education						
No schooling		- & insignificant	Base			
Completed primary school		+ & insignificant	+ & significant		- & insignificant	+ & significant
Completed secondary school		+ & insignificant	+ & significant			
Tertiary degree		/	+ & significant			

Source: Authors' own analysis

The common determinants of SWB identified in the findings in Table 1 are summarised below.

Income

There is a general consensus among researchers that income plays a significant role in determining SWB (Graham 2016). Easterlin (1974) introduced the Easterlin paradox, suggesting that while higher income is initially associated with increased SWB, the impact of higher income on SWB may diminish over time. Possible explanations for this paradox include considering relative income rather than absolute income, adaptation to higher income levels, and the diminishing marginal utility of income once basic needs are met (Graham et al. 2009; Clark et al. 2008).

Age

Early research indicates that younger individuals tend to report higher levels of SWB compared to older individuals (Powdthavee 2003; Botha and Booysen 2013; Ebrahim et al. 2013)

Health

Health status exerts a substantial influence on SWB, with mental health indicators often demonstrating a stronger relationship than physical health indicators (Dolan et al. 2008). Studies by Fleche et al. (2012) and Cramm et al. (2010) in the African context using different methodologies have reported a positive and significant relationship between health status and SWB.

Gender

Findings regarding gender differences in SWB are mixed. Some studies, such as those by Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) and Haring et al. (1984), suggest that men tend to report higher levels of SWB, while others, like Fujita et al. (1991), find women to have higher SWB. However, several studies, including Fleche et al. (2012) and Cramm et al. (2010), have found gender to be an insignificant determinant of SWB. The results presented in Table 1 for the South African context also reflect this variability.

Marital status

Research in South Africa presents conflicting findings regarding the relationship between marital status and SWB. While Cramm et al. (2010) found that married individuals tend to report higher levels of SWB, Morton et al. (2018) found no significant relationship.

Education

Formal education is associated with higher levels of SWB, as indicated by Easterlin's longitudinal research (2003). Van den Bosch and Taris (2018) highlight the correlation between formal education levels and income levels in the formal job sector. However, research by Blaauw (2017) focusing on the informal sector in South Africa suggests that day workers in this sector report high levels of SWB, despite lower levels of formal education.

In conclusion, the relationship between subjective well-being and various socio-economic determinants reflects complex interactions shaped by context and individual circumstances. Income remains a key factor, supporting the notion that financial stability enhances well-being. However, the diminishing returns observed through the Easterlin paradox highlight that SWB gains plateau once basic needs are met. Age and health are also significant, with younger individuals and those in better health reporting higher SWB, suggesting that both life stage and physical and mental well-being play substantial roles in shaping individuals' quality of life. Mixed findings regarding gender, marital status, and education highlight the nuanced and sometimes contradictory nature of determinants of SWB. For example, while formal education typically correlates with higher SWB in the formal sector, studies show that informal sector workers may experience high SWB even with lower educational attainment. This variability highlights the importance of considering specific contexts, such as the informal sector in South Africa, when evaluating determinants of well-being. Overall, these insights emphasise that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient for understanding SWB.

Methodology

This quantitative study aims to investigate the determinants of subjective well-being among individuals employed in South Africa's informal sector, focusing on social, material, and racial variables. The section begins by outlining the data source and cleaning procedures, followed by a description of the econometric model and specification of the dependent and independent variables.

Data and variables

The analysis utilised the National Income Dynamics Study adult wave five merged dataset for the year 2017. NIDS is a longitudinal study capturing the livelihoods of individuals and households in South Africa over time. The dataset was imported into Stata for analysis.

In Stata, the dataset was filtered to include only individuals employed in the informal sector. The informal sector refers to the part of the economy that:

1) is primarily located in informal settlements (specified in question A5a);
2) is neither taxed nor monitored by the government (answered 'No' to question Ec7.1);
3) lacks formally written contracts and union membership (specified in question Eb14.1 and Eb15); and
4) is characterised by low-skilled workers receiving minimum or unfixed wages (Rand Merchant Bank 2022; IEJ 2018; Blaauw 2017).

Subsequently, irrelevant responses such as blanks, non-participants, and uninformative answers were excluded from the analysis, resulting in a refined dataset for model estimation. This process of filtering and cleaning the data significantly decreased the number of observations from 45,103 to 615.

The dependent variable, SWB, was based on a question in the NIDS questionnaire asking respondents, 'Using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means "Very dissatisfied" and 10 means "Very satisfied", how do you feel about your life as a whole right now?' (NIDS 2017: 50). SWB was recoded in Stata into a categorical variable to use the Ordered Probit model. The SWB variable was recoded by grouping participants' responses as follows: those who rated their satisfaction between 1 and 4 were classified as 1 (not satisfied), a rating of 5 was recoded to 2 (neutral), and ratings from 6 to 10 were classified as 3 (satisfied).

The explanatory variables encompass demographic, material, and racial factors, each recoded in Stata for compatibility with the Ordered Probit model. Table 2 presents the explanatory variables and their corresponding codes.

The model

When analysing SWB, two primary models are commonly employed: the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) model and the Ordered Probit model. Previous studies, such as those by Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) and Ferrer-i-Carbonell and Frijters (2004), have demonstrated the consistency of results across both models. Given the ordinal nature of the dependent variable, the Ordered Probit model was deemed most appropriate for this study. This model accounts for the likelihood of observations falling into specific categories of SWB, considering both observed and unobserved factors.

The estimation equation was as follows:

$$W_{it} = \alpha + \beta X_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

Where: W_{it} is the reported SWB of individual X_{it} at time , is a vector of all the independent variables, including social, material and cultural variables consistent with the literature. is the error term, which includes unobserved characteristics and measurement errors. Before estimation, the model was tested for multicollinearity, normality, and homoscedasticity using appropriate diagnostic tools. Post-estimation, the model's goodness of fit and the significance of individual coefficients were assessed. Given the high correlation between gender and the number of children, the latter was omitted to address issues of multicollinearity. Additionally, two separate Ordered Probit models were used to explore the impact of absolute and relative income variables.

Table 2: Dependent and explanatory variables

Variable	Details	Type and Description
Dependent Variable:		
Subjective Well-being	SWB	**Categorical**: 1 = Not satisfied, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Satisfied.
Independent variables:		
Demographic Variables:		
Gender	Female	**Dummy Variable:** 0 = Male, 1 = Female
Age	Age	**Continuous Variable:** Age in years
Age Squared	Age-SQ	**Continuous Variable:** Age squared
Education	Years of Schooling	**Categorical:** 1 = No schooling (Base), 2 = Primary school or part, 3 = Secondary school or part, 4 = Tertiary degree.
Marital Status	Married (Married/Living together), No longer married (Divorced/Separated), Never married.	**Categorical:** 1 = Married, 2 = No longer married, 3 = Never married (Base).
Health Status	Excellent, Very good, Good, Fair, Poor.	**Categorical:** 1 = Excellent/Very good (Base), 2 = Neutral, 3 = Fair/Poor.
Material Variables:		
Income (Log)	Income from primary and secondary jobs.	**Continuous Variable:** Amount in Rands
Relative Income	Respondent's income compared and ranked according to average income	**Categorical:** 1 = Below Average income (Base), 2 = Average income, 3 = Above Average income.
Other income	Income from grants	**Dummy Variable:** 1 if received any kind of grant or assistance, 0 otherwise.
Ethnic variables:		
Race group	Respondent's race group.	**Categorical:** 1 = African (Base), 2 = Coloured, 3 = Asian/Indian, 4 = White

Source: NIDS Wave 5 (2017) Adult Survey where applicable. Binary variables assigned by the authors otherwise

Results and Discussion

The results are delineated into two parts. In Part 1, a comprehensive analysis of the data is conducted utilising descriptive statistics, employing pie charts and histograms. Initially, attention is directed to the holistic depiction of the informal sector, elucidating its organisational structure and highlighting key characteristics derived from the dataset. Subsequently, the average SWB across various categories was scrutinised. In Part 2, the outcomes of the Ordered Probit model are presented and discussed, accompanied by post-estimation tests that explore the correlations between the findings of this study and the existing literature.

Descriptive statistics

The informal sector of South Africa

Table 3 portrays the overarching organisation of the informal sector. Notably, the mean SWB registers at 5, indicating a neutral stance towards well-being among employees in this sector. The average age is 38, with an accompanying average income of R2,030. According to research, the informal sector predominantly consists of:

1) females;
2) uneducated individuals who only finished matric or a part of secondary school;
3) low-income earners; and
4) Africans (Chen 2001; Adams et al. 2013; Stats SA 2014).

The sub-sample of individuals used in this study confirms the findings of previous studies, as shown in Figures 1–6 and Table 3.

Botha and Booysen (2013) delved into the determinants of SWB for South Africa as a whole and reported a comparable mean SWB of 5.43. Their study also reflected similar statistics regarding marital status, with 46 per cent never married, 31 per cent married, and 23 per cent no longer married. The subsequent section will delve into the average SWB of individuals employed in the informal sector, segmented by the predefined categories.

SWB in the informal sector

Figure 7 shows that average SWB tends to be higher among individuals in their teenage years (aged 15–19) and older adults (aged 66–70), with lower average SWB observed in midlife. This trend suggests a general, though not perfectly symmetrical, U-shaped pattern in average SWB across age groups, consistent with the findings of Easterlin (1995), Botha and Booysen (2013), and Ebrahim et al. (2013).

Table 3: The informal sector

Variable	*Mean*	*Std. dev.*	*Min*	*Max*
SWB	5	2.43	1	10
Age (yrs)	38	12.10	15	70
Income	R2 030	1480,9	R0	R12 500
Nr of Children	2	1,25	1	6

Variable	*Category*	*Percentage*	*Pie Chart*
Gender	Male	45%	Figure 1 - Gender
	Female	55%	Male Female
Education	No schooling	13%	Figure 2 - Education
	Primary school or part	22%	No school PrimSch or part
	Secondary school or part	60%	SecSch or part Ter degree
	Tertiary degree	5%	
	Postgraduate degree	0%	
Relative income	Below Average Income	50%	Figure 3 - Relative Income
	Average Income	40%	Below Averag Average Above Average
	Above Average Income	10%	
Race	African	91%	Figure 4 - Race
	Coloured	8%	African Coloured Asian/Indian White
	Asian/Indian	0.8%	
	White	0.2%	
Marital Status	Married	32%	Figure 5 - Marital Status
	No longer married	10%	Married No longer married Never Married
	Never Married	58%	
Health Status	Excellent	65%	Figure 6 - Health Status
	Neutral	29%	Excellent Neutral Poor
	Poor	6%	

Source: NIDS (2017)

SWB demonstrates a decline when income reaches very high levels, potentially due to the diminishing marginal utility of wealth. This phenomenon is supported by Kahneman and Deaton (2010) and Layard (2011), suggesting that emotional well-being becomes constrained by other factors beyond a certain threshold of stable income. Visual representations in Figure 8 corroborate this assertion, depicting a decrease in average SWB with the highest income category.

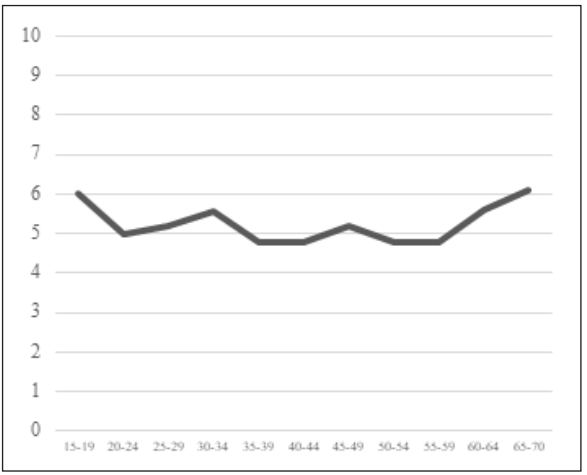

Figure 7: U-shaped Average SWB according to age
Source: NIDS (2017)

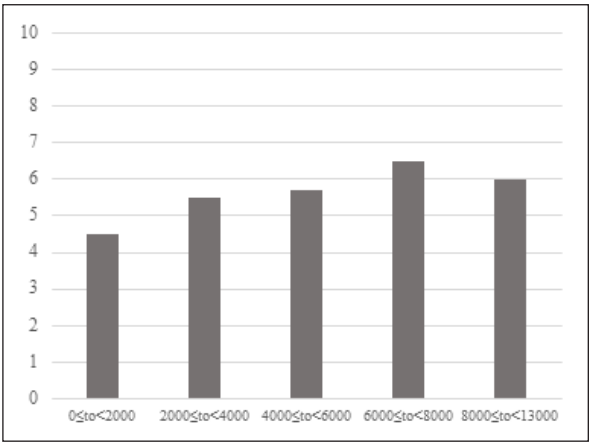

Figure 8: Average SWB according to Income
Source: NIDS (2017)

The histograms in Figure 9–14 further illustrate the average SWB across various categories. These descriptive statistics align with findings from a case study conducted by Mahadea and Ramroop (2015) in KwaZulu-Natal, indicating that males exhibit slightly higher SWB than females, education levels do not significantly affect SWB, and disparities exist in SWB across racial groups. Hinks and Gruen (2007) also observed lower levels of SWB among Africans, while Botha and Booysen (2013) found that married individuals report higher satisfaction compared to their single, divorced, separated, or widowed counterparts.

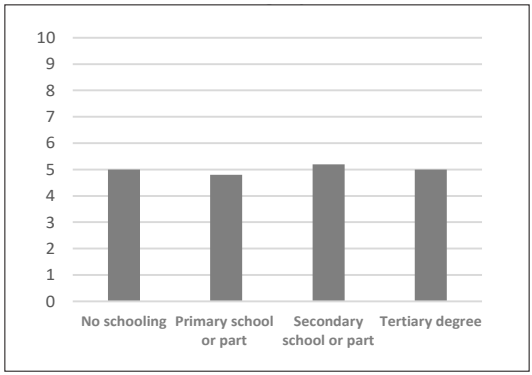

Figure 9: Average SWB per Education category

The Average SWB among the different Education categories do not differe by much

Source: NIDS (2017)

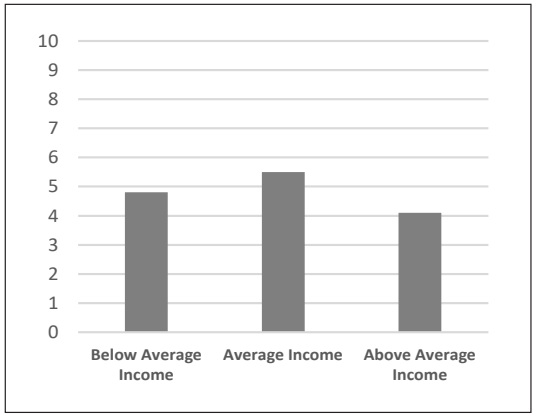

Figure 10: Average SWB per Relative income category

The Average SWB is highest for individuals who earn an average income relative to others.

Source: NIDS (2017)

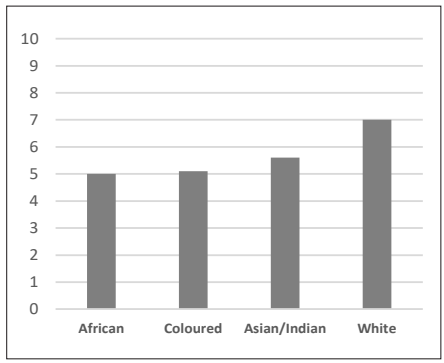

Figure 11: Average SWB according to Race

Africans have the lowest average SWB and Whites have the highest average SWB

Source: NIDS (2017)

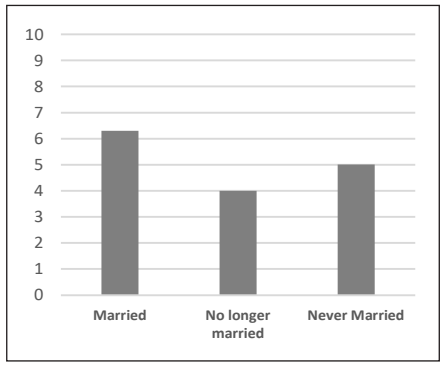

Figure 12: Average SWB according to marital status

Married individuals have the highest average SWB. Individuals who are either divorced or widowed show the lowest average SWB. Source: NIDS (2017)

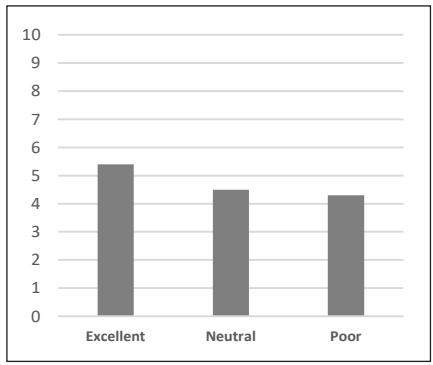

Figure 13: Average SWB according to health status

The average SWB decreases as health status decreases. Individuals with Excellent health have a high average SWB. Source: NIDS (2017)

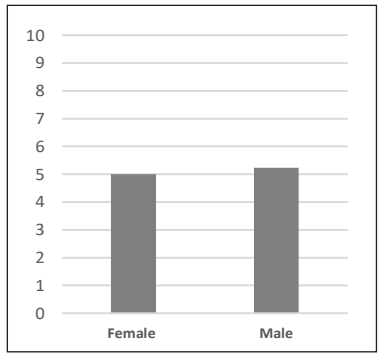

Figure 14: Average SWB according to Gender
Females show a slightly lower
Source: NIDS (2017)

Ordered Probit results

Prior to estimation, the data underwent rigorous pre-estimation tests to ensure the robustness of the model. These tests encompassed the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to assess multicollinearity, the Anderson-Darling test to evaluate normality, and the Breusch-Pagan Lagrangian multiplier test to examine homoscedasticity. The authors found the models did not require adjustments after these assessments, facilitating the retrieval of reliable regression results.

Table 4 presents the comprehensive regression outcomes for the two Ordered Probit models, where SWB is the dependent variable and is regressed against all pertinent explanatory variables. Model 1 diverges from Model 2 by incorporating relative income, denoting an individual's perception of his or her income relative to that of their immediate peers. In contrast, Model 2 encompasses absolute income, representing the actual monetary amount received monthly and reflected in the person's bank account.

Upon conducting post-estimation tests, as indicated in Table 4, both Model 1 and Model 2 exhibited statistical validity, with the Prob > chi2 statistic yielding values below the conventional threshold of 0.05. The pseudo R squared values, which represent the joint explanatory power of the explanatory variables, hover around 4.3 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. These figures align closely with prior studies on SWB in South Africa, offering a semblance of consistency with the findings of existing literature (Powdthavee 2003; Hinks and Gruen 2007; Botha and Booysen 2013; Posel and Casale 2011). Notably, the higher Pseudo R2 in Model 2 suggests it is a better fit than Model 1.

Table 4: Ordered probit model regression results

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coefficient	P-value	Coefficient	P-value
Age	-0.046**	(0.026)	-0.037**	(0.026)
Age-Squared	0.001***	(0.000)	0.001***	(0.000)
log Income	0.342*	(0.078)		
Gender	0.045	(0.123)	-0.036	(0.120)
Grants Received	0.128	(0.122)	0.070	(0.121)
Relative income				
Below Average Income			Base	
Average Income			0.254*	(0.100)
Above Average Income			-0.529	(0.164)
Education				
No schooling	Base		Base	
Primary school Or Part	-0.140	(0.167)	-0.153	(0.166)
Secondary school Or Part	-0.033	(0.168)	0.022	(0.166)
Tertiary degree	-0.132	(0.271)	0.037	(0.268)
Race				
Coloured	-0.121	(0.168)	-0.098	(0.170)
African	Base		Base	
Asian/Indian	-0.061	(0.497)	0.107	(0.492)
White	5.499	(104.382)	5.949	(104.286)
Marital status				
Married	0.061	(0.113)	0.071	(0.112)
No longer married	-0.565	(0.191)	-0.621	(0.185)
Never Married	Base			
Health status				
Excellent	Base		Base	
Neutral	-0.307	(0.109)	-0.383	(0.107)
Poor	-0.410	(0.202)	-0.572	(0.203)
Number of observations	589		600	
Prob > chi2	0.0000		0.0000	
Pseudo R2	0.0426		0.0495	

Dependent variable: SWB = 1 if Not satisfied, = 2 if Neutral, =3 if Satisfied.
***p<1%, **p<5%, *p<10%. Source: NIDS (2017)

In both Model 1 and Model 2, age emerges as a significant determinant of SWB, exhibiting a negative correlation with well-being. This finding resonates with previous research by Botha and Booysen (2013), Ebrahim et al. (2013), Powdthavee (2003), and Posel and Casale (2011), which underscored the inverse relationship between age and SWB, possibly attributed to declining health and increased financial constraints as individuals age.

Income, featured solely in Model 1, showcases a positive and significant impact on SWB, consistent with prior studies by Botha and Booysen (2013), Ebrahim et al. (2013), Powdthavee (2003), and Posel and Casale (2011). This finding highlights the alleviation of financial stress associated with higher income levels, thereby enhancing the well-being of informal sector employees. Grants, akin to income, exhibit a positive yet insignificant effect on SWB, aligning with the observations of Blaauw and Pretorius (2023), particularly concerning the positive impact of income on carguards' well-being.

Relative income, introduced in Model 2, presents a nuanced perspective, with the coefficient for average income earners displaying a positive and significant effect, but this becomes negative for above-average income earners. This inversion confirms the diminishing returns theory posited by Layard (2011) and supported by Botha and Booysen (2013) and Ebrahim et al. (2013), indicating a decline in well-being as income surpasses a certain threshold.

The influence of gender on SWB diverges between Model 1 and Model 2, mirroring the inconclusive findings in prior studies. While Model 1 aligns with Cramm et al. (2012) and Mahadea and Rawat (2008) in portraying a positive yet insignificant impact of being female on SWB, Model 2 accords with Hinks and Gruen (2007) in suggesting a detrimental effect on well-being among females.

Similarly, marital status exhibits a negative and insignificant association with SWB among individuals who are no longer married, echoing the findings of Blaauw and Pretorius (2023), Ebrahim et al. (2013), and Hinks and Gruen (2007). The negative, albeit insignificant, association between not being married and SWB may be attributed to the loss of the emotional and social support typically provided in marriage, potentially contributing to feelings of loneliness or anxiety (Pretorius et al. 2021). According to Pretorius et al. (2021), similar to the adaptation observed in marriage, individuals who experience marital dissolution might initially encounter a decline in SWB, as the absence of companionship and stability associated with marriage creates a lasting emotional gap. Africans, as the base group for race, maintain higher SWB compared to other racial groups, albeit not consistently significant. This finding diverges from prior studies but may be attributed to the homogeneity of the sample, which is primarily comprised of African individuals.

Education, intriguingly, exhibits a negative and insignificant relationship with SWB in Model 1, indicative of diminishing returns to education among informal sector employees. This finding contradicts previous studies by Blaauw and Pretorius (2023) and Ebrahim et al. (2013) but aligns with the observations in Model 2.

Overall, the results suggest that SWB among informal sector employees in South Africa may not hinge on domain satisfaction, as evidenced by the insignificance of numerous variables. However, the average SWB reported indicates a moderate level of well-being, which is in accordance with the top-down theory posited by psychologists.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The prevalence of informal employment in South Africa persists due to ongoing rural-to-urban migration, with migrants seeking improved job prospects and higher incomes in urban areas. For those with limited educational attainment, the informal sector often represents the sole avenue for livelihood. However, the absence of governmental oversight leaves informal sector workers vulnerable to exploitation and economic insecurity (Mohlakoana et al. 2019).

Past research in this domain has either encompassed South Africa holistically, incorporating formal employment or has been restricted to specific subgroups within the informal sector. This study aims to bridge the gap by elucidating the determinants of SWB among informal sector employees in South Africa, without focusing on any particular subgroup within this sector.

Employing an Ordered Probit model for estimation, the findings reveal that age, income (in Model 1), relative income (in Model 2), health status, and marital status significantly influence SWB. Notably, advanced age, compromised health, above-average income, and marital dissolution are associated with diminished SWB, whereas average income levels correlate positively with well-being.

The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of SWB determinants among informal sector employees, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to enhance overall well-being. Policymakers should prioritise initiatives to bolster income levels, address age-related health concerns, and mitigate gender disparities in the informal sector. Additionally, efforts to support individuals grappling with marital dissolution or educational attainment should be considered to foster resilience and well-being within this vulnerable demographic.

The study's outcomes bear significant policy implications. To enhance SWB among informal sector employees in South Africa, targeted, age-sensitive interventions could address the unique challenges of older workers, offering support in areas such as health, financial planning, and mental wellness. Additionally, income enhancement programmes, including skills

development, microloans and support for transitioning to more profitable activities could help informal workers increase their earnings, thereby improving their SWB. Lastly, financial literacy and savings initiatives would enable workers, particularly those with lower incomes, to manage their finances more effectively, reduce their economic vulnerability, and ultimately alleviate financial stress.

The study's efficacy is somewhat constrained by its stringent criteria for identifying informal sector workers in South Africa, leading to a notable reduction in sample size. As explained above, the process of filtering and cleaning the data significantly decreased the number of observations from 45,103 to 615. Further subdivision of the sample for specific variables exacerbated this issue. While the findings largely confirm those of existing research, the small sample size suggests that they should be interpreted cautiously.

It is imperative to devise more precise methodologies for data filtration to encompass a broader spectrum of informal sector employees, thereby enhancing the reliability and generalisability of the findings. Addressing these methodological limitations would enhance the robustness of policy recommendations aimed at fostering SWB among informal sector workers in South Africa.

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Commissions of Inquiry: The Hybrid Hollowing Out of State Governance in South Africa

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Abstract

The release in mid-2022 of *The Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture Report* brought the number of completed official commissions of inquiry (CoIs) since 2001 to twelve. Currently, there has been a substantial increase in the use and establishment of CoIs. This article contends that the establishment of CoIs in inappropriate circumstances should be seen as a disturbing practice by the African National Congress (ANC)-led government to outsource its political and institutional leadership role to quasi-legal arrangements like CoIs. This article uses Rational Choice Theory/ Choice Theory to examine the terms of reference of two recent CoIs. It then contends that there has been a marked decline in state capacity, and that appointing CoIs due to ANC political party decisions is a form of the hybrid 'hollowing out of state governance', which involves outsourcing governance and leadership to CoIs. This jeopardises the government's ability to address socio-economic and institutional public policy problems. New government usage standards are needed to guide decisions on when it is indeed appropriate in South Africa to establish a CoI to examine and report on an important societal concern.

Keywords: Commissions of inquiry, South Africa, African National Congress, Rational Choice Theory, Choice Theory, governance

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Résumé

La publication, mi-2022, du rapport de la Commission d'enquête judiciaire sur les allégations de captation de l'État a porté à douze le nombre de commissions d'enquête officielles (CE) menées à terme depuis 2001. Au cours de cette période, le recours à et la création de CE ont considérablement augmenté. Cet article soutient que la création, dans des circonstances inappropriées, de CE doit être considérée comme une pratique inquiétante de la part du gouvernement dirigé par le Congrès national africain (ANC) qui a pour objectif d'externaliser son rôle de leadership politique et institutionnel vers des dispositifs quasi juridiques tels que les CE. Cet article s'appuie sur la théorie du choix rationnel/théorie du choix pour examiner les termes de référence de deux dernières CE. Il soutient ensuite que les capacités de l'État ont connu un déclin marqué et que la mise en place de commissions d'enquête sur la base de décisions politiques de l'ANC constitue une forme hybride de « désagrégation de la gouvernance étatique », c'est-à-dire une externalisation de la gouvernance et du leadership vers des commissions d'enquête. Cela compromet la capacité du gouvernement à résoudre les problèmes socio-économiques et institutionnels de politique publique. En Afrique du Sud, de nouvelles normes d'usage gouvernementales sont nécessaires pour décider de l'opportunité de créer des commissions d'enquête chargée d'examiner et de rendre compte d'une préoccupation sociétale importante.

Mots-clés : commissions d'enquête ; Afrique du Sud ; Congrès national africain ; théorie du choix rationnel ; théorie du choix ; gouvernance.

Introduction

Since 2001, South Africa's African National Congress (ANC)-led national government has frequently used the political-legal apparatus known as a commission of inquiry (CoI), also known as a public inquiry, to address various socio-economic and political problems plaguing the state. In the period 2018 to 2022, the revelations about South African political and economic elites' abuse of authority that emerged from hearings of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector including Organs of State (colloquially known as the Zondo Commission) shocked people across the world (Nicol 2022).

While the Zondo Commission was critical in distilling various moral and institutional lapses in the state and organs of state, the fact that it cost about R1 billion (about U$55 million) (Ramela 2022) raises serious questions about the efficacy of using CoIs to address critical governance problems (AZAPO Voice 2018). So, while the Zondo Commission should be seen as a positive development for holding the government to account

(Haffajee and Chipkin 2022), and enhancing oversight of the highest office and many powerful individuals, it must be seen as a step, and not a panacea, for addressing misgovernance (Kohn 2024).

This article adds new thinking to ideas about CoIs and how they are being used by the South African government. It contends that, rather than adding to the understanding of various socio-political and institutional weaknesses in South Africa, more recent CoIs are proof of a decline in governance, political and institutional leadership capacity (Mazzucato et al. 2021). This type of action by the South African government is referred to in the current article as a 'hybrid hollowing out of the state' for reasons described below.

Howlett (2000) introduced the idea of 'the hollow state' which refers to governments which outsource the management of critical public utilities like energy, water and healthcare to private/ non-government actors rather than governing these critical areas themselves:

> Many states have undergone a kind of 'hollowing out,' as various functions and activities traditionally undertaken by governments – from highway maintenance to psychiatric care – have been contracted-out or otherwise devolved to non or quasi-governmental organizations, further deepening the network structure and character of contemporary life (Howlett 2000: 413).

This article extends Howlett's concept of 'hollowed-out' state governance by contending that, when it exercises the choice to appoint CoIs, the South African state is not only outsourcing its governance role, it is also outsourcing its leadership. This is referred to in the current article as a 'hybrid hollowing out' of the state.

This article's main contention is illustrated by examining the terms of reference (TORs) of two recent CoIs – the Judicial Commission of Enquiry into Allegations of Impropriety at the Public Investment Corporation (2020) and the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education and Training (2017).

Historical background to CoIs

The idea of commissions of inquiry/ public inquiries has come to occupy quite a prominent role in the thinking of average (non-legal expert) South African citizens (Mkhatshwa 2018), especially as it relates to how they view the use of political and institutional power by prominent government authorities. The current article is open to exploring the practice of CoIs in other non-Western states and will begin by drawing on the interpretation of the concept that emerged in twelfth-century England.

Elaborating on their origins of CoIs, Lester (2016) explains,

> In medieval England they were variously used as tribunals, to determine legal guilt or innocence, or as investigative instruments when treason or sedition was suspected, or to prosecute those who posed a threat to the Monarchy. (Lester 2016: 25).

Two key ideas emerge from the preceding paragraph.

Firstly, CoIs were utilised as legal instruments to assess the threat posed by certain individuals to the authority of, for example, medieval English monarchies (Lester 2016). Secondly, while they were legal instruments to determine a legal outcome of guilt or innocence, COIs were and (some might argue) continue to be, political instruments, not simply legal instruments. Put differently, it can be contended that authorities of the time – the monarchy in the early twelfth century or authorities in the present time – have a significant influence on how and when CoIs are appointed. This remains true in the case in the present day.

One arena where this applies is multilateral institutions such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) where international CoIs have come to be favoured by the United Nations Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the United Nations Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as regional multilateral entities (OHCHR 2015: V).

This statement about the use of CoIs by entities that are not state governments clearly indicates the popularity and growing importance of CoIs as policy tools and, perhaps, as mechanisms. This brief historical overview of CoIs has intentionally employed a Western or international prism of analysis. The following section focuses specifically on South Africa.

The South African landscape pre- and post-1994

Pre-1994 South Africa

A good starting point for examining the history of CoIs in South Africa is Gardiol van Niekerk's doctoral study, *The Interaction of Indigenous Law and Western Law in South Africa: A Historical and Comparative Perspective* (Van Niekerk 1995). Van Niekerk explains how pre-1994 commissions were appointed under the imposition of Western white colonial rule. Some notable examples of colonial-era CoIs in South Africa include the Cape Native Laws and Customs Commission (1881) and the Cape Native Laws and Customs Commission (1883). One of the many benefits of Van Niekerk's work is that it provides valuable insight into how CoIs can operate within a politically and socially immoral system, such as British colonialism.

Two other insights can be garnered from the work of Van Niekerk as it relates to the current article's argument on the use of CoIs.

Firstly, it shows that CoIs in South Africa that date back to the era of British colonial rule and the apartheid era were like the British monarch's political tools – to be used by political elites and leaders to achieve semi-legal outcomes (or quasi-legal outcomes) for their rule. In the case of British and Afrikaner despotic rule, most Africans were disregarded, and the law was used to continue their subjugation, seen most clearly in the section entitled 'Inter-colonial Native Affairs Commission of 1903–1905' (Van Niekerk 1995: 95).

The second point is that under British and Afrikaner despotic rule, CoIs became blunt tools for advancing white minority rule. The National Party (NP) rulers of South Africa used the 1976 Cillié Commission (named after Judge Petrus M Cillié) to examine the uprising in Soweto and other places in the same year. The 1976 Cillié Commission clearly illustrated the NP's and apartheid South Africa's government's ability to manufacture what seemed to be legal outcomes, even when the wider international community could see that the government apparatus (police) had killed people (Anisin 2021: 308). The use of CoIs in pre-1994 South Africa can therefore be seen as an extension of Western imperialist thought that negated the existence of native African populations and kingdoms.

Post-1994 South Africa

Between 2001 and 2025, the ANC-led government had appointed twelve commissions of inquiry/ public inquiries, and another three enquiries under the National Prosecution Authority Act.[1] CoIs/ public inquiries during this time include the recently concluded Commission of Inquiry Into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector, Including Organs of State (2018–2022), the Commission of Inquiry into Ellis Park Stadium Soccer Disaster (2001), and the Donen Commission into the Alleged Illicit Activities of Certain South African Companies or Individuals Relating to the United Nations Oil for Food Programme in Iraq (2011).

Professor of Law Stephen Peté of the University of KwaZulu-Natal contends that the value of post-1994 CoIs rests on three ideas. Firstly, they are a lived expression of South Africa's transition from an era of repression and secrecy to one of openness. Secondly, CoIs are an embodiment of the South African state's commitment to liberal democratic order. Thirdly, and perhaps most interestingly, they permit public and private institutions to be held to account, even though individuals in these institutions have astonishing authority and power (Peté 2021).

While the current article agrees with some of Peté observations, the author contends that the purpose of early CoIs in South Africa's democratic era, specifically the 2001 Commission of Inquiry into the Ellis Park Stadium Soccer Disaster (a tragic event resulting in numerous deaths) and the 2001 Nel Commission of Inquiry into the Affairs of the Masterbond Group and Investor Protection in South Africa (focusing on complex Ponzi schemes fleecing vulnerable citizens), were aligned with the Norris and Shepheard understanding of the purpose of CoIs, namely that CoIs are appointed to investigate 'events in which people have suffered, or even lost their lives, and where in some cases there is a danger of those events being repeated' (Norris and Shepheard 2017: 4). By contrast, more recent CoIs in South Africa can be described as demonstrations of the ANC-led government's failure to make decisions, lead and govern.

Study Methodology

Due of its contentious nature, the current study necessitated a novel methodology. Firstly, the study used purposive sampling and a qualitative approach to closely analyse the TORs of two specific CoIs appointed in post-1994 South Africa. Secondly, the study divided the twelve CoIs appointed since 2001 into three categories. Thirdly, the study applied a Rational Choice Theory (RCT)/ Choice Theory lens to examine the CoI data.

The purposive sampling for the first part of the study took the form of examining the TORs of two selected CoIs, namely the Judicial Commission of Enquiry into Allegations of Impropriety at the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) (2020) (referred to here as the PIC Inquiry), and the Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education and Training (HET) (2017) (referred to here as the HET Inquiry). The results of this analysis are tabulated in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

The key reason for choosing the TORs of these specific CoIs is that the analysis shows that, in both cases, the problems these CoIs had been appointed to investigate were public policy problems that could and should have been managed by a capable and institutionally sound government.

The PIC Inquiry was chosen for three other reasons. Firstly, the PIC manages state employee pensions worth around R2.13 trillion (approximately US$120 billion), which highlights its societal importance (Kew 2020). Secondly, in its role as an asset manager for the Government Employees' Pension Fund (Hendricks 2018), the PIC accounted for over 10 per cent of the value of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in 2001 (WBA 2021). The PIC's significance as a stock exchange investor means that, if things were to

go wrong, this would be a potential financial contagion risk to the whole South African economy. Thirdly, the PIC is Africa's largest asset manager, investing in the continent's power, transport, logistics, natural resources, telecommunications, and heavy industrial sectors (AFC 2022).

The HET Inquiry report serves as an example of the state's inability to address longstanding, unresolved policy matters. As long ago as 1997, the White Paper on Education 3 (DoE 1997) provided the government with clear advice on how to address the problem of student access to higher education, and how failing to address this problem would stunt South Africa's post-apartheid development potential, especially with respect to Black students (Ayuk and Koma 2019: 180). Furthermore, in 2001, the Department of Education's National Plan for Higher Education gave guidance about the need to find new forms of funding and formulas to address the problem of financial exclusion for numerous South Africa, especially those dealing with apartheid legacy problems (DoE 2001: 10).

Understanding TORs

The World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group uses the following definition of terms of reference:

> A ToR presents an overview of the requirements and expectations of the evaluation. It provides an explicit statement of the objectives of the evaluation, roles and responsibilities of the evaluators and the evaluation client, and resources available for the evaluation (World Bank 2011: 2).

This explanation informs the analysis of the TORs of the two CoIs under close study. Firstly, this analysis offers a profound understanding of the prevailing societal and institutional problems affecting the South African state. Secondly, this analysis helps to determine whether the problem being investigated by each CoI is a genuine issue that is best addressed through a fact-finding mission, or whether it is a problem that is better resolved through public policy interventions.

A list of CoIs appointed since 2001 were divided into categories using the Norris and Shepheard (2017) definition of a public inquiry/ CoI (see Table 4). Then, the Rational Choice Theory/ Choice Theory was employed to collect data about the selected CoIs and analyse it using thematic analysis. The themes which emerged from this approach helped to provide a description and explanation of how government approaches socio-economic, political and institutional governance decisions.

Rational Choice Theory/ Choice Theory as a Theoretical Analytic Framework

The most useful approach for this study is Rational Choice Theory (RCT)/ Choice Theory.

Origins of RCT/ Choice Theory

RCT/ Choice Theory has its roots in attempts by certain economists and political scientists to understand how political actors (government, politicians and voters) make the choices that inform their decisions.

Early pioneers in this field of study date back to the 1950s and 1960s, including Kenneth J. Arrow (2012), *Social Choice and Individual Values,* Anthony Downs (2020), *An Economic Theory of Democracy,* James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock (1962), *The Calculus of Consent*, and William Riker (1962), *The Theory of Political Coalitions*. RCT/ Choice Theory gained more mainstream and popular understanding through the work of 1992 Nobel Prize winner Garry Becker. Becker's most notable publications in this field include *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (Becker 1976), *A Theory of Rational Addiction* (Becker and Murphy 1988), and *An Empirical Analysis of Cigarette Addiction* (Becker et al. 1994.

A cursory analysis of the pre-1992 publication of the work of Becker and earlier pioneers in the field highlights three major themes. Firstly, the importance of RCT/ Choice Theory was widely acknowledged when Becker won the 1992 Nobel Prize for work that encompasses many fields of study, including political science, sociology, economics, and behavioural science. Secondly, RCT/ Choice Theory examines how to assess and predict the decisions and choices of individuals across multiple fields of study. Thirdly, and perhaps more interestingly, when Becker's post-Nobel Prize literature is considered, RCT/ Choice Theory has expanded beyond macroeconomic and political matters to also encompass sociological and psychological issues, such as addiction.

In a critique of RCT/ Choice Theory, Debu Gandhi contends that,

> …the prominence of rational choice theory has to do with more dubious factors that have little to do with the analytical achievements of rational choices: a) The Physics envy phenomenon; b) A desire to command the positions (and salaries) in academia and in the policy worlds that mathematically oriented economists have succeeded in obtaining for themselves; c) A misguided and widely shared obsession with 'advancing' the discipline at the cost of actually trying to understand political phenomena… (Gandhi 2005: 82).

The current article will not take a position on the validity of Gandhi's critique, but the author believes it is essential to present this countervailing view in the interest of providing a well-rounded understanding of the history and operation of RCT/ Choice Theory. *Interpretation and definition of RCT/ Choice Theory.*

Interpretation and Definition of RCT/ Choice Theory

This section analyses four major definitions of the concept of RCT/ Choice Theory.

A good starting point is to look at the work of Jon Elster, who said that, 'when faced with several courses of action, people usually do what they believe is likely to have the best overall outcome' Elster 1989: 99). In other words, for Elster, RCT/ Choice Theory is about people understanding the myriad of options before them and making the choice that best suits each person.

Nakaska (2010: 127) adds to this understanding by saying that 'RCT is a utility-maximization methodology, by which choices are made on the basis of the "best interest of the actor making the selection"'. This adds to Elster's conception of RCT/ Choice Theory as being about actors (political, economic, and governmental) arriving at a decision/ choice, but presenting it as a methodology for interest-based decision-making.

The third definition used by the author of the current article is by political scientist Gerardo Munck who explains that,

> it bears stressing that RCT is first and foremost a theory of decision making that rests on the expected utility principle, which states that individuals make decisions that maximize the utility they expect to derive from making choices (Munck 2001: 175).

Munck's interpretation builds on the work of Elster and Nakaska by stating that RCT/ Choice Theory posits that individuals make decisions based on maximising the gains they expect to receive.

The fourth definition used by the author of the current article is that of Kulawik (2020) who, using Brummerhoff (2011), explains,

> the essence of the public choice theory to analyse the state's decision-making processes, which reflect the relationship between the preferences of members of a given society and decisions made by public authorities (Kulawik 2020: 146).

This interpretation of the Choice Theory concept differs from the three discussed above in that it focuses on the application of RCT/ Choice Theory to state/ government actions and decisions. This is important for the current article because the study focuses on government choices and actions.

Before presenting this article's working definition of RCT/ Choice Theory, it is important to briefly discuss an important aspect of the theory, which has not been well expanded upon, namely the idea of rationality. Without being overly doctrinaire, the concept of rationality is well presented by Ogu (2013), who he explains that,

> 'rationality' defined by the rational choice theory adopts a more specific and narrower definition, which simply means that 'an individual acts as if balancing costs against benefits to arrive at action that maximizes personal advantage' (Ogu 2013: 90).

The idea of rationality is an ever-growing field of study which attempts to understand whether and how the idea of rationality influences individuals/ institutions or state behaviour as the work of Herfeld (2022: 3) illustrates.

Key ideas and usage model

Ogu (2013: 94) outlines six steps for applying RCT/ Choice Theory in decision-making.

1. Definition of the problem: The actors or individuals in question agree upon a problem to be solved or resolved.
2. Identification of decision criteria: As the problem is discussed or debated, there is need to decide upon how to arrive at a decision.
3. Weighing the criteria: This stage focuses on the internal and external debates about how to properly ascertain critical questions and values linked to the decision and identify the problem.
4. Generation of valid alternatives: Once the previous deliberation stage is complete or nearing completion, a stage for creating possible solutions is initiated.
5. Rating of each alternative on each criterion: Once the various decisions or options are provided, each is assigned some form of value.
6. Computation of optimal decisions: This is a modern phenomenon in which specific potential solutions are captured in digital computer form and tested using mathematical tools and applications.

This section concludes by saying the author of the current article's working definition of RCT/ Choice Theory is that it is concerned with the process micro or macro actors use to make decisions and choices for

outcomes that, in the main, brings them advantage, or can be argued to be rational. The six decision-making steps above demonstrate that the idea and practice of RCT/ Choice Theory can be described as a linear, easy-to-follow process. However, it is important to note that these six steps will not always have been followed. The key point here is to argue for the ongoing development of improved ways of thinking about how to understand choice and decision-making.

Results Discussion, Theme-informed Analysis

In the methodology section, this article uses a two-step approach to analysing the use of CoIs in post-1994 South Africa. The first approach focuses on the two selected CoIs – the PIC Inquiry and the HET Inquiry. This is followed by an examination of the history and nature of a number of CoIs in post-2001 South Africa. Finally, this section uses thematic analysis to present and explore the dominant themes that have emerged from these two approaches to analysing the quality of government decision-making.

First approach: Analysis of the TORs of two selected CoIs

The focus on, and analysis of, the TORs of the chosen two CoIs: the PIC Inquiry (Table 2), HET Inquiry (Tables 2 and 3) was a novel approach to ascertain the nexus between politics, governance, institutional governance and legal practice in South Africa.

Table 1: Selected TORs of the PIC Inquiry

1.1 Whether any alleged impropriety regarding investment decisions: by the PIC in media reports in 2017 and 2018 contravened any legislation, PIC policy or contractual obligations and resulted in any undue benefit for any PIC director, employee or any associate or family member of any PIC director or employee at the time	**1.2 Whether any findings of impropriety following the investigation:** in terms of paragraph 1.1 resulted from ineffective governance and/or functioning by the PIC Board
1.3 Whether any PIC director or employee used his or her position or privileges, or confidential information: for personal gain or to improperly benefit another person	**1.4 Whether any legislation or PIC policies concerning the reporting of alleged corrupt activities:** and the protection of whistle-blowers were not complied with in respect of any alleged impropriety referred to in paragraph 1.1

The TORs presented in Table 1 show that the issues presented to the PIC Inquiry for investigation did not necessarily need a CoI for two reasons.

Firstly, before the PIC Inquiry had been established, the South African government had investigated and tried to explain what was happening at the PIC. As the PIC Inquiry report explains,

> During August 2018 the Board, on the recommendation of the then Minister of Finance, Mr N Nene, commissioned a forensic investigation into the allegations levelled against Dr Matjila in the email, including the alleged relationship between him and Ms Louw (Presidency of South Africa 2000: 187).

It is thus quite apparent that while the PIC Inquiry should be welcomed, the weaknesses of the PIC could and should have been addressed before the actual PIC Inquiry was appointed in 2018.

Secondly, one of the chronic problems plaguing the PIC, as stated throughout the proceedings of the PIC Inquiry, was that a lack of political and governmental leadership allowed a catastrophic situation to develop at the PIC. The PIC Inquiry report explains,

> The role of the Shareholder, coupled with the frequent changes to the Minister, Deputy Minister and consequently the Chairperson of the PIC, created instability and a vacuum of leadership at the helm of the PIC (Presidency of South Africa 2000: 187).

This statement, perhaps like no other, perfectly explains the problematic nature of the impact of a lack of leadership on institutions and, eventually, on government performance.

When the TORs in Table 1 are critically examined, it is hard to argue that a CoI was ever needed to investigate the dysfunction of the PIC. If anything, the TORs in this section clearly illustrate how the ANC, as the leader of the South African government, had failed in its duty to provide quality leadership (or candidates) and had failed to exercise political oversight over governmental institutions over which it had strong influence. Furthermore, if the PIC had proper internal controls and systems, many of the issues raised in the TORs would have been addressed internally. For this reason, the current article contends that the PIC Inquiry is a good example of political obfuscation of responsibilities, rather than a response to the systemic failure of an institution. The PIC can be argued to have become a complex problem due to destructive politics within the South African government and, by extension, the ANC.

Table 2: Selected TORs of the HET Inquiry

The Commission of Enquiry into Higher Education and Training was appointed by the President on 14 January 2016 with the following terms of reference… The Commission shall enquire into, make findings, report on and make recommendations on the following: The feasibility of making higher education and training (higher education) fee-free in South Africa, having regard to:
1.1 the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, all relevant higher and basic education legislation, all findings and recommendations of the various presidential and ministerial task teams as well as all relevant educational policies, reports and guidelines;
1.2 the multiple facets of financial sustainability, analysing and assessing the role of government together with its agencies, students, institutions, business sector and employers in funding higher education and training;
1.3 the institutional independence and autonomy which should occur vis-à-vis the financial funding model.

Table 3: Additional notes on selected HET Inquiry TORs

188.	According to the terms of reference of the Fees Commission, the main focus for the Commission was on the feasibility of free education, in particular for the higher education sector. *The Commission took a broad view of feasibility, to include a broad discussion of the points in favour of and those against the introduction of free education for all (or some) in the South African context…*
189.	The parameters of free education were also a point of discussion, but *there was general agreement from all parties that whatever form financial aid should take in South Africa, funding should cover the total cost of study*.

Firstly, the macro theme running across the selected TORs in Tables 2 and 3 are public policy and public finance matters of choice. A prime example of this contention is presented in Table 3 (Section 188), where the task assigned to the HET Inquiry is, in fact, a matter of public policy choice that falls within the realm of public finance.

Hyman (2010) provides an understanding of the link between public finance and political decision-making as follows:

> Public finance is the field of economics that studies government activities and the alternative means of financing government expenditures… A crucial objective of the analysis is to understand the impact of government expenditures, regulations, taxes, and borrowing on incentives to work, invest, and spend income (Hyman 2010: 5).

While broad, this explanation of public finance highlights the importance of governmental public policy or political decisions in a numerical/ quantitative manner (public finance). The importance of policy and political decisions is not simply a question of rands, dollars or cents, but is one that significantly explains whether a state will develop or not. Barrios and Schaechter expanded on this idea by explaining, 'Sound fiscal positions, over the medium and long term, are a precondition for macroeconomic stability and sustainable economic growth' (Barrios and Schaechter 2008: 12).

Firstly, the appointment of CoIs, such as the HET Inquiry highlights the political and institutional weaknesses of the South African government. The problem the HET Inquiry was established to investigate is an example of a public inquiry, a matter that should have been handled by the relevant political processes and systems, but is instead an example of a politically outsourced inquiry.

Secondly, the HET Inquiry highlights the South African government's inconsistency in policy decision-making and its lack of strategic follow-through on identified critical problems. It is interesting to note that the HET Inquiry report starts by reminding the ANC government of its own documents, such as the 1955 Freedom Charter and the Ministry of Education's 2001 National Plan for Higher Education (DoE 2001), which alludes to the problem of funding for higher education – the very matter the HET Inquiry was established to consider. This lack of consistency in policy decision-making and lack of strategic follow-through is best illustrated in this comment made in the Ministry of Education's 2001 National Plan for Higher Education (DoE 2001) about the funding of higher education:

> Increased access… is meaningless if students do not succeed in their studies. Although this is the primary responsibility of institutions, the Ministry is committed to ensuring that the underlying factors that hinder success are addressed. The Ministry's support will focus primarily on three areas, namely, the funding of academic development programmes, improving the quality of schooling … and student financial aid (DoE 2001: 1).

This extract and other points made in this report detail how the problems highlighted in the HET Inquiry's TORs are public policy problems rather than matters requiring the appointment of a CoI. Moreover, the issues identified in the HET Inquiry highlight the South African government's lack of consistency in policy decision-making and illustrate the fact it cannot provide a strategic solution or follow through on key problems associated with public policy problems. As is the case with the PIC Inquiry, the HET Inquiry is a politically outsourced inquiry in nature and form.

Concluding this section, this article contends that, having examined and provided a thorough analysis, the TORs of both of these CoIs are textbook examples of a lack of political leadership and consistency in policy decision-making on strategic problems affecting South African society. This being the case, it is lamentable that, rather than attending to these weaknesses, the South African government has outsourced/ obfuscated its political and governance leadership responsibilities to judges and quasi-legal structures in CoIs. For this reason, this article argues that a hybrid form of 'hollowing out of the state' is taking place as the government outsources its governance and leadership responsibilities to CoIs.

Second approach: The nature and form of CoIs post-1994

To begin with, the early CoIs in post-1994 South Africa can be argued to have followed the internationally advised form of setting them up, namely that CoIs. At the same time, part of the political and legal processes are established to investigate complex and problematic occurrences with a view to avoiding a recurrence of such events. According to Norris and Shepheard:

> Public inquiries investigate events in which people have suffered, or even lost their lives, and where in some cases there is a danger of those events being repeated (Norris and Shepheard 2017: 4).

In the early post-1994 period, this is indeed what CoIs in South Africa were mainly used for. Two examples are discussed below.

The first example is the Commission of Inquiry into the Ellis Park Stadium Soccer Disaster, which investigated a stampede that occurred on 11 April 2001 during a football match between Kaizer Chiefs Football Club and Orlando Pirates Football Club at the Ellis Park Stadium in Johannesburg. Forty-three people died (Tshwaku 2021).

The second example is the Nel Commission of Inquiry into the Affairs of the Masterbond Group and Investor Protection in South Africa. The Nel Commission was tasked with investigating and making recommendations on a Ponzi scheme that caused many South African pensioners to lose a total of R620m. The Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors described the significance of the Nel Commission report as follows:

> As part of its work into the investigation of the 1991 Masterbond collapse, the Nel Commission invited comments from interested parties on a consultation paper titled 'The Role of the Auditor – The Elimination of the Expectation Gap'. The content of the consultation paper outlined the reasons why the Commission believed that the contents of financial statements, the audits of these statements and the resulting auditors' reports were inadequate for the needs of users and why a 'structural shift towards transparency was regarded as a necessity' (IRBA 2021).

As a result of the Nel Commission, the South African government and financial institutions developed new policies and legal instruments to protect investors.

It is fascinating to note that the number of CoIs has more than doubled since 2007, the year in which Thabo Mbeki lost the leadership of the ANC to Jacob Zuma at the party's 52nd National Conference (Booysen 2011: 33–84). This section argues that the leadership change within the ANC in 2007 has also altered the nature of CoIs in South Africa since that time.

Norris and Shepheard say of public inquiries, the term in England for what is called a CoI in South Africa: 'public enquiries are a common tool for investigating some of the tragic, complex and controversial issues in society' (Norris and Shepheard 2017: ii).

The current article argues that responding to 'tragic' situations and 'complex' issues could be good reasons for the South African government to appoint a CoI. Table 4 categorises a select list of CoIs appointed in South Africa since 2001 as 'standard' (responses to tragedy), 'complex' (responses to complex situations), or 'politically outsourced' (hybrid hollowing out of the state by outsourcing governance and leadership responsibilities to a CoI).

Table 4: Categorisation of selected CoIs since 2001

Year	**Name**	**Category**
2001	Commission of Inquiry into the Ellis Park Stadium Soccer Disaster	Standard inquiry
2001	Nel Commission of Inquiry into the Affairs of the Masterbond Group and Investor Protection in South Africa	Complex inquiry
2002	Commission of Inquiry into the Rapid Devaluation of the Exchange Rate of the Rand and Related Matters	Complex inquiry
2003	None	
2004	Hefer Commission of Enquiry into Allegations of Spying Against the National Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr B.T. Ngcuka	Complex inquiry
2005–2007	None	
2008	Khampepe Commission of Inquiry into the Mandate and Location of the Directorate of Special Operations	Politically outsourced inquiry

Year	Name	Category
2009–2010	None	
2011	Donen Commission into the Alleged Illicit Activities of Certain South African Companies or Individuals Relating to the United Nations Oil for Food Programme in Iraq	Standard inquiry
2011	Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of Fraud, Corruption, Impropriety or Irregularity in the Strategic Defence Procurement Packages	Politically outsourced inquiry/ Complex inquiry
2012	Marikana Commission of Enquiry: into the Tragic Incidents at or Near the Area Commonly Known as Marikana Mine in Rustenburg, North West Province, South Africa	Standard inquiry
2013–2015	None	
2016	The Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education and Training	Politically outsourced inquiry
2017	None	
2018	Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector Including Organs of State	Politically outsourced inquiry
2018	Commission of Inquiry into Tax Administration and Governance by SARS [South African Revenue Service]	Politically outsourced inquiry/ Complex inquiry
2018	Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of Impropriety Regarding Public Investment Corporation	Politically outsourced inquiry/ Complex inquiry
2019–2021	None	

Three of the twelve (25 per cent) of the CoIs listed in Table 4 can be classified as standard public inquiries. Another three CoIs (also 25 per cent of the twelve in the list) can be said to be complex inquiries, for example, the Nel Commission (which focused on complex financial transactions) and the Hefer Commission (which investigated secret service activities). In other words, fifty per cent of CoIs in South Africa since 2001 were standard inquiries, two of which took place in adjacent years (2011 and 2012). The remaining six of (50 per cent) were either complex or politically outsourced inquiries. Three (25 per cent) were categorised as politically outsourced inquiries, and three were a mixture of politically outsourced inquiries and complex inquiries.

Having performed this analysis of CoIs, four dominant themes now seem to shape the analysis of the establishment of CoIs by the government.

Theme-informed analysis and RCT/ Choice Theory discussion

Theme 1: Insufficient institutional and administrative leadership guardrails allow for nefarious actions

The analysis of the PIC Inquiry's TORs in Table 1 highlighted the fact that identified problems could and should, firstly, have been dealt with by the PIC as an institution and, secondly, the leadership structures and laws such as the Public Investment Corporation Act, 2004, Companies Act, 2008, and Public Finance Management Act, 1999, inter alia. In addition to this, the PIC has a Board of Directors, which had leading business, political and other leadings figures entrusted with,

> Steering the PIC and setting its strategic direction; Approving policy and planning that give effect to the direction provided; Overseeing and monitoring implementation and execution by management; and Ensuring accountability for the PIC's performance by means of, amongst others, reporting and disclosures (PIC, n.d.).

This article contends that the PIC problem highlights the fact that when insufficient institutional and administrative leadership guardrails are in place, or are in place but allowed to deteriorate, illegal or improper action will follow.

Additional support to this theme finding can be found in the Commission of Inquiry into Tax Administration and Governance by SARS [South African Revenue Service] (better known as the Nugent Commission). The Nugent Commission detailed how public finance, tax and other public finance actions can be circumvented or corrupted by weakened or disappearing guardrails:

> the disbanding of certain units with SARS dedicated to chasing non-compliant large business taxpayers has contributed to the perception that many taxpayers are not meeting their tax liability. Political interference… contributed to tax administration corruption and a lack of focus on the important mandate of revenue collection (Dicey 2019: 7).

While these CoIs focused on two different institutions, the result of both investigations revealed that, over time, institutions and administrative leadership deficiencies manifest in poor governance and, when allowed to deteriorate, poor governance encourages untoward and illegal behaviour and actions.

Theme 2: A broken political environment creates increasingly complex problems

CoIs such as the Zondo Commission and the Nugent Commission have shown that politically induced problems in the ANC become more complex if they are not attended to politically. The ANC then tends to outsource the governance and solution of the problem to a politically outsourced CoI. For example, during the Zondo Commission,

> Perhaps the single most significant moment in South Africa's state-capture revelations was the admission by Gwede Mantashe, then secretary general of the ruling African National Congress, that the list of names announced by then President Jacob Zuma as appointees in a Cabinet reshuffle 'came from somewhere else; we were not consulted, we were informed'. When the political institutions given the electoral mandate to govern are 'informed' of significant decisions, the extent to which power has shifted away from accountable institutions is clearly revealed (Masterson 2018: 187).

What can no longer be denied is the fact that the broken political system of the governing ANC permitted problems to become very complex. Instead of taking courageous steps inside party structures to address these problems, the ruling party chose the expedient step of appointing a politically outsourced inquiry.

Theme 3: When correctly deployed, CoIs are effective instruments of governance and institutional reform

Following the categorisation in Table 4, complex and standard CoIs are the correct instruments for addressing institutional and policy gaps in state operations. For example, as discussed above, the Nel Commission has been acknowledged by the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors as having made important recommendations for managing risk in the context of a global shift in financial markets (IRBA 2021). The result of the Nel Commission was the development of policy parameters to protect investors from the risks of Ponzi schemes.

Theme 4: Increasing numbers of CoIs reflect a lack of accountability to the state

Ten more CoIs have been appointed by the South African government since 2008. The current article contends that this can be linked to the increasing political complexity and problematic nature of developments in the ANC. Even the ANC is aware of this. The most recent ANC Policy Conference Document, particularly the second chapter entitled ANC Organisational Renewal: Progress and Challenges, details how, over the

last decade, the ANC has become an inward-looking institution, rife with internal fights and individuals eager to engage in corrupt activities (ANC 2022: 7). This malpractice by the governing party has so entrenched itself in how the ANC works that it has affected how the state and its various institutions operate, as the Zondo Commission revealed. This made it possible for individuals to undermine and destroy state institutions in order to acquire personal wealth.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the increase of CoIs is directly linked to the loss of institutional morality in the governing party of South Africa. Individuals and certain parliamentary processes created an environment which led the government to outsource its governance and leadership to CoIs (Pillay 2022).

Interpretation of the Four Themes through the Six RCT/ Choice Theory Steps

Definition of the problem

This article analysed themes and data to contend that the main problem associated with CoIs in South Africa is that, in some cases, they have been used to cover up the lack of political leadership in the ANC and institutional weaknesses in the state.

Identification of decision criteria

Two overriding criteria appear to have been used since 2008 for establishing CoIs. Firstly, CoIs have been appointed as a result of legal processes established elsewhere by parliamentary processes or other offices e.g., the Zondo Commission, which was an outcome of a report by the Public Protector's Office. Secondly, large-scale political developments impressed upon the governing party that it needed to be seen as taking certain problems seriously, e.g., the student-led Fees Must Fall protests, which led to the HET Inquiry. As a caveat, it is essential to note that, prior to 2008, certain CoIs were established for valid reasons, such as the Ellis Park Disaster Inquiry.

Weighing the criteria

After applying the previous step, the current article contends that the most important criterion for appointing CoIs since 2008 can now be described as political outsourcing of governance and leadership linked to the weaknesses of the state and the ANC. As discussed above, many of the post-2008 CoIs are addressing problems that could and should have been addressed by a properly functioning state apparatus and leadership in the ANC.

Generation of valid alternatives

It is most interesting to note that neither the PIC Inquiry nor the HET Inquiry has generated the types of recommendations that go beyond what many policymakers and processes would have made. For example, the PIC Inquiry report's recommendation that responded to the first TOR listed in Table 1 states,

> The Commission recommends that the Board should develop clear policies to guide the involvement of PIC employees and non-executive directors in investee companies (Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, 2000: 300).

While this is an appropriate recommendation in response to the TOR, it is something that could and should have been part of the PIC's standard operating practice. While some recommendations may be more useful in practice than others, in the main, many will ask the institutions and individuals in question to follow the set laws and policies of the Republic.

Rating of each alternative on each criterion

This article contends that the rating of alternatives should be focused on whether and how CoIs were able to bring about substantive public policy ideas to unforeseen or deeply problematic issues. In this regard, the key CoIs which can be positively rated are the Commission of Inquiry into the Ellis Park Stadium Soccer Disaster, the Nel Commission of Inquiry into the Affairs of the Masterbond Group and the Investor Protection in South Africa, the Commission of Inquiry into the Rapid Devaluation of the Exchange Rate of the Rand and Related Matters, and the Hefer Commission of Enquiry into Allegations of Spying Against the National Director of Public Prosecutions Mr B.T. Ngcuka. They are positively rated because the level of complexity of the issues they were investigating required new thinking.

Computation of optimal decision

While it would have been interesting to compute the optimal decisions for many of the CoIs discussed here, CoIs operate within a framework of existing policies, legal instruments, and institutional practices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This article's main contention is that recent CoIs, especially those after 2008, have become a form of political and governance outsourcing/ obfuscation, which has led to a hybrid 'hollowing out of the state' as the state and the ANC outsourced their governance and leadership responsibilities.

The result is that policy makers and institutions are rendered as willing, yet unfortunate, bystanders in the business of statecraft and state actions, all because the ANC in government has failed to make important public policy and political decisions, and views the traditional roles of the state as something that can easily be outsourced to CoIs.

It is now more important than ever to rethink the use and role of CoIs in the future. This article makes three critical recommendations could help halt the slide towards the hybrid 'hollowing out of the state' described above and seen in the appointment of politically outsourced CoIs since 2008.

Firstly, clear legal and policy criteria should be formulated for what CoIs should not do, beyond the current guidance provided by section 82 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The Office of the Chief Justice should guide the process by asking retired judges and elected politicians to devise a set of criteria for determining whether a problem proposed for investigation by a CoI is a standard problem, a complex problem, or a politically outsourced inquiry. Clearly, politically outsourced inquiries should never be permitted to proceed. Once this process is finalised, these criteria should be formulated as a legal instrument and brought before Parliament, where they will be voted on with a sixty per cent majority required in favour for the criteria to be adopted.

Secondly, the government should be required to present a well-reasoned explanation of why it believes a CoI is necessary to undertake a specific inquiry. The document must contain clear detail as to why the investigation in question cannot be carried out by the South African government or the state institution that is responsible, accompanied by a legal opinion in favour of appointing a CoI. If the government fails to achieve a sixty per cent vote in Parliament in favour of establishing a CoI, this could be a reason to call a snap election.

Thirdly, a financial penalty should be imposed to discourage politicians and government institutions dealing with public policy matters from hollowing out the state by using politically outsourced CoIs to resolve matters that should be addressed by the state.

Ultimately, this article argues for the South African government, through the ANC or any other political leader of government, to stop the practice of 'hollowing out of the state' through appointing CoIs for reasons of political expediency. The continued use of CoIs to address political and government governance failings needs to be stopped and public officials and public institutions made to do their jobs, lest the South African state find itself

becoming inadequately skilled. If this decline in capacity is not arrested, there is a risk that public policy decisions and institutions are too heavily influenced by judges, possibly even remotely ruled by judges, rather than elected policy actors, such as political leaders, governmental institutional bureaucrats, and their processes and systems.

Note

1. These were: the enquiry into the fitness of Adv. Nomgcobo Jiba and Adv. Lawrence Sithembiso Mrwebi to hold the office of Deputy National Director of Public Prosecutions and Special Director of Public Prosecutions, 2018; the Cassim Inquiry into the National Director of Public Prosecutions' fitness to hold office, 2015; and the Ginwala Enquiry into the fitness of Advocate VP Pikoli to hold the office of National Director of Public Prosecutions, 2008.

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Diamond Mining Conflicts in Tanzania: Community Perspectives and Implications

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Abstract

Tanzania is one of the world's richest countries in terms of its natural resources, including its mines. In the mid-1980s, the government shifted its role from being the owner of mining companies to being the regulator and facilitator of mining. Despite these reforms, Tanzanians remain among the world's poorest people. Of particular importance are ongoing conflicts between privately owned mining companies and impoverished surrounding communities. Using Action Research (AR) methodology, this study explored community perspectives of mining-related conflicts in order to devise long-term solutions. The key findings highlight the potential of AR to achieve relative peace between mining company operations and the surrounding communities. In this case, an AR intervention conducted in 2017 (with subsequent follow up visits from 2018 to 2023) empowered affected communities to express their perspectives on ongoing conflicts, foster ties with local journalists, and create an inclusive framework for participatory decision-making. This paved the way for affected communities to receive compensation from mining companies. In conclusion, this AR study has facilitated transformative learning that enabled participating communities to develop a thorough understanding of the challenges they face, communicate their perspectives, and take appropriate action to improve their situation. This AR project was able to address challenges that had not been effectively addressed since the 1940s.

Keywords: Extractive industry, diamond mining, conflict resolution, empowerment, Tanzania

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Résumé

La Tanzanie est l'un des pays les plus riches en ressources naturelles, notamment minières. Au milieu des années 1980, le gouvernement est passé du statut de propriétaire des sociétés minières à celui de régulateur et de facilitateur de l'exploitation minière. Malgré ces réformes, les Tanzaniens demeurent parmi les populations les plus pauvres du monde. La persistance des conflits entre les sociétés minières privées et les communautés environnantes défavorisées revêtent une importance particulière. En utilisant la méthodologie de recherche-action (RA), la présente étude a exploré les perspectives communautaires sur les conflits liés à l'exploitation minière afin de concevoir des solutions à long terme. Les principales conclusions soulignent le potentiel de la RA dans l'instauration d'une paix relative entre les activités des sociétés minières et les communautés environnantes. Dans ce cas, une intervention RA menée en 2017 (avec des visites de suivi ultérieures de 2018 à 2023) a permis aux communautés affectées d'exprimer leur point de vue sur les conflits en cours, de tisser des liens avec les journalistes locaux et de créer un cadre inclusif pour la prise de décision participative. Cela a ouvert la voie à l'indemnisation des communautés affectées par les sociétés minières. En conclusion, cette étude RA a offert un apprentissage transformateur qui a permis aux communautés participantes de développer une compréhension approfondie des défis auxquels elles sont confrontées, de communiquer leurs points de vue et de prendre les mesures appropriées afin d'améliorer leur situation. Ce projet RA a permis de relever des défis qui, depuis 1940, n'avaient pas trouvé de solution.

Mots-clés : industrie extractive ; exploitation de diamants ; résolution de conflit ; autonomisation ; Tanzanie.

Introduction

At the macro level, globalisation has led to the over-exploitation of mineral resources (Madaha 2018) through the dispossession of the poor (Harvey 2011). The exploitation has led to political instability, forced displacement, disrupted and destroyed livelihoods, and violent conflicts on different scales (Knierzinger and Sopelle 2019; Kinyondo and Huggins 2019). Several studies have documented conflicts in the mining sector (Arsel et al. 2016; Furnaro 2019; Huggins 2016), highlighting the negative environmental impacts of extractive industries. Yankson and Gough (2019) reported an increase in conflicts between large-scale investors in Africa and surrounding communities following the intensification of mining. A similar situation has been observed in Tanzania. Mwaipopo (2014) highlights conflicts between unlicensed illegal artisanal miners and licensed large-scale diamond

mining companies in Tanzania. Kinyondo and Huggins (2019) say that the country's legal framework primarily benefits large-scale mining. Kinyera (2019) points out that social unrest arises from the new scramble for resources in underdeveloped, resource-rich peripheries, including Tanzania. For example, the relationship between Williamson Diamond Mining Limited and surrounding communities remained unstable throughout its history, from the time it formalised large-scale production in Tanzania in 1951 (SID 2009), to the time it was nationalised in 1971, to the time it was privatised in 1994 (Jønssona et al. 2019).

Generally, communities surrounding mining operations are often overlooked when conflicts arise. Although there is plenty of literature highlighting the importance of participation of communities in addressing conflicts in resource governance (Kant and Cooke 1999; Weitzner and Borras 1999; Bryceson et al. 2014; Arsel et al. 2016; Huggins 2016; Kinyondo and Huggins 2019; Knierzinger and Sopelle 2019), there is limited documentation of community perspectives on the mining sector. Community perspectives are those perspectives that are grounded in a particular community in its particular context. This article explores conflicts between diamond mining companies in Tanzania and their surrounding communities to highlight community perspectives on these conflicts. The article attempts to draw the attention of those interested in gaining a more detailed understanding of conflicts in the mining sector within an African context. The main thesis is that a thorough understanding of community perspectives is essential for addressing conflicts in the mining sector.

Using a case study of Williamson Diamond Mining Limited and its surrounding communities, the author highlights the views of grassroots people on how to address conflicts in the mining sector. The focus of the article is to highlight the multidisciplinary orientation of Action Research (AR) and showcase the grassroots and context-specific challenges faced by marginalised communities, aiming to help develop potential solutions for addressing them. The author has attempted to answer the following key research questions: What are community perspectives and implications for conflicts between diamond mining companies and communities?; Was AR able to generate authentic and emancipatory knowledge in the situations where it was applied?; and How did the findings reflect on natural resource governance and diamond mining in particular – did they add to it or challenge it? The article begins by discussing the mining policy framework in Tanzania; moves on to the study methodology; presents the study findings; discusses the findings, and concludes with a number of remarks.

The Mining Policy Framework in Tanzania

Tanzania is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of its natural resource wealth. The country is the world's top producer of tanzanite. Mwadui Ward (the focus of this article) has the largest diamond kimberlite pipe in the world (URT 2015). The Ministry of Minerals is responsible for managing the policy and legal framework that pertains to the country's natural resources and the extractive industries in particular. The Commissioner for Minerals in the Ministry is responsible for supervising and regulating of the Mining Act (URT 2010, 2019). There is also a Mining Advisory Committee that advises the Minister for Minerals on matters concerning the sector. Other legislation and policies governing the industry are the Mineral Policy of Tanzania (URT 2009), the National Environmental Policy (URT 1997), and the Explosives Act (Act 56 of 1963) (URT 1963).

The conventional policy and legal framework of the mining industry emanates from market economic reforms initiated in the mid-1980s (see Kinyondo and Huggins 2019 for more detail about the history of the mining sector in Tanzania and related conflicts). Consistent with these reforms, the role of the government shifted from the sole owner and operator of mines to becoming the regulator responsible for formulating and implementing policy, guidelines and regulations, as well as promoting and facilitating private investments. The literature on the shortcomings of market economic reforms is readily available (Harvey 2005, 2011, 2014; Beder 2009). There are numerous studies that document the increasing inequalities resulting from these reforms in Tanzania (Gladwin 1991; Meena 1991; Madaha 2014a, b; Bond 2005).

The major diamond-mining corporations in the country are located in Mwadui Ward, Kishapu District, Shinyanga Region, Western Tanzania. Table 1 shows the population of each village in the ward in 2017. Mwadui Luhumbo is the capital of the ward and had the largest population. The latitude of the ward is 3°32'59" S and longitude is 33° 36' 0" E. The climate is tropical savannah, characterised as wet (Hudson Institute of Mineralogy n.d.).

There are two major diamond-mining companies in Mwadui Luhumbo Ward. Williamson Diamond Mining Limited is a subsidiary of Petra Diamonds Limited which held a 75 per cent ownership stake in the mine, with the remaining 25 per cent being owned by the government of Tanzania as of 2019 (Jønssona et al. 2019). Petra Diamonds Limited is listed on the London Stock Exchange and has its headquarters in London. In 2015, the company produced 202,265 carats. The annual production stands at 0.2 million carats with revenue of US$78.9 million per annum. In 2023, it

produced 0.32 million carats. Williamson is renowned for its beautifully rounded white and "bubble-gum" pink diamonds. The potential mine-life will be until 2050 (Petra Diamonds Limited 2016, 2024). Based on an assessment conducted in 1994, the mine's diamond reserves are estimated at 50.9 million carats. The latest report (i.e. 2024) shows that the reserves is 37.2 million carats. Between 1997 and 2005, the mine paid a total of US$8.4 million in royalties and US$16.7 million in other taxes to the Tanzanian government. In 2024, the company paid US$15.7 million in taxes and royalties to the government of Tanzania. In 2009, the mine employed 967 employees of whom 959 (99%) were Tanzanians. The number has slightly increased to 988 in 2024 (SID 2009; Petra Diamonds Limited, 2024).

Table 1: Key demographic information on Mwadui Luhumbo Ward, Kishapu District, Shinyanga Region

Village	Population			Households	Hamlets
	Male	Female	Total		
Wizunza	876	922	1798	241	04
Nyenze	2,190	2,765	5,555	479	05
Ng'wang'holo	1,116	1,032	2,148	342	05
Mwadui Luhumbo	3,721	4,352	8,073	1,765	06
Grand total	9,071	12,224	17,574	2,827	20

Source: Secondary data from Ward Executive Office, 2017, Kishapu District Council Office, 2017

Another diamond mining company is owned by Tanzanian firm called El-Hillal Minerals Limited. It is also located in the same area bordering the Williamson diamond mine. By 2007, the company had produced 30,000 carats of diamonds, worth US$6 million. The company has so far paid US$300,000 in royalties and other taxes by 2009. In the same year, the mine had already employed a total of 220 persons, all of whom were Tanzanians (SID 2009). Those are the only statistics available. The findings of this research have revealed that the company has ceased its operations for no apparent reason.

Methodology

Context and study population

This study was part of a large project known as the Intensive Movement Building Cycle (IMBC). The author focused specifically on the study area around the Williamson Diamond Mining Limited through conducting an

AR intervention supplemented by additional extended visits To Mwadui Luhumbo Ward, Kishapu District, Shinyanga Region, Western Tanzania. The ward is composed of four villages, namely Wizunza, Nyenze, Ng'wamg'holo, and Mwadui Luhumbo. There are several organised community-based groups for low-income individuals. The ward is characterised by marginalisation in terms of the absence of reliable social services (such as water, health, and electricity), the persistence of gender-based violence (GBV) (physical violence against women), oppressive traditions (denying women the right to education); social ills (e.g., persistent alcoholism); conflicts between surrounding communities and the mining companies (examined in detail in the findings section of this paper); and presence of national advocacy non-governmental organisations (NGOs) attempting to improve the lives of marginalised people (see the findings section for details). The Tanzania Gender Network Program (TGNP) is one of the major advocacy NGOs operating in the ward and it provided funding to support this study. This NGO is committed to intensifying grassroots feminist interventions throughout Tanzania, particularly in the ward. Additional follow-up work on the study was supported by the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) and the researcher's personal funds. TGNP's support has not influenced the research outcome.

Key demographic information about the ward in 2017 is presented in Table 1. The ward was predominantly occupied by the Sukuma Bantu-speaking ethnic group, one of Tanzania's 120 ethnic groups, and the country's largest group (Britannica 2011). The Sukuma are predominantly patriarchal, meaning women are brought up to be submissive to men in decision-making, even though they are the major source of labour in agriculture, small business, roofing, family care and household chores. Women occasionally engage in the extractive industries both legally and illegally.

Crops grown in the district include maize, sorghum, millet, cotton and beans. Nearly 97 per cent of the residents of the ward depend on agriculture. Sadly, agriculture is heavily affected by climate change which has brought about extended periods of drought. Almost 100 per cent of agricultural produce is lost during extended droughts, and over 50 per cent of livestock die. Farming and animal husbandry have become increasingly challenging, resulting in food insecurity and extreme poverty. Statistics published in 2007 showed that 22 per cent of people in the ward lived in extreme poverty (PMO-RALG 2007). Some people migrate to regions such as Morogoro, Mbeya, Kagera and Tabora to shield themselves from calamity.

Note: *Various photos taken by the author at Williamson Diamond Mining Company. Top left is the author at the Williamson statue and with the women participants). On the right are residences for employees of the mining company.*

Theoretical framework

The study employed an Action Research methodology informed by Gender and Development (GAD) theory as a lens for analysing the findings. GAD theory is a strand of socialist feminism that examines differences across class, gender, sexual and racial ways of being among men and women (Brenner 2014; Parpart et al. 2000; Madaha 2021). Relationships between women and men are socially constructed and they determine men's and women's position in society; they are not immutable reflections of the natural order. GAD examines the oppression of women and men and calls for inclusive movements by the oppressed to transform power relations towards the achievement of a more just society (Mohanty 2002; Madaha 2021). A gender-sensitive AR aims to overcome social exclusion based on gender or other forms of oppression by giving marginalised women and men voice in research as active participants (Parpart et al. 2000; Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Madaha 2018, 2020, 2021).

Action Research methodology

The author employed a qualitative AR methodology. AR requires the development of an in-depth analysis of a case, such as a programme, event, activity, process, or individual case. The participatory methodology allows the researcher to collect detailed information using a variety of data

collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Creswell 2014). AR brings together researchers and respondents to integrate joint critical dialogues, social investigation, education (or co-learning), and responsive action. Researchers and community members engage in critical and creative forms of co-learning to produce transformational actions. Respondents in an AR project are referred to as participants because they collaborate with the researcher; they go beyond simply responding to the researcher's questions. As the researcher gathers data, the community members' skills in understanding their challenges, are enhanced. The mission of AR is *to attain empowerment* for all involved (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005; Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014; Chevalier and Bucklesdon 2019).

Trajber et al. (2019) assert that transforming complex, oppressive, and unsustainable socio-environmental arrangements requires communities working together to overcome powerlessness. This study has focused on how AR can bring together researchers, activists, journalists, local government officials, and communities to acquire authentic and emancipatory knowledge (Pedler and Burgoyne 2008; Reason and Bradbury 2008; Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014). According to Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014), authentic knowledge ensures the achievement of multiple perspectives in a study location. Here, communities acquire information they can use in a more sophisticated manner. The research stimulates and facilitates action by the study population, and empowers host communities to take action to address local challenges. Pedler and Burgoyne (2008) argue that emancipatory knowledge enables communities and other stakeholders to overcome oppression and realise their full human potential.

Sample and sampling procedures

The sampling procedure, data collection techniques, and respondents of the study are described in Table 2. With the support of LGA (local government authority) officials, community-based organisations (CBOs), local NGO field staff and community activists working in the ward, the author managed to identify 25 community representatives to participate in the AR. Other participants are listed in Table 2.

Respondents comprised community representatives (25), ward local government officials (18), district local government officials (19), and press club journalists (21). The respondents were purposively selected in line with the objective of the AR.

Table 2: Study respondents and data collection tools

Category/ levels	Mwadui Luhumbo Ward		Age range (Over 50% in the age range of 26–35)	AR data collection tool	Procedures for the selection of participants
	Female	Male			
Community representatives (co-researchers)	20	5	26 to 55	Participant observation, semi-structured interview schedules, focus group discussions (FGDs), community maps, group work and discussions, participatory analysis of existing government and non-government institutions, storytelling, role-play, poems, songs, and presentations by groups using different techniques such as posters and drawings, taking action to resolve challenges, and forming a CBO	Collaboration between author, local government officials, community leaders, and CBOs
Press club journalists (FGDs for journalists)	9	12	26 to 55	FGDs	Collaboration between author, press club leaders and CBOs
Ward officials (serving as key informants)	3	15	26 to 55	FGDs and key informant interviews	Collaboration between author, local government officials and CBOs
District officials (serving as key informants)	7	12	26 to 55	FGDs and ky informant interviews	Collaboration between author, local government officials and CBOs
Officials of the mining company		3	30–52	Key informants	Collaboration between author, local government officials and CBOs
Total	**39**	**44**			

Data Collection

The researcher used AR data collection tools including participant observation, semi-structured interview schedules, FGDs, and key informant interviews (see Appendix 1). To facilitate interaction among community representatives, the author used additional AR data collection tools including community maps, group work, brainstorming, analysis of existing government and non-government institutions, storytelling, role-play, poems, and songs. The community representatives learned presentation skills using techniques such as posters and drawings. As part of the AR intervention, some proactive journalists visited and worked with the surrounding communities to further explore the situation. In line with the study objective, the author spent an extended period with the host communities from 8 February to 30 May 2017. The author also conducted follow-up visits at the study locations in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023).

Responsive action

The final stage of data collection focused on responsive action involving the author and community representatives in addressing the challenges identified on both short-term and long-term bases. The community representatives participated in collective inquiry of the challenges that faced them and experimented with how they planned to address them. The exercise enabled the author to bring on board his expertise and that of the people to identify the challenges and devise solutions. The exercise also enhanced the researcher's understanding of the study's objective.

Data analysis

The data were collected in Kiswahili. The author transcribed data in Kiswahili and translated them into English. Care was taken to ensure that the translations maintained the meanings and intentions of the participants. Content analysis was used to analyse the data in line with the study objective. Literature on content analysis is readily available (Neuendorf 2012; Drisko and Mosch 2015).

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are about protecting humans from any harm. AR was conducted after the proposal and research tools had been reviewed and approved by the relevant ethics authorities. Permission from the local government authorities was obtained before the author interacted with the respondents. Research permits were also obtained from local government

authorities in December 2016 and national government in May 2017. Obtaining informed consent from participants was a high priority and care was taken to protect participants' privacy. The author explained the research to all respondents to obtain their consent. All participants signed a consent form before they participated. All of the responses from the respondents were anonymised through the use of codes. Individual privacy was maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. Any potential identifiers (e.g., names and locations) were removed.

Photo: Co-researchers participating in community mapping during AR

Findings

The challenges

The AR exposed several challenges in the mining sector that had not been previously captured by studies (Lange 2011; Bryceson et al. 2014; Kinyondo and Huggins 2019; Jønssona et al. 2019). The challenges are explained in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, the surrounding communities remain marginalised due to poor land compensation and reallocation measures. Although the communities rely on peasant agriculture, a large proportion of agricultural land has been taken away for mining. Taking agricultural land way from them, at least from the community's perspective, makes them lose their means of survival. One of the community leaders said:

> The mining companies have taken our land for agriculture. We have been left with nowhere to farm. This heavily affects us. There is no food to put on the table for our children. (Community leader, 21 March 2017.)

All holders of mining licences are legally required to develop and implement a plan for the relocation and resettlement of communities, as well as payment of compensation to these communities (URT 1999, 2010). During data collection time, El-Hillal Minerals Limited, which purchased 92km^2 of 'diamond protected' land[1] (to become the second largest diamond mine in Tanzania after Williamson Diamond Mining Limited), had not fulfilled its obligations. A reconciliation committee, composed of ward counsellors from the communities, followed up on this compensation but in vain. Kinyondo and Huggins (2019) stress that the privatisation of the mining sector does not favour the majority of Tanzanians. Similar views are shared by Lange (2011). Harvey (2011) argues that capitalist development promotes the accumulation of wealth for the rich by dispossessing the poor.

Secondly, the communities remain marginalised due to gender discrimination. There is a community representation committee composed of leaders of eight villages. The committee facilitates collaboration between the mining companies and affected communities. Because only three of the committee members are women, the voices of women are underrepresented in this decision-making body. Experiences from Costa Rica (Weitzner and Borras 1999), the Philippines (Talaue-McManus et al. 1999) and India (Kant and Cooke 1999) suggest that including previously excluded groups in decision-making structures offers new opportunities for finding better ways to avoid, resolve, or manage conflicts. Experiences from India highlight failures of local committees in addressing challenges due to inadequate and inflexible government policies (Kant and Cooke 1999).

Thirdly, the surrounding communities remain marginalised because the mining companies have not fulfilled certain obligations imposed on them by the 2010 Mining Act. Article 52(e) of the 2010 Mining Act requires all holders of mining licences to prioritise employing and training members from communities. They are also required to develop and implement a succession plan to replace expatriate employees with community members in accordance with the Employment and Labour Relations Act. This has not been applied in the study area. The findings revealed that human resource officials from mining companies often offer employment to Tanzanians from communities other than those directly affected by local mining operations. Communities believe that mining company human resource officers often hire people from their own ethnic groups. The finding confirms the findings of previous research. Lange and Kinyondo (2016) argue that local community benefits required by the 2010 Mining Act is often subject to elite capture and patronage and that the Act's requirements are weak. The findings of this study suggest that the Mining Act of 2019 has similar challenges (URT 2019).

Fourthly, women and girls in and around mining are not safe and secure. The Mining Act of 2019 requires all holders of mining companies to ensure the safety of their employees and the public (URT 2019). The findings have shown that communities around mining sites are subject to physical torture, women and girls are raped, and some people have even been murdered. This violence was mainly committed by staff of a security company that oversaw the security of the premises of Williamson Diamond Mining Limited during the initial data collection time. The quotations below shed further light on this lack of safety.

> …a few months ago, I and several other women entered into the mining site to collect firewood. We have done that several times in the past. However, on that day we got surrounded by the security guards working for Zenith. The guard split us into old women and young ones. I and the rest of the other older women were told to pick up our firewood and run away as much as we could. The young and the beautiful ones were not released. I am sure they got raped. However, they cannot say anything because it is shameful for a woman to be raped…

The findings suggest themes of gender-based violence, discrimination, and the impact of cultural attitudes on vulnerable host communities. There is some suggestion that the younger women were sexually assaulted but remained silent due to the stigma and shame associated with rape. The atrocity led to routine disruption of daily schedule, as well as sexual exploitation of the women. This finding underscores the power of AR to enable vulnerable communities to speak for themselves.

> …there is not much we can do because the key government officials are offered bribes worth millions of Tanzanian shillings. Therefore, they cannot take action against the brutality of the mining companies. For example, two of community members who openly spoke for the welfare of the communities surrounding the mining areas were assassinated. At the time, they were about to win the case in a court in favour of the communities. The perpetrators are the mining companies because local people do not own guns. The supporters of deceased have been intimidated. For that reason, they have decided to withdraw from the fight… (Translated from original Kiswahili)

Overall, the findings suggest the systemic use of intimidation, corruption and violence to protect the interests of powerful mining companies at the expense of surrounding communities' rights and welfare. The assassination of some community members who advocated for the welfare of their communities underscores the extreme measures taken by the mining companies to silence dissent. The use of violence to suppress opposition is a grave human rights violation. This indicates a deep-rooted corruption that undermines the rule of law and good governance. The timing of the assassinations, just as the community members were about to hear the outcome of a court case they expected to win, suggests that the mining companies are willing to interfere with the judicial process to maintain their control and avoid accountability. The assertion that local people hardly own guns highlights the power imbalance between the local communities and the mining companies. This imbalance is exacerbated by the support the companies receive from corrupt officials. The intimidation of the supporters of the deceased and their subsequent withdrawal from the fight illustrate the chilling effect of violence and corruption on activism and community resistance. This shows how fear is used as a tool to maintain the status quo and prevent any challenge to the atrocities perpetuated by the mining companies. The responsible authorities have not taken measures to ensure accountability. Privatisation is not necessarily beneficial to the Tanzanian public. There is a need for urgent attention to address the incidences and protect the rights of the affected communities. The creation of local policies and laws is not adequate. The measures in place can be enhanced adopting readily available international safety standards that promote health and safety in the mining industry (Chen and Zorigt 2013).

Fifthly, the desperate situation of surrounding communities has led to an alternative way of earning a living. Here, villagers from the communities have become *wabeshi* (illegally stealing kimberlitic tailings from land owned by mining companies) with the support of *makota* (a local term referring to the relatively wealthy individuals who sponsor the *wabeshi* on the condition that they sell any diamonds to them for less than their market value). The

communities are of the opinion that they are entitled to areas to undertake their own small-scale diamond mining. The view is best summarised by the following quote:

> There have been empty promises from the mining companies and Williamson Diamonds Limited in particular. The company promised that it will set aside areas for artisanal mining. Sometimes in the past, we were told by the company that communities are legally entitled to an area for small-scale mining. The promise was given to us by an official of the company. The promise made the communities to stop all illegal mining activities in the mining areas. Although we have been waiting for over a year, the promise never got fulfilled. Subsequently, the communities have resumed illegal mining activities as a source of their livelihood… (Translated from the original Kiswahili.)

An in-depth interview with one of the representatives of Williamson Diamond Mining Limited revealed that the company does not need its kimberlite tailings. In other words, there is no need for the communities to risk their lives by illegally entering the mining sites to steal the tailings the company does not want. This finding shows the lack of discussion between the mining companies and the communities. The findings suggest a need for inclusive and participatory policies that promote community engagement in addressing key issues (UN 1992; Fischer 2000; Mitchell 2005). Discriminatory approaches are not helpful because inclusive policies of the kind promoted by Talaue-McManus et al. (1999) can provide accountability to communities and, in so doing, minimise unnecessary conflicts (Furnaro 2019).

Sixthly, the mining company fails to fulfil its corporate social responsibility sufficiently. At the time of the data collection in 2017, the Williamson Diamond Mining Limited stakeholders engagement plan had not been updated for seven years. One of the officials from this mining company revealed that the plan had been prepared in 2010. According to the plan's provisions, the company had been disbursing four million Tanzanian shillings to communities every three months (approximately US$900) (key informant interviews). At that time, there were eight villages surrounding the mines that benefitted from the financial aid, namely Mwadui Luhumbo, Nyenze, Igukilo, Maganzo, Masagala, Songwa, Buganika and Buchambi. However, since the plan had been drawn up there had been an increase in the population and two new villages had been established, namely Wizunza and Ng'wang'holo. The mining company had shied away from its responsibility by refusing to include the newly established villages in the plan. The government could not hold the company accountable, leading to a strained relationship between the company and the communities from the two new villages. The

findings suggest that not taking corporate social responsibility obligations seriously can result in increased conflict between mining companies and surrounding communities. This contradicts the argument by Pedersena and Jacob (2017) who argue that the Tanzanian government has become stronger and more able to hold mining companies accountable.

The solutions following the AR intervention

The AR intervention generated authentic and emancipatory knowledge, enabling the communities to develop functional solutions to the challenges. Firstly, the communities fostered ties with local journalists by exposing the mining company atrocities. The journalists published the findings. A select list of media links is included at the end of this paper. The publications took the form of featured articles in various newspapers as well as news stories on television and on radio stations. The findings were also shared on blogs and on social media channels such YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp. Seven of the journalists who attended a feedback meeting organised by the author and community representatives published seven articles in local newspapers. The exercise of the journalists visiting and working with the communities strengthened the relationship between the media and communities.

The study facilitated the creation of an inclusive framework to enable the communities to participate in decision-making. Confirming the findings of previous research on AR, the study served as a critical milestone in empowering communities (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014). Community members were of the opinion that they needed a CBO to be in a position to address the challenges and make use of the opportunities highlighted through the AR. It was argued that with a legal identity, the CBO could write official letters to different stakeholders to advocate for holding the mining companies accountable. A CBO with a constitution could bring together like-minded activists to fight for the rights of marginalised people in the area. A constitution could also limit the possibility that certain members of the CBO might become too powerful at the expense of others.

The 25 co-researchers then established a CBO called Mtandao wa Nyuki Mwadui Luhumbo [translated into English as the Network of Bees – Mwadui Luhumbo] and registered it with local government authorities at the district office in 2017.[2] The author worked with the co-researchers to draw up a constitution for the CBO and an annual action plan. Establishing their own legal entity enabled the representatives to operate in the district and address the challenges prioritised in the action plan. Further information is included in a list of media links at the end of this article.

The CBO was also linked to a regional press club located at Shinyanga municipality. This further enhanced the action space for affected communities. The community representatives wanted to make their voices heard through the media as one of the activities in their action plan. The press club comprises community journalists who represent different media outlets operating in the district and the entire region. Twenty journalists and four leaders of the CBO came together in a two-day workshop with funding provided by TGNP. The author and the four CBO leaders jointly presented the findings of the AR study to the journalists for possible publication.

Finally, the CBO organised communities in the surrounding area to form over 80 registered groups. The author's follow-up in late 2020 revealed that the Williamson Diamond Mining Limited had started providing diamond kimberlitic tailings to the groups. The achievement would not have been possible in the absence of advocacy efforts by the CBO. The communities have developed skills to extract small amounts of diamond from the tailings. The income gained from the tailing supplements household incomes. During an official visit by the late President John Pombe Magufuli, the CBO presented a request to him to help secure compensation from the mining companies. The president agreed to facilitate the process.

The outcome was that the Williamson mining company compensated the communities by giving them 2,000km^2 of land for agricultural production (not mining). Creating a CBO gave voice to women and other marginalised people on mining issues. The level of conflict between the mining companies and the communities has been reduced. Williamson Diamond Mining Limited has increased its corporate social responsibility funding to local mining affected communities to over 100 million Tanzanian shillings per annum. Among other things, the company has also provided piped water distribution and built a health centre to serve the communities. This means the AR interventions have led to the achievement of key milestones that have been needed since the 1940s (key informant interviews with local government officials and representatives of Williamson Diamond Mining Limited).

The achievements are sustainable. At some point, the mining company tried to avoid meeting commitments it had made. Among other things, it continued to fail to offer employment opportunities to local communities. The security company continued to harass the communities by invading their residences and torturing people. In response to these atrocities, the CBO mobilised the communities to put up roadblocks to block mining company vehicles from passing through the villages. This brought the matter to the attention of the local government authorities. The authorities intervened to address the challenge. Subsequently, the attacks on the villages have

stopped. The gender-based atrocities and murders of community members have also stopped. The CBO continues to bring together researchers, activists, journalists, local government officials and communities to co-create relevant and context-specific knowledge about the ward and what its communities need.

An interesting finding is that, the Non-executive Chair of Petra, Varda Shine, proudly claims: "I am particularly pleased with the business's work in the communities around our operations. It is perhaps in adversity that both these intentions and relationships are tested. I have seen first-hand the impact of the Tailings Storage Facility (TSF) failure on the 12 villages around Williamson in Tanzania and our response. That failure should never have occurred, but our swift and appropriate response was about more than meeting just our obligations. The team on the ground has done a fantastic job supporting affected people, including through initiatives to restore the environment and livelihoods. I believe it is worthy of a case study for our industry." Petra Limited (2024:6). Although, there are several actors claiming credit for addressing the atrocities, one is left to wonder where were they before this AR intervention in 2017.

Timeline of conflict and long-term achievements, 1940 to 2023

Dr John Williamson discovered and operated the mining during the first phase (1940–1958). The mine was bought by De Beers and the colonial government in 1958. The two entities operated the mining, in equal partnership, from 1958 to 1973 (second phase). The colonial government was replaced by the nationalist government following Tanzania's independence on 9 December 1961. The first two phases were characterised by the absence of conflict between the mining company and local communities.

In the third phase (1973–1992), the State Mining Corporation (STAMICO) owned 100 per cent of shares in the mine. At the time, the nationalist government nationalised most of the major means of production in the country through its *Ujamaa* policies (Cranenburgh 1990; Hyden 1980). In this phase, illegal mining activities started at the mining site around 1989. Local communities bribed police officers in charge of the security of the mine to facilitate illegal mining activities. The act fuelled conflict between local communities and the company.

The Tanzanian government decided to sell 75 per cent of its shares to De Beers in the fourth phase (1993–2008). During that time, the government engaged in the privatisation of parastatals following the adoption of neoliberal policies in the country (UNDP 2015). De Beers hired a private

security company known as Gray Security Services Ltd. to combat illegal mining activities by members of the surrounding communities. In this phase, conflict between the mining company and local communities intensified.

The peak of the conflict happened in 1999 when the security company attacked the villages of the local communities. The villagers joined hands and counter-attacked the security guards. Men used slings to fight back. Women and children collected stones and gave them to fighters. The villagers managed to capture all of the security guards. The police force negotiated with the host communities for the release of the captives. This event is known locally as 'the Mlimba war' after Mlimba, the head of the security guards, who was also captured during the battle. The security company never went into the village again, it confined its services to the mining site.

During the fifth phase (2009 to 2020), Petra Diamonds purchased shares from De Beers starting in November 2008. Petra Diamonds started operating the mine in February 2009. The mining company hired the services of Zenith Security from 2011 to 2021. As per the findings of this study, the security company committed the worst atrocities that had ever happened in the history of the mine. The AR intervention took place during this time. The exercise brought the atrocities to the attention of the Tanzanian public and the international community (see the select list of articles at the end of this paper). Mtandao wa Nyuki Mwadui Luhumbo CBO was established to implement actions planned during the AR intervention.

In May 2020, Leigh Day issued a claim in the High Court of England and Wales in relation to alleged breaches of human rights, personal injuries and deaths suffered at and surrounding the mine arising from the security operations. In November 2020, an independent NGO, Rights and Accountability in Development (RAID) published a report outlining similar allegations during the same period.

In the sixth phase (2021 to 2024), relations between the Williamson Mining Company and the local communities were relatively peaceful. Informed by AR, the Mtandao wa Nyuki Mwadui Luhumbo CBO managed to take action to address the challenges emanating from the conflict between the mining companies and the communities. The CBO continues to serve as a platform for community organising, and advocacy. The mining company has addressed all of the AR requests raised in 2017 by the CBO (see the section on challenges). The company has significantly improved its relationship with the CBO and the rest of the community members it represents (see also Petra Limited, 2024). In April 2021 the mining company issued fair portions of land for artisanal mining. In May

2021, the international media reported that Petra Diamonds Limited had confirmed a settlement in the amount of £4.3 million to compensate the victims of the atrocities. The mining company fired Zenith Security and hired a new security company. The CBO leadership reports that the new security company has good relationship with the host communities. The CBO leadership has continued liaising with the mining company. In 2024, the Non-executive Chair of Petra, Varda Shine, proudly claims that engaging with and supporting communities at Williamson mine is worthy of a case study for the industry (see Petra Limited, 2024:6).

Discussion

A growing body of literature supports the view that active participation of communities (as opposed to passive participation) is essential for addressing conflicts in the extractive industries (Dyball et al. 2009). Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development highlights that environmental issues are best handled with the active participation of all concerned citizens and emphasises the right of all individuals to participate in decision-making processes. The principle further pinpoints that the full participation of women in such efforts is essential to achieve sustainable development (UN 1992).

Although one of the objectives of the Mineral Policy of Tanzania is to strengthen the involvement and participation of communities in mining (URT 2009), communities hardly participate in the sector. Furnaro (2019) highlights the lack of community participation in decisions as one of the main reasons for the increased conflicts in the sector. Similar views are shared by Singh et al. (2007), who state that weak public participation in decision-making processes leads to conflicts between communities and mining companies. Singh et al. (2007) assert that meaningful participation gives citizens voice and legitimacy in decision-making. Active participation of citizens builds trust and effective communication among concerned parties including local governments, environment monitoring authorities and civil societies. The uniqueness of the AR intervention study is that it has highlighted the potential of AR to capture the local perspectives that are essential for addressing conflicts between mining companies and surrounding communities. AR is an innovation that embeds active participation of participants in a development intervention (Kemmis et al. 2014).

A call for active participation is supported by research worldwide (Lee 1993; Fischer 2000; Mitchell 2005). Mitchell (2005) observes that participation of communities in natural resource governance can improve

environmental management, and can thereby contribute to enhanced quality of life. According to Lee (1993) inclusive participation of stakeholders is one of the primary elements for effective decision-making in natural resource governance. Participation of communities in resource governance, as promoted by Talaue-McManus et al. (1999), can lead to the development of a sense of ownership and of accountability by the surrounding communities.

The study findings support the views of Mitchell (2005) who believes that participation of communities in natural resource governance can improve environmental management, thereby contributing to enhanced quality of life. Further, participation allows effective decision-making in natural resource governance (Lee 1993), as well as a sense of ownership and of accountability by the communities (Talaue-McManus et al. 1999).

Secondly, the AR intervention study facilitated the creation of a critical culture that sustains ongoing transformation in the interests of marginalised communities. The AR led to the establishment of a CBO that has successfully organised the communities it represents in order to hold government, mining companies, and other key stakeholders accountable. The CBO serves as a vehicle to facilitate participation of community members in the management of locally available resources. In line with past research, community participation in the management of community resources is essential (Kinyondo and Huggins 2019; Knierzinger and Sopelle 2019). AR initiated an empowering platform that continues to improve the welfare of the communities. Establishing a CBO makes a unique contribution to the AR literature that calls for the empowerment of communities (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014).

The goal of AR is the co-production of knowledge with the co-researchers through 'learning by doing' (Freire 1999), and transformations in the community to enable the participants to take more informed actions and co-develop systems that address the challenges sustainably (Trajber et al. 2019). This study has attained the goal. The study took the local context on board by focusing on participative, action-oriented inquiry to enable communities flourish in their social and physical environments (Bradbury 2019; Swantz 1975, 2008). Informed by this participatory, bottom-up perspective, the researcher did not tell communities about their problems but worked with them to identify their problems themselves and what action they would take to tackle those problems (Marja-Liisa Swantz, originator of 'participatory action research', cited in Bradbury et al. 2019). A study conducted by Mwaipopo (2014) highlighted some related issues but was not able to develop a strategy to address them.

Finally, the AR enabled the communities to take action against atrocities perpetrated by the mining company's security company. It continues to serve as a focal point for community mobilising and organising. This is in line with past AR literature which asserts the ability of such research to facilitate joint critical dialogues, social investigation, education (or co-learning), and responsive action (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014). Even so, the AR suggests a need for strengthening legal frameworks, empowering independent bodies, enhancing transparency, promoting whistleblower protection; strengthening civil society; international cooperation; public awareness and education; judicial reforms; economic reforms; and community engagement to sustain the effective measures taken so far and address atrocities in the mining sector on sustainable basis (Lee 1993; Talaue-McManus et al. 1999; Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014; Kinyondo and Huggins 2019; Knierzinger and Sopelle 2019; Onyango 2021).

Conclusion

The uniqueness of this study is that it has highlighted the potential of AR for capturing community perspectives. A thorough understanding of such perspectives is essential for addressing conflicts between mining companies and the communities that surround them. The article highlights the multidisciplinary orientation of AR in showcasing grassroots and context-specific challenges of marginalised communities as well as potential solutions in addressing them in a variety of contexts. As has been the case with other AR studies (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014), this intervention has facilitated transformative learning that enabled the local communities to thoroughly understand the challenges they face and then take appropriate action to address them.

Apart from generating concrete actions in the short term, the AR developed the transformative potential of the communities to address their challenges in the long term. The CBO enabled the communities to gain collective legal status to operate in the district and address the challenges prioritised in the CBO action plan. With this, the study attained the goal of effecting social change and creating knowledge in collaboration with local participants. As has been found in previous AR studies, this study integrated joint critical dialogues, social investigation, co-learning, and responsive action to attain empowerment for all involved (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014).

It is worthwhile mentioning that past efforts hardly addressed conflicts between the mining companies and the communities. The creation of the CBO, as one of the major outcomes of AR, to facilitate a dialogue between the communities, the mining companies, and other actors, has resolved conflicts to a large extent.

Finally, this article has added to the literature on extractive industries and society as well as the AR methodology in an attempt to spark action by local communities. Scholars studying the interaction between extractive industries and society are encouraged to increase the use of AR methodology to boost the surrounding communities and mining companies' ability to address conflicts at mining sites.

Notes

1. The land is believed to have been purchased under fraudulent circumstances because at the time El Hillal, the owner, was the secretary of the ruling party in Shinyanga.
2. See https://mtazamomedia.blogspot.com/2017/03/mtandao-wa-jinsia-tanzania-tgnp-watoa.html.

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Selected local news on outcome of the AR intervention

- ITV, 2019, *Minister Dotto Biteko addresses responds to requests from diamond small-scale miners* [translation]. Available online at https://www.itv.co.tz/news/mhebiteko-atatua-mgogoro-wa-muda-mrefu-katika-mgodi-wa-maganzo).

- Online media links on the outcome (sub-topic: diamond small-scale miners request President Magufuli for an area for diamond mining) include:
- https://habariswitch.blogspot.com/2017/03/wachimbaji-wadogo-wamuomba-eneo-rais.html.
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- http://www.mtaakwamtaa.co.tz/2017/03/wachimbaji-wadogo-wa-madini-wabeshi.html.
- Online media links on the outcome (sub-topic: Williamson Diamond Limited offers diamond kimberlite tailings to the surrounding communities free of charge) include:
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rchvwYerIII.
  - https://www.facebook.com/channeltentz/photos/habari-serikali-kupitia-wizara-ya-madini-imetatua-mgogoro-wa-muda-mrefu-baina-ya/2855578291133686/?locale=th_TH&paipv=0&eav=AfYL0ARmlXpd4EqGOvQqE46fhjmk_ijVXjTn66KXqJ8SkbPMln_Umw6GzqJXqU-aCxs&_rdr.
  - https://www.madini.go.tz/page/eca6da63-7a2a-4e0a-a4b6-91d6d1799bc8/.
  - https://www.jamiiforums.com/threads/mgogoro-wa-wachimbaji-madini-watatuliwa.1665782/.
- Online media links on the outcome (sub-topic: Press Club meeting) include:
  - https://mtazamomedia.blogspot.com/2017/03/mtandao-wa-jinsia-tanzania-tgnp-watoa.html.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Key questions/ issues explored through participant observation, semi-structured interview schedules, focus group discussions and key informant interviews

i. Safety and security of women and girl children in and around the mining sites as reflected in laws and regulations.
ii. Surrounding community's participation in decision-making in the mining sector, including employment and local content. (local content refers sourcing resources i.e. workforce, goods, services etc from the surroundimg community as a way to empower them and their economy)
iii. Compensation for land taken for mining and reallocation of land for surrounding communities.
iv. Surrounding communities' participation in decision making.
v. Presence and impacts of conflict between mining companies and surrounding communities.
vi. Gender relations including gender discrimination, incidents GBV and gender-responsive budgets as cross-cutting issues.
vii. Proposed solutions to address the challenges:
    a. establishment and registration of a CBO.
    b. strengthening of relationships with journalists.

Appendix 2: Initial data collection at the study location in 2017[1]

8 February 2017	Planning the initial data collection.
7–16 February	Mapping study location with CBO members near the mining site.
19 February	Arrival in the field.
20 March	Courtesy call and planning with local participants.
21–25 February	Participatory action research field work with kikundi mama every day and with other groups in the second half of the day.
26 February	Sunday break.

27 February	Reflection and preparation for ward and district feedback workshops.
28 February	Ward feedback followed by reflection.
1 March	Preparation for district feedback session and collection of relevant data.
2 March	District feedback workshop followed by reflection.
3 March	Preparation for press clubs workshop and CBO training.
4 March	CBO training and formation.
5 March	Sunday break.
6 March	CBO training and formation.
7–8 March	Presentation of findings to press club.
9 March	Orient investigative journalism team and print and disseminate CBO action plans at ward level.
9–14 March	Investigative journalism continues unaccompanied.

Note

1. Initial data collection refers to the initial AR Action Research (AR) Intervenion in 2017. The iniatila data collection was accompanied by follow up visit in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, and 2024. The follow up visits were geared at monitoring the progress of the AR intervention. That, the researcher monitoring how the surrounding communities used the capabilities acquired through AR to address the challenges they faced. The follow up visits also monitored the achievements of the AR intervention over the years.

Notes to Contributors

Articles for publication in *Africa Development* (*AD*) should be in electronic format, submitted via our electronic submission system (https://journals.codesria.org/index.php/ad) as MS Word attachments. Excessive formatting of the text should be avoided. Camera ready copies of maps, charts and graphs are required as well as the data used in plotting those charts and graphs.

Authors should use the Harvard Reference System (author–date), e.g.:

> It is interesting to note that… the word for 'tribe' does not exist in indigenous languages of South Africa (Mafeje 1975:254).

It is essential that authors list all publications cited in their articles. For clarification on how to present the list of references, authors should consult the *CODESRIA Guide for Authors* available on our website: www.codesria.org.

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Author's full name, address (including e-mail contact), academic status and current institutional affiliation should be indicated.

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Les auteurs doivent utiliser le système de référence de Harvard (auteur–date), par exemple :

> Il est intéressant de noter que… le mot « tribu » n'existe pas dans les langues indigènes d'Afrique du Sud (Mafeje 1975 : 254).

La liste des références doit répertorier tous les travaux cités dans le texte par l'auteur. Consulter le guide *CODESRIA recommandations aux auteurs*, disponible sur notre site web : www.codesria.org pour plus d'informations sur la présentation de la liste de références.

Un résumé de 150 à 200 mots, indiquant la problématique de recherche ainsi que les principaux résultats et conclusions, doit accompagner l'article. Les articles qui ne se conforment pas à ce format verront leur traitement retardé.

Les auteurs doivent clairement indiquer leur nom au complet, leur adresse (de même que leur adresse e-mail), leur situation académique ainsi que leur affiliation institutionnelle actuelle.

Les articles envoyés à *Afrique et développement* (*AD*) doivent être des contributions originales et ne doivent pas être soumis pour considération à une autre publication. L'anonymat est de rigueur dans le système d'évaluation des articles publiés dans *AD*.

Les auteurs ont droit à deux copies imprimées de la publication dans laquelle leurs articles sont publiés. Les versions électroniques de la revue sont disponibles à : www.codesria.org.

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