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Development of Social Science Research in Africa**

**Revue trimestrielle du Conseil pour le développement  
de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique**

**Papers from the  
2017 CODESRIA's Meaning-making Research Initiatives (MRI)**

**Articles issus des  
Initiatives de recherche pour la construction du sens (MRI) de 2017**

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

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## CODESRIA's Meaning-making Research Initiatives (MRI): A Note

Godwin R. Murunga\*, Ato Kwamena Onoma\*\*  
& Ibrahim Oanda Ogachi\*\*\*

The collection of articles in this issue of *Africa Development* represent the first outputs of CODESRIA's Meaning-making Research Initiatives (MRI). CODESRIA introduced the MRI in 2017 as its principal tool for generating and supporting research on Africa and its place in the world. This was part of the Council's ambitious programme of revamping its work, commencing with the new 2017–2021 Strategic Plan. As the Council comes to the end of this plan, and while preparing for the next strategic cycle, it is satisfying that the Council is already beginning to publish the peer-reviewed articles from the MRI on schedule and in Africa's premier Social Science journal.

The Council's decision to introduce the MRI as an epistemological and methodological tool for research was prompted by the need to resolve a range of challenges it confronted at programmatic and intellectual levels. Foremost was the imperative to nudge a new generation of emerging researchers in Africa towards new ways of conceptualising research and collecting and analysing data. The MRI aims to privilege the ontological contexts of the researcher and the researched in the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The Council's focus, in the context of the MRI, is to support work that deliberately advances beyond the description of Africa and its place in the world, to question, probe and analyse African realities in ways that suggest alternative and interesting ways of understanding and comprehending the continent. The MRI represents a recommitment to a long tradition of critical analysis and theorisation that previously saw CODESRIA contribute significantly to some of the most important debates on Africa and the rest of the world.

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Privileging the task of theorisation and critical inquiry has been part of CODESRIA's longstanding effort to challenge the intellectual divisions of labour that disadvantage intellectuals in Africa. The resulting hierarchies in this division have often been reflected in the quality of proposals and research outputs the Council has received after sharing calls for applications and providing fellowships and grants to different cohorts of applicants to its programmes. Some of the outputs received at the Council tended to be descriptions of various social settings and processes in ways that were marked by rather limited effort by the researchers to probe revealed structures and processes and to ask why things are the way they are and not otherwise. Such work was often marked by a paucity of intellectual curiosity and a limited ability to perceive what is puzzling in social realities. In the Council's view, this work was indicative of the limited ability of the researchers to go beyond describing how things are to imagining and exploring other ways in which they could be. The failure to give meaning-making enough emphasis had obviously diminished the extent to which African voices contributed to how they, as well as non-Africans, understand and make sense of the continent, its peoples, the Diaspora and the world in which they exist. It represented a missed opportunity for some African scholars to participate in the important processes of constructing the fundamental maps through which the world is produced (instead of just perceived and understood) and through which critical issues are defined and interventions fashioned.

The elision of meaning-making was not a choice that African academics simply adopted. It reflected a conjuncture in an African higher education context that had been battered by years of mismanagement and underfunding, a reality whose consequences were reflected both in the flight of able students and faculty to universities in the global North and in the deterioration of the African university as a space for serious and rigorous teaching and reflection. While there remains critical faculty working in African universities, they are few, overworked and overstretched, and increasingly a good many have emerged in institutional contexts that offer little preparation and stimulation for the tasks of relevant and innovative teaching, research and public engagement. The recent expansion of public and private universities has only worsened the staffing and research environment. Mounting student numbers, multiplication of teaching load and supervision at postgraduate levels, coupled with the drying up of research funding, have cumulatively negatively impacted the African university, resulting in a situation where basic training in conceptualising research and finding suitable methodologies for executing the research have taken a back seat in the last three decades.

Periodic training mounted by institutions like CODESRIA continues to play an important role in supporting the new generation of academics in the continent but, again, the reality of the research environment on the continent is such that the interventions by CODESRIA and like-minded institutions are always in competition with other parallel institutions who privilege different lenses through which to study and represent the continent. The MRI is therefore an attempt to bring urgency to the issue, signalling to the researchers the Council supports and the institutions they are affiliated to that better structures and sharper focus are needed to confront the persistent epistemological challenges in the continent. Besides intervening in the training of individual researchers, the Council began a programme of institution-based interventions supporting schools and faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences in the continent to revamp infrastructures for teaching and research, especially at the graduate level.

The adoption of the MRI as the principal tool for supporting research represents an effort to boost the legibility and visibility of knowledge produced by CODESRIA. The use of one well-defined tool instead of the five vehicles deployed in the previous cycle sought to help the scholarly and policy community to more easily discern the contributions of CODESRIA to knowledge about and research on the African continent. As part of the adoption of the MRI, the Council sought to strengthen the capacity of scholars to complete their projects by reinforcing the support that the Council offers them. This reinforcement has included an increase in the grant amounts provided, the inclusion of peers to accompany the researchers throughout the research process, the streamlining and improvement of monitoring and evaluation processes and greater involvement of the Council's training and publications arms in the generation of research outputs. Further, the Council adopted the strategy of releasing calls and launching MRIs only in the first three years of the five-year strategic cycle and leaving the last two years dedicated to completing manuscripts, publication and dissemination. Finally, the Council shifted from requiring a book manuscript from most MRI recipients to asking for the submission of one (for individual grants) or two (for group grants) scholarly articles to the Council while encouraging and supporting researchers to produce additional articles and book manuscripts that they later publish with a journal or press of their choice.

After a wide-ranging multi-stage process of consultations and debate, CODESRIA decided to focus its research for the 2017–2021 period on a set of thematic areas, as explained in the Strategic Plan document.<sup>1</sup> The choice of these themes, it was estimated, would allow the Council to continue promoting basic (academic) research in the Social Sciences and Humanities

in Africa as a contribution to meeting the continent's development challenges. They would focus on the most important aspects of this changing African landscape through appropriately fashioned theoretical, conceptual and methodological resources that do justice to the continent's history, current situation and its ambitions for the future. The articles in this volume, as in the forthcoming one, dwell on the thematic clusters and cross-cutting themes highlighted in the Strategic Plan. They touch on five critical issues: research and higher education; civil society activism and political engagement; popular culture; livelihoods and urban dynamics; and, finally, how information on weather patterns impacts smallholder farmers.

The seven articles in this issue, constituting the first output from the MRI intervention, traverse the thematic clusters on governance, democratisation and citizenship, economies and ecology, and higher education, that are the priority areas identified in the Council's 2017–2021 Strategic Plan. The articles are tied together by a common effort to grapple with what we can broadly speak of as transformation and agency. The first article, by Agyeman et al, addresses the Ghanaian context and reinterprets university–society relations in ways that contribute to a new theorisation of the stake that society, along with all of its hierarchies, has in the governance of universities in Africa. The article re-examines the forms of reciprocity expected from this relationship, with society ensuring the sustenance of the university by providing resources and management skills, and the university in turn satisfying society's development imperatives. The second article, by Hoffmann et al, explores the South African context, focusing on how teacher educators and the way in which they are trained shape their impact on social transformation at the macro level. The issue of social transformation at the macro level also preoccupies the article by Dimé et al, which grapples with questions of political and social agency. The article deals with how youth across Africa are deploying the Internet as a tool for political mobilisation in ways that pose real problems for state surveillance and control mechanisms. In examining the methods of Y'en a Marre in Senegal, Balai Citoyen in Burkina Faso, and Filimbi and LUCHA in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the article fleshes out but also interrogates the new ways through which citizens organise and mobilise to contest power, using technology, language and linguistic forms, and symbols.

Tsambu's article continues this exploration of hierarchies, their contestation and subversion, by diving into the thoroughly gendered and hierarchical vagaries of the Kinoisce music scene in Kinshasa. His specific preoccupation is the precarious location and status of female musicians in this world, their contribution to this musical space, their domination and exploitation as well as the possibility of their exercising forms of agency in it.

The article by Kimani et al deals with similar questions of domination, marginality and contestations over citizenship, in the Kenyan context. It uses language and linguistic practices as prisms to explore contestations over space and economic opportunities in Nairobi's Central Business District between hawkers on one hand and the city authorities and the 'formal' businesses that they approve of on the other hand. This contestation over space and opportunities speaks to broader loaded dichotomies between the formal/informal, legal-illegal, proper/improper through which the forms of marginalisation and struggles for voice that mark the Kenyan context are elaborated and, as Kimani et al show, can be understood.

The article by Mhiripiri et al also deals with the issue of agency, with a focus on the marginal San community in Zimbabwe. It adopts the unorthodox method of exploring what forms of 'self-filming' result when members of a San community are empowered with technological training in and instruments for film-making. In what ways does the medium and the political economic context in which it is immersed shape how the San elaborate, present and perform their ways of life in cultural texts?

Finally, the article by Yebemey et al addresses similar questions of technological diffusion, with a focus here on its economic impacts. It explores the extent to which weather-related information provided to rural farmers through modern ICT technologies helps them increase yields. Mhiripiri et al and Yebemey et al's engagement with explicitly rural contexts help balance the heavy focus on urban spaces and actors that otherwise informs some of the papers in this issue. The ability to traverse these spaces speaks to the Council's cross-cutting themes of rurality and urbanity.

These articles testify to the work done in the last three years to revitalise research and speed up production of knowledge and dissemination for the purposes of knowledge and policy engagement. This obviously remains work in progress, as two additional cohorts of the MRI are at advanced stages of completing their work. The Council plans to improve on this progress and ensure that the African voice continues to assert itself in global Social Science and Humanities debates.

## Note

1. CODESRIA 2017–2021 Strategic Plan, Reaching New Frontiers in Social Science Research and Knowledge Production for Africa's Transformation.





## Note sur les Initiatives de recherche pour la construction du sens (MRI)

Godwin R. Murunga\*, Ato Kwamena Onoma\*\*  
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La collection d'articles de ce numéro d'*Afrique et développement* présente les premiers résultats des Initiatives de recherche pour la construction du sens (MRI) du CODESRIA. En 2017, le CODESRIA a mis en place les MRI à titre d'outil principal de création et de soutien à la recherche sur l'Afrique et sur sa place dans le monde. Cette initiative faisait partie de l'ambitieux programme du Conseil qui concerne la réorganisation de ses interventions, à commencer par le nouveau Plan stratégique 2017–2021. Alors que ce Plan arrive à son terme, et tout en se préparant pour le prochain cycle stratégique, il est gratifiant de constater que le Conseil a commencé, dans les délais prévus, la publication, dans la principale revue de sciences sociales en Afrique, des articles, évalués par les pairs, issus des MRI.

La décision du Conseil de mettre en place les MRI en tant qu'outil épistémologique et méthodologique de recherche a été motivée par la nécessité de prendre à bras-le-corps les défis auxquels il est confronté sur les plans programmatique et intellectuel. D'abord, il y a eu l'impératif de pousser une nouvelle génération de chercheurs émergents en Afrique vers de nouvelles manières de conceptualiser la recherche, de collecter et analyser les données. Les MRI privilégient les contextes ontologiques du chercheur et du sujet étudié dans le processus de collecte, d'analyse et d'interprétation des données. Dans le cadre des MRI, l'objectif du Conseil est de soutenir les travaux qui, délibérément, vont au-delà de la description de l'Afrique et de sa place dans le monde, et interrogent, sondent et analysent les réalités africaines afin de suggérer des moyens alternatifs et innovants de comprendre et d'appréhender le continent. Les MRI sont un réengagement

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dans une longue tradition d'analyse critique et de théorisation qui a, de manière significative, permis au CODESRIA de contribuer aux débats les plus importants sur l'Afrique et le reste du monde.

Privilégier la tâche de théorisation et d'enquête critique fait partie des efforts durables du CODESRIA dans la remise en question des divisions intellectuelles du travail qui désavantagent les intellectuels en Afrique. Les hiérarchies résultant de cette division du travail se reflètent souvent dans la qualité des propositions et des résultats de recherche que le Conseil reçoit après la publication d'appels à candidatures et l'octroi de bourses et de subventions à différentes cohortes de candidats à ses programmes. Certains des résultats reçus par le Conseil étaient surtout des descriptions de divers contextes et processus sociaux, captives des restrictions des chercheurs dans leur exploration des structures et processus révélés, et réduites à se demander pourquoi les choses sont ainsi et pas autrement. De tels travaux étaient souvent marqués par un manque de curiosité intellectuelle et une capacité limitée à percevoir ce qui est déstabilisant dans les réalités sociales. De l'avis du Conseil, ce type de travail est révélateur des réticences des chercheurs à aller au-delà de la description des choses afin de les explorer et de leur imaginer d'autres manières d'être. Ne pas accorder suffisamment d'importance à la construction du sens a évidemment amoindri la contribution des voix africaines à la manière dont elles, et les non-Africains, comprennent et donnent un sens au continent, à ses peuples, à la diaspora et au monde dans lequel ils existent. Ce fut une opportunité, manquée pour certains chercheurs africains, de participer aux importants processus de construction des cartographies fondamentales par lesquelles le monde est produit (au lieu d'être juste perçu et compris) et à travers lesquelles des questions cruciales sont déterminées et des interventions conçues.

L'élosion de la création du sens n'était pas simplement un choix d'universitaires africains. Elle reflétait une conjoncture dans un contexte d'enseignement supérieur africain malmené par des années de mauvaise gestion et de sous-financement, une réalité dont les conséquences renvoient à la fois à l'exode d'étudiants et de professeurs compétents vers les universités du Nord global et à la détérioration de l'université africaine, en tant qu'espace d'enseignement et de réflexion sérieux et rigoureux. Il reste des professeurs critiques dans les universités africaines, mais ils sont peu nombreux, surchargés de travail et débordés, et beaucoup sont dans des contextes institutionnels peu propices à une préparation et une stimulation des tâches d'enseignement, de recherche et d'engagement publics orientées vers la pertinence et l'innovation. La récente expansion

des universités publiques et privées n'a fait que détériorer un peu plus les ressources humaines et l'environnement de la recherche. Le nombre croissant d'étudiants, la multiplication des charges d'enseignement et de supervision aux niveaux postuniversitaires, à quoi s'associe l'assèchement du financement de la recherche, ont eu un impact négatif et cumulatif sur l'université africaine, créant, au terme des trois dernières décennies, une situation où la formation fondamentale à la conceptualisation de la recherche et à la quête de méthodologies appropriées pour l'exécuter est devenue secondaire.

La formation périodique organisée par des institutions comme le CODESRIA continue de jouer un important rôle de soutien à la nouvelle génération d'universitaires sur le continent, mais, ici encore, la réalité de l'environnement de la recherche est telle que les interventions du CODESRIA et d'institutions ayant des vues similaires sont en concurrence avec des organismes parallèles, qui privilégient des perspectives différentes dans l'étude et la représentation du continent. Les MRI sont donc une tentative d'amplifier la question, de signaler aux chercheurs soutenus par le Conseil et aux institutions auxquelles ils sont affiliés que de meilleures structures et un ciblage plus précis sont nécessaires pour faire face aux défis épistémologiques chroniques du continent. En plus d'agir dans la formation de chercheurs individuels, le Conseil a lancé un programme d'interventions institutionnelles de soutien aux écoles et facultés de sciences humaines et sociales pour la réorganisation des infrastructures d'enseignement et de recherche, en particulier au niveau des cycles supérieurs.

L'adoption des MRI comme outil principal de soutien à la recherche a pour objectif d'accroître la lisibilité et la visibilité des savoirs produits par le CODESRIA. L'utilisation d'un dispositif bien défini au lieu des cinq véhicules déployés dans le cycle programmatique précédent a pour objectif d'aider la communauté scientifique et politique à reconnaître plus facilement les contributions du CODESRIA à la connaissance et à la recherche sur le continent africain. À travers l'adoption des MRI, le Conseil a voulu consolider la capacité des chercheurs à mener à bien leurs projets en renforçant le soutien que leur apporte le Conseil. Ce renforcement comprend une augmentation des montants des subventions accordées, l'inclusion de pairs dans l'accompagnement des chercheurs tout au long du processus de recherche, la rationalisation et l'amélioration des processus de suivi et d'évaluation et une plus grande implication des programmes de formation et de publication du Conseil dans la production de résultats de recherche.

En outre, le Conseil a introduit la stratégie consistant à lancer des programmes et des MRI uniquement dans les trois premières années du cycle stratégique quinquennal, consacrant ainsi les deux dernières années à la finalisation des manuscrits, à la publication et à la diffusion. Enfin, le Conseil, au lieu de requérir de la plupart des récipiendaires des MRI un manuscrit d'ouvrage, est passé à l'exigence de la soumission au Conseil d'un article (pour les subventions individuelles) ou de deux articles (pour les subventions de groupe), tout en encourageant et en soutenant les chercheurs en vue de la production d'articles et de manuscrits supplémentaires, qu'ils publieront plus tard dans le journal ou la revue de leur choix.

Comme il est expliqué dans le Plan stratégique<sup>1</sup>, après un vaste processus de consultations et de débats échelonnés, le CODESRIA a, pour la période 2017-2021, décidé de concentrer ses recherches sur un ensemble de domaines thématiques. Le choix de ces thèmes devrait permettre au Conseil de continuer à promouvoir la recherche (académique) fondamentale en sciences sociales et humaines en Afrique, afin d'apporter sa contribution à la résolution des défis de développement du continent. Ils porteront sur les aspects les plus importants de ce panorama africain en mutation, grâce à des ressources théoriques, conceptuelles et méthodologiques convenablement conçues, qui rendent justice à l'histoire du continent, à sa situation actuelle et à ses ambitions pour l'avenir. Les articles de ce volume, comme ceux du prochain, insistent sur les agrégations thématiques et les thèmes transversaux mis en évidence dans le Plan stratégique. Ils touchent à cinq questions essentielles : la recherche et l'enseignement supérieur; l'activisme de la société civile et l'engagement politique; la culture populaire; les moyens de subsistance et la dynamique urbaine; et, enfin, l'impact favorable des informations météorologiques sur les petits agriculteurs.

Les sept articles de ce numéro constituent le premier résultat de l'intervention MRI. Ils couvrent les thématiques de la gouvernance, de la démocratisation et de la citoyenneté, des économies et de l'écologie, et de l'enseignement supérieur, qui sont les domaines prioritaires identifiés dans le Plan stratégique 2017-2021 du Conseil. Les articles sont liés par l'effort commun d'aborder ce que nous pouvons qualifier de transformation et d'agencéité. Le premier article, rédigé par Agyeman *et al.*, étudie le contexte ghanéen et réinterprète les relations entre université et société de manière à contribuer à une nouvelle théorisation de l'enjeu que la société, avec l'ensemble de ses hiérarchies, prête à la gouvernance des universités en Afrique. L'article réexamine les formes de réciprocité attendues de cette relation, la société assurant la pérennité de l'université en fournissant des ressources et des compétences de gestion, et l'université répondant, à son tour, aux impératifs

de développement de la société. Le deuxième article, écrit par Hoffmann *et al.*, sillonne le contexte sud-africain, se focalisant sur les formateurs d'enseignants et se demandant comment la manière dont ils sont formés structure leur impact sur la transformation sociale au niveau macro. La question de la transformation sociale au niveau macro est également la préoccupation de l'article de Dimé *et al.*, qui aborde les questions d'agencéité politique et sociale. L'article traite des jeunes en Afrique et de leur usage d'internet comme outil de mobilisation politique, selon des modalités qui posent de réels problèmes aux mécanismes de surveillance et de contrôle de l'État. Examinant les méthodes de Y'en a Marre au Sénégal, Balai Citoyen au Burkina Faso, et Filimbi et LUCHA en République démocratique du Congo, l'article renseigne, étoffe, mais également interroge les nouveaux moyens par lesquels les citoyens, utilisant la technologie, la langue et les formes linguistiques et les symboles, s'organisent et se mobilisent pour contester le pouvoir.

L'article de Tsambu poursuit cette exploration des hiérarchies, de leur contestation et de leur subversion en plongeant dans les aléas profondément genrés et hiérarchisés de la scène musicale kinoise. Sa préoccupation spécifique est la situation et le statut précaires des femmes musiciennes dans ce monde, leur contribution à cet espace musical, la domination et l'exploitation dont elles sont l'objet, ainsi que la possibilité d'y exercer des formes d'agencéité.

L'article de Kimani *et al.* s'applique à l'étude de questions similaires de domination, de marginalité et de citoyenneté contestée, dans le contexte kényan. Il utilise les prismes de la langue et des pratiques linguistiques pour parcourir les contestations d'espace et d'opportunités économiques dans le quartier central des affaires de Nairobi, entre des colporteurs, d'une part, et les autorités municipales et les entreprises «formelles» qu'elles agréent, d'autre part. Cette compétition pour l'espace et les opportunités renvoie à des dichotomies plus larges et plus chargées, telles que formel et informel, légal et illégal, approprié et inapproprié, à travers lesquelles sont élaborées et peuvent être comprises les formes de marginalisation et les luttes pour être entendu qui marquent le contexte kényan.

L'article de Mhiripiri *et al.* s'occupe également de la question de l'intermédiation en mettant l'accent sur la communauté marginale San du Zimbabwe. Il prend pour méthode l'exploration, peu orthodoxe, des formes de «film sur soi» produites lorsque les membres d'une communauté San sont formés technologiquement et dotés d'instruments pour la réalisation de films. De quelle manière le médium et le contexte politico-économique dans lequel il est immergé influencent-ils les San dans l'élaboration, la présentation et la réalisation de leurs modes de vie?

Enfin, l'article de Yegbemey *et al.* aborde des questions voisines de diffusion technologique, en insistant sur leurs impacts économiques. Il examine dans quelle mesure les informations météorologiques fournies aux agriculteurs ruraux grâce aux technologies TIC modernes les aident à accroître leurs rendements. L'engagement de Mhiripiri *et al.* et de Yegbemey *et al.* dans des contextes explicitement ruraux aide à contrebalancer l'importance accordée aux espaces et acteurs urbains documentés dans certains des articles de ce numéro. La capacité à franchir ces espaces témoigne d'ailleurs de la transversalité des thèmes du Conseil que sont la ruralité et l'urbanité.

Ces articles illustrent le travail accompli au cours des trois dernières années dans la revitalisation de la recherche, l'accélération de la production et la diffusion de savoirs à des fins de connaissance et d'engagement politique. Cela demeure évidemment un travail en cours, car deux cohortes supplémentaires en sont à un stade avancé de finalisation de leurs travaux. Le Conseil prévoit d'accentuer ces progrès et d'amplifier les voix africaines dans les débats mondiaux sur les sciences sociales et les sciences humaines.

## Note

1. Plan stratégique du CODESRIA 2017–2021, Vers de nouvelles frontières dans la recherche en science sociales et la production de connaissances pour la transformation de l'Afrique.



# University–Community Relations in Ghana: Traditional Authority as a Stakeholder<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article examines the levels and forms of engagement between universities in Ghana and traditional authority. The article is based on an in-depth study of five public universities and their neighbouring communities. Stakeholder theory was used for analysis. Findings from the study indicate that there is a growing awareness among public universities in Ghana of the need to engage the traditional authority of their immediate surrounding communities to enhance university–community relations and coexistence, in order to address the socio-economic and developmental aspirations of the communities and to help achieve the institutional goals of the universities. However, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) appears to have a more comprehensive engagement model than the others.

**Keywords:** University–community relations, traditional authority, stakeholders, Ghana

## Résumé

Cet article examine les niveaux et les formes d'engagement entre les universités du Ghana et les autorités traditionnelles. Le document est basé sur une étude approfondie de cinq universités publiques et des communautés avoisinantes. La théorie des parties prenantes a été utilisée dans l'analyse. Les résultats de l'étude indiquent que les universités publiques du Ghana sont de plus en plus conscientes de la nécessité de faire participer les autorités traditionnelles de

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leurs communautés immédiates afin d'améliorer les relations et la coexistence université–communauté, répondre aux aspirations socio-économiques et de développement des communautés, et atteindre leurs objectifs institutionnels. Cependant, l'Université des sciences et technologies Kwame Nkrumah (KNUST) semble disposer d'un modèle d'engagement plus complet que les autres.

**Mots-clés :** relations université–communauté, autorité traditionnelle, parties prenantes, Ghana

## **Introduction**

In this article, we examine the level of stakeholder influence that traditional authority wields over universities within their respective jurisdictions. We explore the degree of salience that public universities in Ghana give to traditional authority<sup>2</sup> in the university administration, by looking at the stakeholder power, legitimacy and urgency of the traditional authority. Recent events in Ghana have shown that chiefs<sup>3</sup> are becoming more and more important as stakeholders in addressing societal problems, while in some cases too, they could be the causes of these problems. Moreover, in recent times, there have been growing tensions between universities and their host communities over land, access to employment, admissions and matters relating to universities' corporate social responsibility towards their communities.

In light of this, one key governance strategy of public universities in Ghana for improving relations with local communities is the engagement of traditional authority. As a result, traditional authority, which is encapsulated in the chieftaincy institution, plays an important role in the administration of Ghana's public universities. In spite of the vicissitudes that this institution has suffered, both during colonial times and in the post-independence era, it has proved to be resilient and capable of adapting, while at the same time maintaining its relevance. As a result, Ghanaian chiefs, queens and queen mothers continue to control and command respect and allegiance among their subjects as well as serving as custodians of Ghanaian culture.

In recent years, traditional leaders have helped to address social issues, such as girl-child education, the mobilisation of resources to fund education, teenage pregnancy, unemployment and public health, and have lobbied government and development partners to address socio-economic development challenges within their localities (Boafo-Arthur 2003; Campion & Acheampong 2014). Indeed, chiefs have become the eminent mouthpiece of their communities and they expect educational institutions within their jurisdictions to be their partners in this transformational agenda. For example, during periods of school admissions, chiefs are inundated

by requests from their subjects to facilitate their children's admission into schools under their jurisdiction, and they expect school authorities to co-operate with them. Therefore, three main questions are addressed in this study. First, what form of engagement exists between Ghanaian universities and their local community stakeholders, specifically traditional authority? Second, what type of stakeholder roles are assigned to traditional authority in this engagement? Third, what level of influence does traditional authority exert in this engagement?

## Theoretical Framework

This article is grounded in stakeholder theory as advanced by Freeman (1984) and Freeman et al. (2010). The theory focuses on the social contract, networks and partnerships that businesses and organisations develop with people, communities and institutions. According to Harrison, Freeman and Sá de Abreu (2015), the core of stakeholder theory is about creating more value. Lately, this theory has been adopted in the study of the operations of higher education institutions (Khanyile 2018), which have been impressed upon to 'bring the gown to town' and be more involved in improving the wellbeing of their neighbouring communities (Watson 2007; Hoyt 2010; Hoyt & Hollister 2014).

Generally, a stakeholder refers to an individual or a group that can directly or indirectly influence the operations and sustainability of an organisation (Mainardes et al. 2012). Although the Stanford Research Institute coined the term 'stakeholder' in 1963 to refer to 'those groups without whose support the organisation would cease to exist' (Zsolnai 2006:38), the term is often attributed to Edward R. Freeman, based on his famous book titled *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, of 1984. In this work, Freeman defined a stakeholder as 'any group or individual that can affect or be affected by the realisation of a company's objectives' (Freeman 1984:25; Freeman et al. 2010:9; Hörisch et al. 2014). From these definitions, therefore, university stakeholders could be taken to comprise organisations, groups and individuals (Jongbloed et al. 2008) whose actions influence the functions and operations of the university.

Jongbloed et al. (2008) have argued that universities around the world have the responsibility to 'demonstrate quality, efficiency and effectiveness' not only to the governments and other bodies or individuals who provide funding and oversight responsibility over them, but also to a wide range of stakeholders who are directly or indirectly engaged with them. Mitchell et al. (1997), basing their argument on Freeman, showed that the stakeholder approach helps to determine 'who or what really counts' in an organisation's

operations and governance strategies as it guides managers and leaders of corporate organisations to find ways to pay attention to their stakeholders. Stakeholders are influential and play a critical role in the success or otherwise of an organisation (Khanyile 2018) and can be classified as those who have the power to thwart the organisation's achievement of its objectives, as well as the potential to cause the organisational goals to fail (Prokopy et al. 2015).

### ***Stakeholder types and relevance***

Identifying and prioritising stakeholders effectively is an essential component of the stakeholder analysis of any organisation. Therefore, any university that wishes to gain a competitive advantage in the current turbulent tertiary education milieu, characterised by fierce and rising competition, cannot but prioritise its stakeholders (Slabá 2015; Khanyile 2018). This will help the university to determine who its stakeholders are and their relevance (Jongbloed et al. 2008). However, traditional methods for identifying stakeholders have not been applied in the context of universities (Mainardes et al. 2012). Consequently, the identification of university stakeholders has not been empirically researched, which means that the process of identifying them needs to be developed from scratch. Nonetheless, Jongbloed et al. (2008) argue that stakeholder identification within the university occurs not only at the institutional level, but also at other levels, because of professional domination, fragmented decision-making and the diffusion and devolution of power. It is important that university stakeholders are identified and classified in accordance with their relative importance, as the basis for establishing relationships with them (Mainardes et al. 2012). In this context, identifying stakeholder groups is not a simple process (Jongbloed et al. 2008) and universities need to determine each stakeholder's expectations and needs or demands, which goes beyond merely identifying stakeholders (Bertrand & Busugutsala 1998). Therefore, the university's ability to identify, prioritise and engage with communities mirrors its degree of organisational evolution (Jongbloed et al. 2008). In the case of Ghana, identifying the role that traditional authority plays in the administration of universities is vital for ensuring the success and continuous relevance of such universities to society.

Three main attributes have been used to determine the importance of stakeholders to institutions, namely: power, legitimacy and urgency. These attributes are also used to identify the various categories of stakeholders of an organisation and their levels of influence (Mitchell et al. 1997; Parent & Deephouse 2007; Jongbloed et al. 2008; Jeffery 2009; Carroll & Buchholtz 2014; Khanyile 2018).

A stakeholder's power refers to the stakeholder's ability to arbitrarily and coercively exercise his/her will over a relationship with the organisation. The extent of power a stakeholder can exercise over an organisation will ultimately determine how much influence such a stakeholder can have over the functioning of the organisation (Carroll & Buchholtz 2014; Parent & Deephouse 2007; Jongbloed et al. 2008). A stakeholder's legitimacy refers to the entitlement and interest that the stakeholder has in an organisation. This is what defines a stakeholder (Pesqueux & Damak-Ayadi 2005). The claims and actions of a stakeholder can be understood as being appropriate or legitimate, as well as proper and desirable (Carroll & Buchholtz 2014; Jongbloed et al. 2008; Parent & Deephouse 2007). Finally, a stakeholder's urgency refers to the extent to which the stakeholder views his/her claims as being critical and time-sensitive (Carroll & Buchholtz 2014; Mitchell et al. 2007; Parent & Deephouse 2007). These three attributes serve as a measure of the level of influence and the quality of relationship that the stakeholder can have with an organisation. The level of importance of the stakeholder role of a traditional leader depends on how many of these attributes he or she possesses (Parent & Deephouse 2007), which in turn determines how great his or her influence on university decision-making processes will be (Mitchell et al. 1997).

Based on the attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency, three categories of stakeholders are identified that can be subdivided into seven: (a) latent stakeholders – those who possess only one of the above-mentioned attributes; (b) expectant stakeholders – those who possess two of the attributes; and (c) definitive stakeholders – those who possess all three attributes. Using this theoretical approach, and based on the relationship that they develop with universities within their localities, we were able to identify the type of stakeholder a traditional authority is.

The operational hypothesis of this article is that the success of a university is dependent on the level of engagement it has with the local community stakeholders, particularly traditional authority. In line with this, traditional authority is examined as a key stakeholder of university–community relations, as is the extent to which its interests can affect the operations of a university.

## **Methodology**

Qualitative research methodology was adopted for this work by employing data in the form of words to generate descriptions and explanations (Bangura 2019; Munene et al. 2019). The choice of the methodology was based on its 'scrupulosity, meticulousness, commitment to scholarly rigor

in the investigation of research questions, determination to find the truth, and intellectual honesty' (Bangura 2019:30). Specifically, the study used a narrative design, focusing on a single phenomenon and the setting of participants (Shisanya 2019:55). This design afforded us the opportunity to explore how universities engage traditional authority in their governance systems. It enabled us to focus on the perspectives of the leadership and management of public universities and those of their host communities. It also allowed for the creation of a platform for in-depth discussions to generate insights regarding the effectiveness of the engagements.

Data for the paper was drawn from various sources: primary data (interviews), secondary data (journal articles, books, print and electronic media) and other informal interactions. The paper is based on seventy-three in-depth key informant interviews across five public universities in Ghana and their surrounding communities. The study sites were the University of Cape Coast (UCC), the University for Development Studies (UDS), University of Education, Winneba (UEW), University of Ghana (UG) and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), and their surrounding communities. Both the primary and secondary data were collected concurrently within the stated period.

Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the participants, who comprised senior administrative and academic staff in the five universities, as well as chiefs, queen mothers and traditional leaders of the surrounding communities. The interviews were conducted over a period of seven months from June 2018 to January 2019 and were at the convenience of the participants. Whereas interviews with university authorities were conducted in their offices during weekdays and during office hours, interviews with the chiefs and elders were conducted in their homes or palaces as was deemed appropriate for the participants. For the convenience of the participants, the time and venue of interviews were determined by them. The interviews were conducted in English, Fante, Twi, Dagbani, Ga and Effutu. They were recorded, transcribed and translated into English. In instances where the research team did not speak the local language to be used for the interview, the service of a community member was engaged for the interview, transcription and translation. The primary data was coded for the purpose of generating themes for discussion.

Apart from the interview data, secondary data including historical documents, reports and commissioned studies, the statutes and acts establishing each university, annual bulletins, brochures and online documents were obtained and analysed. In one form, it was used to validate some of the issues raised in the interviews; in another it was used to support

the governance issues that arose from the respondents. This was meant to complement, compare and corroborate some of the issues emerging from the interviews with the documentary evidence. In order to protect the identity of participants, pseudonyms have been used for them in this work.

### ***Traditional authority engagement in university governance***

In this section we examine the involvement of traditional authority and the roles they play as key stakeholders in the general political economic space of Ghana and, more specifically, in the governance of universities in their areas of jurisdiction.

#### *Traditional authority as an important community stakeholder in Ghana*

Traditional authority, represented by chiefs, is the oldest form of governance in many African countries. It is an indigenous political arrangement by which leaders of good moral standing are selected and installed in line with the provisions of customs and laws (Nweke 2012). In Ghana, the chieftaincy institution dates back at least five hundred years and was organised into a decentralised political system for efficient administration even before colonisation (Panyin 2010). In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the British government established a bifurcated state (Tieleman & Uitermark 2018), with the established civil service coexisting with the traditional system. Although this system has experienced various forms of vicissitudes by elite political governance systems, it has remained resilient and evolved, mainly because it has roots in and relevance to Ghanaian society. This claim was supported by the Coussey Commission in 1948, which reported in part that:

The whole chieftaincy institution is so closely bound up with the life of our communities that its disappearance would spell disaster. Chiefs and what they symbolize in the society are so vital that the subject of their future must be approached with the greatest caution. No African of the Gold Coast is without some admiration for the best aspects of chieftaincy and all would loathe doing violence to it ... (Panyin 2010:7).

The significance of traditional authority has not changed, and most Ghanaians today cannot imagine a community without a chief (Tieleman & Uitermark 2018). Even those who feel their chiefs are grossly ineffective do not feel that the chieftaincy itself should be abolished (Ubink 2007). Furthermore, the national Constitution provides for the involvement of chiefs as important stakeholders in national and local governance through the creation of a Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs, since 2005, and the enactment of the Chieftaincy Act

2008 (Act 759). Although chiefs in Ghana do not belong to political parties, there are structures for them to participate in governance and decision-making, at the national, regional and district houses of chiefs. In addition, chiefs are appointed in consultation with their traditional councils into the non-partisan metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies to participate in decision-making at the local level. Thus, the involvement of chiefs at the various levels of governance is indicative of the significance of the traditional authority as key stakeholders at all levels of decision-making in the political economy of Ghana. This notwithstanding, the degree of influence and roles of the chiefs in the political space in Ghana also largely depends on the prominence and clout of a particular traditional ruler within his or her area of jurisdiction and beyond.

### *Traditional authority: what role in university governance?*

The involvement and stakeholder roles of traditional authority in the establishment, governance and management of education is not new in Ghana. For example, Nana Sir Ofori Atta of Akyem Abuakwa traditional state established schools, including Abuakwa State College in 1937, and instituted scholarships for his subjects. Similarly, the celebrated luminary, Professor K.A. Busia, benefitted from a scholarship by the Asanteman Council to pursue higher education in Great Britain. Clearly, traditional authority has been a significant stakeholder in the provision of education in general, and tertiary education in particular, in Ghana. It is therefore not inappropriate that chiefs be involved at different levels of decision-making and play crucial roles in the governance and management of universities.

The public universities in this study engage chiefs<sup>2</sup> at different levels and in different capacities within their governance structure. The results of the study show that, depending on the exigencies of a particular university, traditional authority is engaged at policy-making level or administrative level or both within the governance structure of the university, which includes: (1) the regulatory bodies (Ministry of Education – MoE; National Council for Tertiary Education – NCTE; and National Accreditation Board – NAB); policy-making bodies (Office of the Chancellor, Governing Council); and administrative structures. In most, cases however, the engagement is very informal. Here we focus on the formal engagement systems.

### *Chiefs in Policy-Making Bodies*

Two of the studied universities engaged the traditional authority of surrounding communities in their policy-making bodies. At KNUST, the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, is the chancellor, while at UEW, the

paramount chief of the Effutu traditional area, Neenyi Ghartey VII, is a member of the university's governing council. The positions occupied by the chiefs within universities in respective traditional jurisdictions enable them to exert some level of influence at the policy-making level of the respective universities. Their access to such position is principally based on their capacity as traditional leaders. During the interviews, university authorities considered such appointments strategic for improved university–community relations. Of the Asantehene as chancellor of KNUST, a former vice chancellor said:

was strategic, yes. We did that because, you see, initially we had a lot of problems with regards to land ... During the construction of our medical school, every time we installed our equipment the next day we go it is not there. There was a particular man who said we should go away because that part of the land does not belong to us. We informed Otumfuo and he instructed the chief in that community to stop that man. In fact, that ended this man's behaviour. In addition, if you understand the process involved in determining who should become a chancellor ... in fact we went through a long list. The Academic Board, Council Select Committee ... preferred his candidature because of the link between himself and the government, and, at the same time, the link between himself and the traditional authority here. That is why I said earlier that it was strategic. If this decision was not strategically considered, we would have run into a host of problems. (AB, former vice chancellor, KNUST).

The appointment of the paramount chief of Winneba as a member of the University of Education, Winneba's governing council was also strategic. It followed a series of court issues by natives of Winneba against the university on matters relating to the university's corporate social responsibility towards the community. We can deduce, therefore, that the involvement of traditional authority in the policy-making organs of public universities is a form of recognition of their position and role in society.

In recent times, it has been argued that, 'The chief is a political and social power center (if even in a circumscribed sense) in the area he rules and *ipso facto* a microcosm of authority who at times rivals the central government in legitimacy, recognition and loyalty by subjects' (Baofo-Arthur 2003:134). As a result, the views and directives of chiefs on some matters are more likely to be adhered to and implemented than those of the government (Panyin 2010; Mitchell et al. 1997). Therefore, involving them in university policy-making within their jurisdictional areas provides important leverage to address governance challenges within the universities. Also, universities that engage their local traditional authority may have leverage over the other public universities, particularly in matters relating to university's relation with surrounding communities.

### *Mediation between the university and the community: conflict resolution and socio-cultural engagement*

What type of stakeholder roles are assigned to traditional authority in their relations with the universities? In other words, what is the purpose of the engagement? Roles that are performed or assigned to traditional authority by the universities vary. During the interviews many functions came up which can be summarised under the following themes: mediation; ceremonies/sociocultural; and conflict resolution.

#### *Mediation*

Evidence from our study shows that in university–community relations, traditional authority was engaged to play a mediation role. The leaders mediate between the universities and the communities as well as between the universities and government. The mediatory role of traditional authority is social, political and religio-cultural. In fact, the purpose of establishing university–community engagement committees by KNUST and UCC, comprising traditional leaders of the surrounding communities and the university authorities, is to enable the universities to reach out to the community through the chieftaincy institution. As a medium for extending social relations or corporate social responsibility to the surrounding community, the chiefs serve as a bridge between the universities and the communities. In that sense, any social intervention by the university in the communities is channelled through the appropriate traditional authority. For example, at KNUST, admission quotas have been assigned to each traditional ruler of the surrounding communities, some of whom are women. UG has given a quota to the La Traditional Council, while UCC and UEW permit protocol admissions from chiefs of surrounding communities. This practice is also common among the universities when recruiting junior staff and labourers. On admission quotas, the queen mother of Bomso, said:

Yes. Sometimes the number is even more than the allocated quota. For instance, somebody may not be a native of Bomso but such a person has stayed here and worked with us, attends communal labour to the extent that when they die they are buried here – we have cemeteries reserved for such people. We even have the chief for the Frafra ethnic group. What prevents me from giving such people the opportunity when they need it? For non-indigenes, there are many of them in this town from different ethnic groups. We co-exist peacefully with them so when they request that I should help their wards to get admission into the university I do not deny them.

In some cases, however, the mediation role of the chiefs is political. Chiefs mediate on behalf of universities when the universities have issues with

government state institutions. Sometimes, they mediate on behalf of university dons who are aspiring for top management positions:

Truth, the word truth is one. That is why you are here and I am telling you all this. They cannot deny it. You see those who are vying for VC coming here every now and then. I told you it is through me you see the paramount chief, so they will come and see me first before I also sit down with the paramount chief and then we start lobbying. Then when they get it, that is all. We are even thinking of ceasing to help them because when we help them and they come, they don't do anything for the community (Nana E, Traditional Leader, Kokoadjo, UCC).

In fact, due to the growing influence of chiefs as power brokers within the country, they sometimes play direct or indirect roles in the appointment of persons to top management positions whenever such positions become vacant. Therefore, the influence of chiefs in determining who becomes the next vice chancellor, pro vice chancellor or registrar of a university within their jurisdiction counts a lot. As a result, and also depending on the extent of power and influence that such traditional authority possesses, people vying for such positions are not likely to get them if they are not on good terms with such authority. In fact, this practice is not limited to universities, but also most top public administrative and management positions in Ghana. For example, in 2015, the Asanteman Council caused the removal from office of the Mayor of Kumasi Metropolis, Mr Kojo Bonsu, when the Council declared him persona non grata after he was accused of showing gross disrespect to them (Ashitey 2016). Moreover, following a lawsuit by a citizen of Winneba against the University of Education, Winneba, the largest teacher education university in the country, over several charges, including reneging on its corporate social responsibility to include local content in the award of university contracts, the government responded by appointing the paramount chief of Winneba to the university's governing council. In this case, he mediated between the university and the community.

### *Ceremonies and socio-cultural relations*

The universities recognise traditional authority as custodians of culture and the representatives of the people, particularly when they organise public events, such as matriculations and graduations. All five public universities we studied invite some of the eminent chiefs and queens of surrounding communities whenever they are organising such ceremonies. The traditional authorities usually attend these ceremonies with their entourage and full regalia. This kind of protocol observed by the universities is significant in giving recognition to the kings who are their landlords. It is also a way of strengthening relations between the universities and surrounding communities.

In addition, when paramount chiefs are performing their annual festivals, the universities provide support at institutional, departmental or sometimes at individual level. In the UEW, the school of creative art makes available staff and facilities for the training of local teams, particularly for the masquerade show during the Aboakyir Festival. Staff and departments of KNUST are also heavily involved in festivals and other cultural programmes of the Asantehene. At UCC, UEW and KNUST, the university community sends gifts to the local traditional authority during the annual festivals.

### *Conflict resolution*

Another role that traditional authority plays in university–community relations is conflict resolution, particularly in matters related to land disputes, encroachment, job access, sanitation, security, infrastructural deficits and inequality. All five universities occupy large tracts of land, the ownership and usage of which is a subject of dispute between them and their communities. At UG, one of the communities, Okponglo, has taken the university to court over land issues. UEW and UCC have also taken some individuals and community members to court over land. At UCC, for example, all the surrounding villages are at loggerheads with the university on such matters. The following views elucidate this point:

Nobody has come to us to tell us how much Nkrumah bought the land or how much he gave to the elders in compensation; no one has done that. Even they are supposed to give a concession to some of our young people here to be taken in the university. The government doesn't do that for us. Yet all the time they are saying this is university land. They have cheated us of our lands, and moreover we don't get anything from the university (Community leader, UCC).

The university–community relations committees established by both KNUST and UCC are primarily meant to help resolve some of these disputes. Their activities are summarised in the following quotes:

When we meet, the problems which normally occur between the community and the university are the issues that we sit down and talk about; what the university will do for the community, and what the community will do so that the university will stand or expand. These are some of the issues we meet and talk about (Nana E., Kokoado).

Whenever there are difficulties we get assistance from the head of the Surroundings Villages Committee who happens to be a paramount chief as well. He is very knowledgeable and has knowledge of what chieftaincy rule means, and he is also a lecturer... His position as a lecturer as well as a chief makes it possible to relate positively with us (Nana Dikro, Boadi).

In Ghana, traditional authority has the power to resolve land-related and other forms of disputes within the context of alternative conflict resolution. Additionally, over 80 percent of all land is controlled by chiefs. This is because, 'land is communally owned, and customary trustees, such as chiefs, earth priests, clan heads and family heads, hold the allodial interest (this is similar to customary freehold), which under customary law is perpetual and inheritable' (Campion & Acheampong 2014:6333). Any land transaction requires the consent of the chief who has jurisdictional authority over that area. An important element which should be kept in mind is that acquisition of lands by the state and state institutions is usually tied to a particular purpose (Gyamera et al. 2018). Therefore, traditional authority, families and clan heads whose land has been acquired for particular projects can agitate or initiate legal action for the return of their lands when there are grounds to suspect that the usage of the land has deviated from the original purpose for which it was acquired. The need for universities to be on good terms with the host community chiefs and their subjects is thus paramount for the continued existence and growth of such universities.

The structures in KNUST and UCC enable the universities to interact with their communities and also accord some form of stakeholder role to traditional authority and local communities. However, in the case of UCC, many community members were not satisfied with the relationship that exists between them and the university. The committee at UCC is viewed by some opinion leaders in the communities as a means to control community leaders to achieve the university's institutional goal to the detriment of the communities. In the villages surrounding UCC, they have serious trust issues with their leaders due to the role they are perceived to be playing in the joint university-community committee. The community members blame their leaders for allowing themselves to be used by the university. This situation demonstrates that UCC's approach to community relations, channelled through traditional authority, is not productive. In addition, it does not give power and recognition to the traditional leaders. Whatever the case, however, the structures provide channels for communication between the universities and their communities. On the other hand, at UG, UDS and UEW there are no formal structures for university–community relation activities. Though the KNUST and UEW have traditional rulers of their local communities serving in decision-making bodies, the others do not. However, at a ceremonial level, all universities engage with traditional authority.

### ***Revitalising traditional authority engagement in university governance***

In this section, we focus on the relations that exist between the five public universities and traditional authority in the governance of the universities. In addition, we examine the nature of the engagement and the roles that are assigned to traditional authority by the universities. The purpose is to determine to what extent the position of traditional authority is considered salient, urgent and necessary by the university authority in its governance system.

#### *Chiefs in university governance*

Besides involving chiefs in decision-making bodies, some of the universities engage divisional chiefs and traditional heads of surrounding villages especially at the administrative level, through the committee system. Both KNUST and UCC have established formal structures for this form of engagement. In the case of KNUST, the committee is composed of traditional leaders of about twenty surrounding villages and staff from the university, and is known as the Surrounding Villages Committee (SVC). It was set up in 2003 after people in the surrounding communities staged a demonstration against the university over land, employment, access roads and other issues. The committee meets once every semester to deliberate on issues to do with university–community relations. Strategically, the committee is chaired by a senior academic at the university, who is himself a traditional ruler. Since its establishment, the committee has become the channel for the university to interact with community leaders and address some of their issues. In an interview with the chairman of the committee, he said:

In 2003, we (the university) had problems with the surrounding villages. They were agitating for support from the university. They felt the university was not doing much to support their communities, so we had some attacks from one of these communities where they spoilt some flower pots as they marched to the main administration. The Vice Chancellor at the time, Professor Andam, asked for my opinion ... He had this discussion with me in the morning. The following day he asked me to constitute a committee for surrounding villages of which I was made the chairman. Various people from the different departments were appointed to be part of the committee. At the time, we had about 20 surrounding villages (Chairman, Surrounding Villages Committee, KNUST).

UCC has also set up a committee, known as the Joint University–Community Consultative Committee (JUCCC), which addresses matters related to

university–community relations. Again, the committee is composed of university staff and chiefs and elders of all the surrounding communities. The committee is a medium through which the university interacts with community leaders to address issues affecting them, particularly those concerning land, security and conflict. This was corroborated by the university's registrar during an interaction with him:

We have lost so many hectares of our land. It is still an issue. Almost every council meeting, it comes up for discussion. How to control encroachment and at the same time live peacefully with the communities around. But by and large, we have had peaceful coexistence with the communities. In fact, we have a structure. We have what we call University-Community Consultative Committee. So we have a committee in place and it is recognised by our statutes. So from time to time, we meet (Interview with University Administrator).

UG, UEW and UDS, on the other hand, do not have any formal structures in place through which to engage their communities. In the case of UG and the UDS, community members complained about the lack of a relationship between them and the university. In fact, one of the UG communities has taken the university to court over land issues. Due to this, we observed some level of dissatisfaction among some chiefs about their lack of involvement in the governance of universities within their jurisdictions. The following quotes elucidate this point:

We don't have anything at all to do with the university. There has not been an instance where we interact and discuss issues of mutual interest. They don't need, in fact, the town Okponglo. They don't want to hear the name. That is what I am telling you. The university does not want to see our faces, so we too we don't see their face. This is what I am telling you. They hate us because they know when we are coming to them, we are coming to them with land issue. In short, we don't have anything in common with them. They know when you are nearing them, you are nearing them to come and take the land from them, so they don't near us we too we don't near them. In fact, we are enemies. I am telling you honestly. There is nothing in common with us. I am telling you (Nii Kpakpo, traditional leader, Okponglo, Accra).

These same sentiments were expressed among community members living near UDS. They think that the university and the community exist independently of each other and that the chiefs are not involved nor is their authority recognised in university matters. The following comment highlights this point:

There is nothing like that between us. There is no discussion between us, they are just there. They don't even come to the chief's palace. They have never

brought a visitor to introduce to the chief. The chief himself has written to them several times and has gone there personally to tell them that as he is the custodian of the land and so they should employ someone as a labourers but for God's sake Mr., they refused. Chief's letters are plenty with them and he goes there himself (Yidana, traditional authority, Nyankpapa).

Like, I said I have very good relationship with them; the VC, the registrar and some others. But that is on personal terms. Otherwise, I cannot see how my influence as the chief can help my people (Abdulai, traditional leader, Sanerigu).

We can deduce from the above statements that the lack of a formal structure at UDS and UG to engage the traditional authority in their localities is adversely affecting the relations between them and the surrounding communities. This is not to say that the existence of a structure means there are no problems whatsoever, or that the structures are in themselves solutions to the problem, or where they exist that communities are necessarily satisfied with these structures. Some of the community members near UCC suspect that the university uses their representatives on the Joint University–Community Consultative Committee (JUCCC) to disseminate information to them instead of engaging them for mutual benefit. In these communities, people did not trust that their leaders had the power to demand their entitlement and engage with the university on equal terms. In some cases, the chiefs and traditional leadership were seen not to represent the interest of their people on the committee. This is shown in the following statements:

We have the chief and his elders here who are members of the committee, but we don't know if they are able to dialogue with the university and I don't think they do because if they did, we would know what the outcome has been (Yaw, a retired educationist, Amamoma).

We hear the university formed a committee involving some of our leaders and officers of the university, but to be honest with you, we don't know what our people are doing on that committee. Even when the university gave part of the land to us during Professor Adjapong's time, most of it was sold to individuals. Our chiefs and the people who own the land sold them. The supposed chief has run away to America. Hmmmmmm. After selling the land (Traditional leaders in Amamoma, UCC, Cape Coast).

In addition, when the structure exists to serve the interest of the university only, it can generate problems and undermine the authority of chiefs among their own people. In the case of the UEW, given recent events, the university has signed an MOU with the Winneba community and committed itself to add 'local content' to employment and the awarding of contracts.

## **Stakeholder position and the influence of traditional authority**

Among the five public universities studied, it was KNUST that best integrated traditional authority into its governance structure to ensure a smooth co-existence with the communities and also to ascertain that the university has a positive impact on such communities. In this instance, the traditional leaders possess power, legitimacy and urgency in their stakeholder relationships with the university to some degree, due to the lands they gave and other mediatory roles they play for the university.

The Ashanti King, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, who is also chancellor of the university, can be considered a definitive stakeholder of the university. The amount of power he wields both as overlord of the Ashanti Kingdom and as chancellor of the university puts him in a privileged position to seriously influence the goal, objectives and directions of the university. His position also knits a tight knot of collaboration between traditional authority and university (Pitcher 1976). The KNUST case also demonstrates that the positive and structured relations between public universities and their communities can work towards the mutual benefit of both. This emphasises the evolving roles of chiefs to keep pace with modernity and urbanisation (Tielemans and Uitermark 2018) as many chiefs in Ghana are highly educated and duly qualified to perform such roles.

The University of Ghana, Legon, however, which was modelled along the lines of the University of London, does not incorporate traditional authority in its governance structure. Even after the reforms of 2010, elements of the university's governance structure, such as the governing council, consist of different groups and individual representation (Act 806 of 2010) but without taking the traditional authority into account. The university's strategy of recognising the La Traditional Council by, for example, providing admission quotas and inviting them to ceremonies without engaging chiefs of the surrounding villages, has not ensured good relations. In this instance, both the La Traditional Council and chiefs of surrounding villages are latent stakeholders of the university.

At the time of fieldwork for this study, the La Traditional Council and the chiefs of surrounding villages possessed only one of the three stakeholder attributes (power, legitimacy and urgency) (Kanyile 2018). The power that the La Traditional Authority possessed as the landlord of the university remains dormant since it is not accompanied by any urgency. However, the surrounding communities, such as Okponglo, whose demands contain urgency, lack power, and to some extent, legitimacy to press home their claims, though they were litigating against the university.

In the event that they gain power, but do not have the legitimacy to press home their demands, they can easily become dangerous stakeholders of the university. As Mitchell et al. (1997) have observed, such stakeholders could be coercive and potentially violent, which makes them potentially ‘dangerous’ to the organisation.

The traditional leadership of UCC’s surrounding communities is a dependent and an expectant stakeholder, having legitimacy and urgency in their claims for recognition and proper engagement, but lacking the necessary power to realise their demands. This means that they depend on others for the power to pursue their claims. As a result, the chiefs and community leaders are not satisfied with the university. Nor are the community members satisfied with their leaders’ lack of power to have their legitimate and urgent demands met. Some of the chiefs and community leaders believe the university’s style of engagement with the traditional authority is biased towards achieving only the university’s goals, to the detriment of those of the communities. In the event that the communities do gain the power to resolve their demands and grievances, this could actually have a detrimental effect on the existence of the university, unless the university changes its approach. Interestingly, the university views the community as ‘demanding’ stakeholders, that is, stakeholders who possess only urgency without power and legitimacy. Because they have the attribute of urgency, they are viewed as ‘demanding’ claims on the organisation (Khanyile 2018).

The cases of UDS and UEW are similar to that of UCC, although the communities near UDS are not in litigation with the university. Their main demand is greater recognition for community heads and more opportunities, such as access to education and jobs. As landowners, their demands have legitimacy, due to the fact that the university was established to help address the socio-economic and environmental challenges of the regions in northern Ghana. But because the loss of land created a lack of alternative livelihood opportunities, the demands also have urgency. However, they lack the power or the motivation to press for their demands. The traditional authority of the UDS can be classified as expectant stakeholders, who are neither dangerous nor dominant, but rather dependent.

In the past, the communities surrounding UEW had only urgency and legitimacy in their claims, but without power. However, in recent times, they have gained power especially since the paramount chief of Winneba has become a member of the university’s governing council. This means he can become a definitive stakeholder, possessing power, legitimacy and urgency, when the need arises. When such happens, he will be in a position

to influence the goals, objectives and directions of the university. However, it appears that, at the moment, there is no urgency or exigency for him to exercise such powers because the university appears to be taking steps to address community demands through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the community on its corporate social responsibility.

## **Conclusion**

In this article, we have shown that there is growing awareness among public universities in Ghana of the need to engage with the traditional authority of their immediate surrounding communities to enhance university–community relations and coexistence, in order to address the socio-economic and developmental aspirations of the communities and to help achieve the institutional goals of the universities.

We identified various roles and levels of engagements with traditional authority as important stakeholders in university governance in Ghana. Some of the roles include participating in policy-making bodies of the universities, mediation and conflict resolution, attending university ceremonies, such as graduation, and fostering cordial socio-cultural relations between universities and their communities.

Also, the universities engage traditional authority leaders at different levels and in different capacities, depending on the exigencies of the universities and the neighbouring communities. For some of the universities, like KNUST and UCC, such engagement takes place through permanent institutional structures, especially through the committee system, whereas at UG, UDS and UEW, such structures do not exist. They engage with their communities through their university relations offices which have broader mandates and appear not to give the requisite attention to the immediate surrounding communities.

Among the five universities studied, it was KNUST that had the most comprehensive traditional authority and community engagement model, which positions traditional authority as a definitive stakeholder. The approach of UG and UCC, in contrast, has the tendency to weaken the relationships between these universities and their surrounding communities. This has the potential to turn these communities into dangerous stakeholders since they have urgency but no power nor, to some extent, legitimacy to argue for their claims and concerns. However, the inclusion of the Chief of Winneba in the Governing Council of the UEW will enhance his stakeholder role to engage more effectively and definitively with that university.

## Notes

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2. By traditional authority, we mean a form of leadership which derives its source or mandate from customs and tradition. In Ghana, traditional authority is embedded in the chieftaincy institution and according to the Chieftaincy Act 2008 (Act 759, article 57 clause 1) a ‘chief is a person who, hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a chief or queen mother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage’.
3. According to article 58 of the Chieftaincy Act 2008 (Act 759), there are five categories of chiefs in Ghana in the following hierarchical order: Asantehene and Paramount Chiefs; Divisional Chiefs; Sub-divisional Chiefs; Adikrofo and other chiefs recognised by the National House of chiefs. Divisional and sub-divisional chiefs and the Adikrofo operate under a paramount chief within a particular traditional area, or in the case of Asante, under the Asantehene. In the absence of substantive chiefs or queen mother, a council of elders of a particular stool or skin may act on behalf of traditional authority.

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# Teacher Education, Common Purpose and the Forging of Multiple Publics in South Africa<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

In an important scholarly intervention on African publics, Raufu Mustapha argues that the multiplicity of publics is not an obstacle but instead a creative resource that can be used to forge common purpose through public deliberation. However, he does not elaborate how common purpose operates and to what effect. In this article, we examine the dynamics of common purpose among student teachers in South Africa. Teachers inculcate the dispositions and habits of public deliberation in young people. How teachers are trained and where they teach is therefore crucial to understanding the constitution of publics. We analyse data from a cohort of student teachers regarding their reasons for becoming teachers, their future plans and their anxieties about their profession. We find little evidence of race and class differences among student teachers. Instead, the evidence suggests that student teachers shared a common purpose informed by hyper-particularistic notions of the public, which was not only raced and classed, but also limited to a narrow understanding of their own community. In light of this, we seek to explain how policy contributes to the conditions under which common purpose leads to segregated publics, closing off the generative possibilities of multiple publics.

**Keywords:** common purpose, multiple publics, South Africa, teacher education

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## Résumé

Dans une importante intervention scientifique sur les publics africains, Raufu Mustapha soutient que la multiplicité de publics n'est pas un obstacle, mais plutôt une ressource créative qui peut être utilisée pour forger, par la délibération publique, un objectif commun. Cependant, il n'explique pas comment fonctionne l'objectif commun et son but. Dans cet article, nous examinons la dynamique d'objectif commun chez les élèves-enseignants d'Afrique du Sud. Les enseignants inculquent aux jeunes les dispositions et les pratiques de délibération publique. La formation des enseignants et le lieu où ils enseignent sont donc cruciaux pour comprendre la constitution de publics. Nous analysons les données d'une cohorte d'élèves-enseignants sur leurs motivations à devenir enseignants, leurs projets d'avenir et leurs inquiétudes face à leur profession. Nous trouvons peu de preuves de différences résultant de la race et de la classe. Par contre, ces preuves suggèrent que les élèves-enseignants partagent un objectif commun éclairé par des notions hyper-particularistes du public, qui ne sont pas uniquement de race et de classe, mais également limitées à une compréhension étroite de leur propre communauté. À la lumière de ceci, nous tentons d'expliquer comment la politique contribue aux conditions d'un objectif commun qui mène à des publics ségrégatifs, restreignant ainsi les possibilités génératives de publics multiples.

**Mots-clés :** objectif commun, publics multiples, Afrique du Sud, formation des enseignants

## Introduction

Education is widely viewed as a public good, in the sense that it offers not only private benefits to an individual, but also broader benefits to a group of people – a public. While the *goods* of education have been subject to extensive critique by African scholars (perhaps most recently in response to student protests for decolonisation), there has been comparatively little debate around the idea of the *public* in Africa. Recent scholarship has therefore sought to rekindle theoretical and empirical enquiry into African publics (Mustapha 2012a; Awasom 2012; Manganga 2012; Singh 2014). In counterpoint to older work, this more recent work does not approach the multiplicity of publics in African societies as an inherent obstacle to forging a unified polity. Instead, it tries to show that multiple publics could also function as an untapped creative resource for forging common purpose within society through public deliberation.

This article contributes to this line of enquiry by investigating the dynamics of common purpose in teacher education in South Africa. We use the term ‘common purpose’ to mean the goals that people come to share as

a result of engaging in public deliberation. Seen this way, teacher education is a site where future teachers can potentially enter into deliberation with one another and thereby come to forge a common purpose. South Africa offers a test case of the deliberative potential of teacher education, because its highly segregated education system is characterised by multiple publics – different schools and universities continue to serve different groups of people according to their race and class. In this article we ask: what are the dynamics of common purpose in teacher education in this context?

To answer this question, we draw on a cohort study of student teachers at one university, which provides survey and focus group data. We examine their reasons for becoming a teacher, their future plans and their anxieties regarding their chosen career path. This allows us to construct a picture of their teaching goals after nearly a year of studying to become teachers. It provides an indication of the extent to which they have come to share a common purpose as prospective teachers and a guide to the ways in which they might constitute and reproduce particular publics as fully qualified teachers.

In the first section, we situate recent theoretical work on African publics within the context of South African education. In the second section, we explain the methodology of the study and its limitations. In the third section, we examine sample characteristics, focusing on the ways in which participants' education histories are inflected by race and class. In the fourth section, we examine data on the proxies of common purpose and consider how these differ with regard to race and class. In our concluding remarks, we reflect on how policy casts light on the findings.

When we began the analysis, we expected that student teachers' reasons, future plans and anxieties about teaching would differ by race and class, given these strong cleavages in the South African education system. However, we find little evidence of differences in purpose. Instead, the evidence suggests that student teachers share a common purpose, but this purpose is informed by hyper-particularistic notions of the public, which are tied not only to their own race and class, but also to the particular community in which they grew up. Moreover, this common purpose appears to have been shaped by highly individualised understandings of how teaching and learning should occur. Their future choices about where and how to teach might therefore reproduce increasingly finely segregated publics, even as they share a common purpose. This suggests that common purpose is necessary but not sufficient for forging a united polity. It must also be undergirded by an expansive social imagination, which has instead been narrowed by post-1994 education policymaking.

## Theorising Education Publics

### *Theorising the public*

The point of departure for our discussion is Raufu Mustapha's theoretical work on African publics (Mustapha 2012a; 2012b). The political impetus for this work, as he makes clear, is the emergence of neopatrimonial views of African societies around the period of structural adjustment. Neopatrimonial theories view African societies as characterised by profound power inequalities between an elite and a citizenry who are hermetically sealed off from each other (Mkandawire 2015). The interests of these two groups invariably conflict, and while citizens may try to get these interests to coincide by becoming clients of elites, they do so in vain. Elites always act in their own interests and dispossess citizens. As a result, civil society is required to stave off the worst excesses of political elites. Mustapha (2012a:2) argues that these are caricatures with a specific discursive function: they leave 'little room for an African whole; no common purpose or collective interests bind the disparate groups together .... Where there is no notion of a collective will or social solidarity, there cannot be a public or a "public sphere".' The elision of concepts of the public sphere and the public good in scholarly discourses about Africa, he implies, is no accident: it reflects the historical project of structural adjustment. To retrieve and rework the notion of the public, then, is an act of creative intellectual resistance.

Mustapha situates this work of creative retrieval between two theoretical traditions on the continent: the Nigerian tradition that engages with Ekeh's work on *Colonialism and the Two Publics* (1975) and the South African tradition that engages with Habermas's work on *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962).

For Ekeh, as Mustapha explains, colonialism is to Africa what feudalism was to Europe: the context for the emergence of the public as distinct from the private. But colonialism led to a unique historical configuration: the emergence of *two* publics – the primordial and the civic. The primordial public has its roots in precolonial institutions and therefore has legitimacy in the eyes of citizenry. The civic public, on the other hand, has its roots in colonial institutions and therefore fundamentally lacks any legitimacy. Africans who had been educated in colonial schools were able to access both publics, but they did so from a precarious and psychologically conflicted position. As a result, they came to belong to the civic public 'from which they gain materially but to which they give only grudgingly' and simultaneously to the primordial public 'from which they derive little or no material benefit but to which they are expected to give generously and do give materially' (Ekeh

1975: 108). This dialectic between the two publics, marked by conflicting notions of rights and obligation, promotes ethnic fragmentation, corruption and primordial attachments. Here, Western education institutions are seen as one of the primary drivers of this dialectical tension, insofar as they provide access to both publics and serve as an ideological tool by which a precarious African bourgeoisie attempts to legitimise their authority.

In contrast, the Habermasian conceptualisation of the public emphasises its role as a space for open talk and reasoned engagement, which was developed by the European bourgeoisie as a tool for moderating the worst excesses of modernising states. The South African tradition has been influenced by critics of Habermas, such as Fraser (1990), who focus on the dynamics of exclusion and oppression in the public sphere. Fraser traces the ways in which oppressed people respond to their political situation through an act of creative resistance – they carve out counter-publics. These counter-publics function as spaces in which oppressed groups develop their struggles for meaning, recognition and redress as a means of resisting the dominant public. As a result, there is not one public, but many publics riven by contestation and asymmetrical power relations. In South Africa, this has been most clearly articulated in questions around which public is served by education institutions, and searching analyses of the ways in which ‘publics are not self-evidently progressive and cannot be presumed automatically to have emancipatory interests in contradistinction to private constituencies’ (Singh 2014: 5). These concerns have been shaped by the country’s history of racial capitalism, in which institutions for economic exploitation have been deeply bound up in racial oppression (Alexander 1979). The resulting state has produced acute race, gender and class hierarchies, such that the dominant public sphere has been the preserve of white people.

As Mustapha notes, although these are two distinct traditions of theorising the public, they both espouse an understanding of the public as multiple and contested. Yet each is open to critique. In response to Ekeh, Mustapha argues that ethnicity is co-constructed by many different actors, not just Western-educated elites. By implication, the sharp distinction between the primordial and the civic is unwarranted. In response to Fraser, Mustapha argues that multiplicity does not in and of itself constitute a negation of common purpose and not all multiplicity is a function of inequality.

This is critical, for as Mustapha argues, African societies are characterised by a multiplicity of publics, constituted not only through the colonial dynamics of racial or ethnic inequality, but also more positively defined by the multiplicity of soundscapes and cultures in each society. In coming to terms with and negotiating the counter-publics and systemic exclusion,

Mustapha cautions, we must not lose sight of the possibilities of more equal and generative multiplicities. For this reason, he argues, the lack of debate around the notion of the public misses a critical opportunity to explore the ways in which different publics not only counter each other, but may also be mutually constitutive of shared identities and play a central role in forging common purpose through public deliberation.

Here, Mustapha holds to a Habermasian notion of public deliberation as being open to all members of a given society and as a form of reasoned communication in which ‘Reason … is not opposed to passion, but to tradition and authority, to coercion, and finally – because we are dealing here with communicative and not instrumentalist rationality – it is opposed to the strategic pursuit of ends that are not themselves subject to dialogue’ (Hallin 1994, cited in Mustapha 2012b: 39) This is not a thin view of public deliberation as simply a consideration of the views of others. Instead, it is a deeper understanding of public deliberation as the process of submitting our political interests to public questioning, in part by debating fundamental policy agendas. The multiplicity of publics in turn offers a rich array of perspectives on policy agendas and therefore the potential for more holistic political decision-making. That is, it offers the possibility of forging a common purpose, and through this, a united polity. In this sense, Mustapha’s argument has theoretical affinities with the work of Neville Alexander (1994) who sought to demonstrate that the multiplicity of languages on the continent was not an obstacle, but instead an epistemic resource. Similarly, for Mustapha, multiple publics are potential endogenous social arrangements for forging common purpose through the mechanism of public deliberation.

This is a theoretically attractive proposition. In the South African context, schools and universities have not only functioned as a mechanism for the reproduction of racial capitalism, but also as a site for resistance. The forms of public deliberation that emerged through these contestations, such as the Black Consciousness movement in the 1970s and the more recent student protests around decolonisation, illustrate the capacity of multiple publics to generate a powerful common purpose.

But Mustapha’s theoretical work does not tell us how common purpose operates and to what effect. Indeed, the concept of common purpose, which lies at the heart of his argument, is never explicitly defined. We use the term to mean the goals that people come to share as a result of engaging in public deliberation. It combines a common-sense interpretation of the term with Mustapha’s emphasis on deliberation. This definition allows us to conduct an empirical investigation into common purpose in teacher education in South Africa.

### ***Multiple publics, a feature of the South African education system***

The schooling sector in South Africa offers a test case of multiple publics, for it continues to be marked by apartheid planning. Government schools in South Africa are divided between fee-paying and no-fee schools. Fee-paying schools are historically white and typically serve a multiracial elite. No-fee schools overwhelmingly serve impoverished black communities (we use the term 'black' to mean people classified as 'native', 'coloured' or 'Indian' under apartheid).<sup>2</sup> As there is no absolute cap on the fees that historically white schools can charge, some charge fees comparable with private schools, rendering them 'semi-private' (Motala & Carel 2019).

These race and class inequalities are complicated by decentralised governance at both provincial and school level. Fiscal and administrative powers over the schooling sector are primarily located in provincial authorities rather than in national authorities. A number of provinces are largely contiguous with the authoritarian ethnic 'homelands' created by the apartheid state. Under this form of ethnic federalism, resources, infrastructure and institutional capacity remain unevenly distributed among provinces (Kota et al. 2017). Schools in former 'homelands' not only have the highest level of poverty and institutional backlog stemming from apartheid-era planning, but also receive the least institutional support from the state (Department of Basic Education 2013).

A second form of decentralisation occurs at the level of the school. Each public school is required to appoint a school governing body, which is mandated to make decisions over the hiring of teachers, the language of instruction, religious practices and admission policy. Historically white fee-paying schools are effectively empowered to establish and maintain school communities that are contiguous with apartheid cultural norms. This is, in part, because school fees typically constitute a substantially greater proportion of financial inflow to the school than the state subsidy does and, as such, historically white schools have become sites where elites are able to capture a disproportionate share of national education spending (defined as the sum of public and private spending on education). Thus, despite the rationalisation of government funding across the education system, historically white schools are able to use school fees to capture the highest per capita expenditure (Motala 2009).

Faced with an increasingly inequitable institutional context, families have engaged in a form of 'quintile-hopping' in which they attempt to move their children up the race, class and regional hierarchy of schools (Fataar 2015). Thus, historically black schools lose an important source of black middle-class funding, while fee-paying schools crowd in greater resources and exercise

more freedom over their governance and budgets. This phenomenon likely contributes to the fracturing of inter-class allegiances among black communities and strengthens the perception that historically white schools are the standard of excellence to which black learners and schools should aspire.

Drawing on the preceding theoretical discussion, education publics in South Africa have several important characteristics. The first is that they are multiple, and this multiplicity is defined not only by race and class, but also increasingly by ethnic region. Second, these publics are in competition with each other, each jostling to gain greater proximity to whiteness, which is understood to constitute *the standard of excellence* (De Kock et al. 2018). Third, these publics interpenetrate one another. They are not as hermetically sealed off from one another as might first appear, insofar as families attempt to move between schools and therefore up the race, class and regional hierarchy. Fourth, white publics depend upon black publics, for they are increasingly reliant on the resources of black middle-class families.

This fragmented, unequal landscape persists into the higher education system, which is characterised by significant inter-institutional cleavages based on race, class, location and institutional type. The social and material effects of these cleavages were thrown into sharp relief during the FeesMustFall and RhodesMustFall student movements in 2015–2017, when the research for this study took place. These student movements highlighted the many ways in which universities harm black students and staff and brought into sharp relief the imperative to imagine freely (Gamedze 2015; Naidoo 2016). They asked us to consider what universalism and democracy look like within our education system (Dlakavu, Ndelu & Matandela 2017), and to examine who counts as an intellectual and what counts as intellectual work (Department of Black Imagination 2015). In short, their intellectual and political work posed first-order questions about who the public is and how it is constituted.

Teachers and their navigation of this complexity matter. Not only are they products of the education system they later enter as professionals, but how they are educated as student teachers significantly influences their capacity to interrupt, challenge or reinforce the social function of education. Teacher education is arguably central to the reproduction of the publics that emanate from education institutions. As Sayed et al. (2017) and Chisholm (2020) describe, the colonial and apartheid provisions for teacher training formed part of an enduring system of structural underdevelopment that would ensure intergenerational inequality.

Given this context, the ways in which student teachers understand their goals as teachers provide critical insights into their conceptions of education publics and how they intend to engage with them. Their reasoning provides

an important guide to how education publics might be reproduced and transformed. In line with deep race- and class-based cleavages in the schooling system, we expected that the student teachers' reasoning would mirror these cleavages as they would likely have had different education experiences and economic histories. We anticipated that this would reflect in different understandings of the role of education and the purpose of teaching.

## Methodology

In this article, we examine data from a cohort study of Foundation Phase student teachers at a South African university, which tracked them from their first year of admission (2015) into their final year (2018). This university, one of the largest providers of teacher education in the country, was created out of the merger of historically white and black teacher training colleges as well as technical colleges. Such mergers were introduced by the post-1994 government to desegregate universities, cut costs and improve the quality of teacher education.

The cohort study aimed to understand how student teachers develop their knowledge and practice over the course of their studies. For this reason, the study adopted a mixed-method design, gathering both questionnaire and focus group data.

We focus on data collected towards the end of the student teachers' first year of studies, since this period elicited their reasoning regarding their chosen profession. We first asked the entire cohort of student teachers to complete a self-administered questionnaire in English. We then conducted a focus group discussion with a purposive sample of eight student teachers to probe more deeply into their reasons for becoming teachers.

In this article, we use the term 'common purpose' to mean the goals that people come to share as a result of engaging in public deliberation, where we take their first year of university education to include a minimally deliberative element. As such, we use three pieces of information collected from the study to draw conclusions about common purpose: (1) student teachers' reasons to enter the profession; (2) their future plans regarding teaching; and (3) their anxieties about teaching. Each of these provides information on student teachers' reasoned objectives regarding their profession.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the university concerned. All respondents provided informed consent to participate in the study and were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality.

There are two important limitations to the survey component of this study. First, since the survey was voluntary, it was difficult to realise a high response rate. In the absence of randomisation, the survey is likely affected by sampling bias. We discuss this in greater detail below. Second, this study as a whole is especially sensitive to the historical context in which it was designed and conducted. The study commenced in 2015, the year in which national student protests began and during which a nascent student movement emerged. While the national character of the student protests appears to have subsided since 2017, the impacts of mass political protest are still unfolding and have yet to be thoroughly understood. It appears to have been an important turning point in higher education financing insofar as the student movement compelled the government to announce tuition-free higher education for working-class and lower-middle-class students in 2017. As a result, the race and class composition of students has likely changed since 2015. As such, our cohort study offers an insight into teacher education on the cusp of change.

## **Sample Characteristics**

The study aimed to survey all student teachers in the 2015 BEd foundation cohort and achieved an 85 per cent response rate. The pattern of responses reveals two important limitations.

First, there was a noticeable difference in the response rates across races, where this difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (Table 1). If these response rates are correlated with student teachers' reasons for becoming a teacher, then these significantly different response rates may be a source of sampling bias. For this reason, the results from this survey should be interpreted with caution and might not generalise to the population of student teachers at this university. In addition, the sample sizes for 'Africans', 'Indians' and those declining to provide a racial identification are too small to identify meaningful statistical patterns. Consequently, we do not discuss results for them. Thus, while data from 211 respondents was gathered, the survey analysis is limited to data from 193 respondents.

Second, the racial distribution of student teachers in this university does not mirror the population of student teachers across all universities. 'African' and 'Indian' student teachers are considerably under-represented within this university. This is because there are racial clusters within cities and provinces. As such, the results might not be a reliable guide for the population of student teachers across South African universities.

In line with the feminisation of primary schooling in South Africa, nearly all the questionnaire respondents, or 97 per cent, identified as women. As a result, we do not report on gender differences in the sample.

In terms of their families' educational background, 44 per cent of the respondents had at least one parent with a post-school qualification, ranging from a technical diploma to a postgraduate degree (Table 2). Consistent with apartheid educational planning, 34 per cent of 'coloured' respondents had at least one parent with a post-school qualification compared with 57 per cent of white respondents. These differences are, to a limited extent, reflected in the respondents' tuition source (Table 3). At the time of this study, government (NSFAS) loans and bursaries were typically provided only when financial need was dire. Such funding was especially limited in the context of teacher education in order to reduce the supply of teachers (Le Roux & Breier 2012). In this respect, 1 per cent of white respondents indicated that they had received a NSFAS loan or a government bursary, compared with 16 per cent of 'coloured' respondents.<sup>3</sup>

With regard to their own schooling history, 82 per cent of the respondents had attended a fee-paying government school of some type, whereas just 7 per cent of the respondents had attended a no-fee government school and 4 per cent had attended a private school of some type (Table 4). The predominance of government schooling in the sample is reflective of the current structure of schooling in South Africa, where government schools continue to be the provider of first choice and are therefore central to the reproduction of the schooling system. Since government schools are characterised by *de facto* race and class segregation, it is not surprising that 56 per cent of the white respondents had attended a former model C school (historically white fee-paying government school) compared with 33 per cent of the 'coloured' respondents.

Indeed, the very low proportion of respondents who had attended historically black no-fee schools is consistent with broader national trends. Across South Africa, learners at fee-paying schools, which are for the most part historically white, are two to four times more likely to qualify for university than learners attending no-fee schools, which are historically black (Spaull 2013). However, attending a fee-paying school should not be taken as a definitive indication of students' wealth, since there are a substantial number of poor 'coloured' and 'African' schools that charge nominal fees.

Overall, there is evidence of racialised differences in parental qualifications, tuition sources and the type of high school the student teachers attended. While these are imperfect proxies of class, they are nevertheless suggestive of the ways in which race and class intersect in education. In the next section, we examine whether the student teachers' reasons, future plans and anxieties about teaching differed by race and by class, with the latter proxied by their parents' educational background.<sup>4</sup>

## Investigating Common Purpose

This section draws on questionnaire and focus group data to examine the student teachers' reasons for becoming a teacher, their future plans and their anxieties about teaching. Two key themes emerge in this discussion. The first is that the student teachers appeared to conceptualise their role as facilitating the change of children within an unchanging framework. The second is that they intended to pursue this role within schools similar to the ones they attended as learners – not only in terms of the race and class of the school, but also in terms of the school's location in the same community from which they came. There was limited evidence of any race or class-based differences among respondents.

### Reasons to teach

Respondents were asked to indicate why they chose to become a teacher by rating seventeen statements on a Likert scale: 'no importance', 'low importance', 'moderate importance' and 'high importance'. These items were designed to correspond with intrinsic, extrinsic or altruistic reasons. In some instances, items could be classified in more than one category.

An analysis of the internal consistency of the Likert scale indicates that the items have an overall Cronbach's coefficient  $\alpha$  of 0.93 (Table 11 in Appendix), meeting a commonly accepted threshold of internal consistency.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, across all items, removing an item from the scale had little to no effect on the value of  $\alpha$  suggesting that the items may be closely aligned with the same underlying construct(s), such that there is no reason to remove any items from the question in the analysis.

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of responses for each statement across the entire sample. Dominant themes relate to four broad categories: (1) the beneficial role teachers play in society; (2) the social status of teachers; (3) the material benefits of the profession, such as job security; and (4) the importance of relatives either as role models for entering the profession or encouraging students to pursue teaching as a career.

Grouping reasons of high or moderately high importance together, the overarching motivating reasons related to their perception of the beneficial role of teachers in society. These reasons included helping their community, being important to the country's future and contributing to social cohesion and reconciliation. A second set of reasons, emphasised by fewer respondents, related to the social status of the profession, while a small minority reported being motivated by extrinsic factors, such as salaries, the scope of programme options or funding availability.

In general, the differences in response between ‘coloured’ and white respondents were not statistically significant (Table 5). The only exception regarded the presence of a teacher in the family, which was an important motivating factor for 47 per cent of the ‘coloured’ respondents in contrast with 27 per cent of the white respondents, where this difference was statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

With regard to parental education levels, there were four statistically significant differences (Table 6). The presence of a teacher in the family was a motivating reason for a larger proportion of respondents with tertiary-educated parents, while those without tertiary-educated parents tended to emphasise the presence of a teacher who had inspired them to teach.

In addition, more respondents without tertiary-educated parents emphasised their ability to foster reconciliation and underscored community respect for teachers. This suggests that the perceived social benefits and social status of teaching may have been important for more working-class respondents than middle-class respondents.

In general, however, the pattern of responses across both groups is largely similar. In particular, nearly all respondents in both groups reported that helping their community as a teacher was an important motivation, together with teachers being important to the future of the country.

Taken together, there is limited evidence of differences in race and class. In general, the respondents tended to have similar patterns of response. The overarching motivating reasons related to their perception of the beneficial role of teachers in society. A second set of reasons, emphasised by fewer respondents, related to the social status of the profession and their ability to find secure work as teachers. These two reasons are plausibly interrelated on grounds that finding secure work as teachers is in part a function of the social importance allocated to the teaching profession and contributes to the social status of teaching. Very few respondents emphasised factors that typically motivate people to enter the teaching profession in South Africa in public discourse – teacher salaries, funding or the lack of other options.

Qualitative data supports these findings as student teachers across all focus groups emphasised the desire to work with children as an important factor. Sentiments such as the following emerged strongly in nearly every focus group: ‘I’ve always had a love for children and so I wanted to take that into education’ (Student Teacher, FG1). However, focus group data also suggested that these motivations came into tension with the low social esteem of teaching. For example, for the participant in the extract that follows, a desire to work with children was not sufficient to pursue teaching as her first choice. She explained:

Teaching was initially my first choice .... But then because teachers get paid so little, my parents wanted me to do law. So, I did that for two-and-a-half years, hated every second of it and then I sat in a school for about two weeks just to see ... and then I realised okay this is what I want to do, and then I should apply to do, switch over next year to teaching. (Student Teacher, FG1)

In the face of opposition to a teaching career, some participants found that experiencing teachers' work first-hand strengthened their resolve. This participant, for instance, was provided an opportunity to experience teachers' work by her cousin, who was a teacher. She observed her cousin's class and found that she 'loved being in a classroom' (Student Teacher, FG1).

Participants not only stressed a personal preference for working with children but indicated a shared belief that teaching was deeply socially beneficial. One participant, for instance, expressed gratification in choosing to teach:

I've always had an immense passion for working with children and I believe that education is one of the most important tools that us human beings need to have. And I know that I can make a difference. (Student Teacher, FG 3)

Here, the participant's reference to education as 'one of the most important tools' illustrates a belief that teaching is among the most socially beneficial professions. This was often explained via recourse to personal experience. One respondent explained that when she was still in primary school teachers would ask her to supervise younger classes, so she experienced how teaching could enable one to 'make a difference' (Student Teacher, FG 2).

This framing of the social benefits of teaching as 'making a difference' occurred repeatedly across focus groups: participants could facilitate learning the national curriculum so that children could eventually enter the labour market successfully. Only one participant mentioned systemic challenges in education, and no participant reflected critically on labour market outcomes as the main criterion of learning achievement. To the extent that student teachers were intent on making a difference, their range did not appear to encompass ends outside of labour market participation and did not stretch towards fundamental change within the classroom, school or education system.

This individualised emphasis on 'making a difference' was shared across race groups. The participants did not report a desire to change the established classroom dynamic or to help children reimagine and change society as reasons for entering teaching. Rather, increased exposure to existing classroom experiences provided the impetus for many respondents to enter the teaching profession. The student teachers appear to have been motivated to facilitate children's individual change within an unchanging social framework.

### ***Future plans***

This interpretation is reinforced by the participants' discussions of future plans oriented around learners' attitude deficits and home backgrounds and how these negatively impact their future prospects, regardless of whether the participants planned to teach in their own communities or outside them. One student teacher (FG1) explained, 'Some people live in a home where they have parents who don't work, and they see that from young ... and you normally follow in your parents' footsteps'. Similarly, another student teacher (FG2) explained, 'I thought, if I were to become a Foundation Phase teacher, I could develop a love for school at that early age' (Student Teacher, FG2). These responses are premised on the belief that many learners do not conform to the 'correct' attitude towards school, so the role of student teachers is consequently to foster attitudinal change among learners. This suggests a particular view of learning: that 'incorrect' learner attitudes are responsible for poor learning outcomes. Participants may have therefore viewed their prospective role in terms of inculcating an ethos of personal responsibility in their learners. This is consistent with their individualised understanding of aiming to 'make a difference' in children's lives.

Moreover, it appears that many participants intended to 'make a difference' in schools that are similar to the ones they attended as learners. When asked where they planned to teach after qualifying (Table 7), 46 per cent of the respondents indicated that they planned to teach at their old school or a school in their community, followed by 19 per cent who indicated that they wanted to teach overseas; 13 per cent planned to teach in a no-fee school in an urban or rural area; while 9 per cent planned to teach at a fee-paying former model C school; and 1 per cent planned to teach in a private school.

Examining this distribution in terms of the education history of the respondents shows a distinction between (1) teaching at a school similar to the one they had attended in terms of its socio-economic profile, and (2) teaching at a school that was in the same community they had grown up in. For those who had attended a fee-paying school, 45 per cent wanted to teach at their old school or in their community, and an additional 10 per cent wanted to teach at a fee-paying former model C school. Taken together, 55 per cent wanted to teach at a school that had similar socio-economic characteristics as their own. For those who had attended no-fee schools, 60 per cent wanted to teach at their old school or in their community, while an additional 27 per cent wanted to teach at a no-fee school – a total of 87 per cent.

There is no statistically significant difference in the pattern of responses by race (Table 8) or class as proxied by parental educational levels (Table 9).

Across race and class categories then, it seems that the majority of respondents planned to teach at a school with a similar race and class profile as their own school. For many, however, learners also had to be acculturated within *the same community*. This suggests a hyper-particularistic conception of the public. It includes race and class, but also language, region and community. By implication then, for many respondents, their beliefs about the socially beneficial nature of teaching are likely oriented towards these fine-grained publics.

This interpretation is strengthened when examining the student teachers' anxieties about teaching. The respondents were asked an open-ended question: 'What are your anxieties with regard to your chosen career path in the year ahead?' The answers were coded according to the most prominent theme that emerged in their responses. Table 10 shows a breakdown of these coded anxieties.

The questionnaire was administered after teaching practice completion, so the question provides some evidence about the extent to which the participants' teaching experience corresponds with their beliefs about the teaching profession. The primary concern for student teachers was their ability to cope with the academic workload in the coming years of their degree (27 per cent), followed by worries that they would not enjoy teaching (10 per cent) and that they would not benefit learners (9 per cent). These anxieties seem to reflect concerns with their own agency and personal responsibility.

More telling, perhaps, is that only one respondent provided an answer interpreted as a concern about the language of instruction, writing, 'The children won't understand anything I teach them'. Given linguistic diversity and a policy commitment to mother-tongue instruction at Foundation Phase, the lack of evidence about language concerns is consistent with the respondents' plans to teach at schools similar to those where they received their education, particularly since linguistic anxieties would presumably be heightened by teaching in a school with a different linguistic profile to their own.

## **Conclusion And Discussion**

We expected that student teachers' reasons, future plans and anxieties about teaching would differ by race and class, given these cleavages in the education system. However, we found limited evidence of these differences. Instead, we found evidence that student teachers shared a common purpose in two senses.

In the first sense, they appeared to share a normative commitment to learners, which was underpinned by individualised notions of teaching in which teachers need to correct learners' deficits in attitude. Comments about the predisposition of poor learners to 'mimic' their parents' life choices and life paths suggest that they view education as an individualised responsibility: that education best enables learners to escape poverty and 'make a difference' in their communities, and that reasons for non-completion are rooted in learners' attitude deficits. Across race and class lines there appeared to be a common view of poverty as a pathology and limited attentiveness to the systematic underdevelopment of black working-class schools in the country.

Second, we found evidence that student teachers were committed to very specific learners: not only those who shared their race and class, but also those who came from the same community in which they grew up. This suggests that student teachers shared a hyper-particularistic conceptualisation of the public, defined in terms of not only race and class, but also language, region and community. So, while student teachers shared a common purpose, the nature of this purpose is such that their future choices might reproduce very finely segregated publics. This is consistent with a recent study of three universities in South Africa, which identified a large degree of circularity between student teachers' own schooling backgrounds and the schools in which they did their teaching practice (Sayed & McDonald 2017).

We must caution, however, that the full range of class and race positions in South Africa is not captured in our study. As discussed above, the sample probably excludes the views of those who are deeply impoverished as well as the views of wealthy students, and the analysis of racial differences is limited to white and 'coloured' student teachers. Furthermore, the study was undertaken towards the end of the first year of the student teacher programme. It is possible that student teachers might have come to hold different views by the end of their four-year degree.

In our concluding remarks, we reflect on the ways in which policy creates the conditions under which student teachers from different race and class backgrounds could come to share a common purpose which reflects hyper-particularistic, narrow conceptions of the public. To do this, we examine three policy moments for teachers. The first policy moment concerns university student recruitment. Policy could, as it has in other countries such as Tanzania (Mbilinyi 1982) and Zambia (Mwalimu 2014), focus on randomly allocating student teachers to different universities to disrupt race, class or regional segregation. However, in South Africa, policy is largely silent on this issue. Prospective student teachers can apply to any university of their choice, while universities can set their own fees and accept their own

students. The result is that race, class and linguistic patterns are reproduced within the university system (Le Roux & Breier 2012).

The second policy moment concerns student teachers' choice of school for teaching practice. Here, policy could allocate student teachers to schools to break the raced, classed and linguistic reproduction of teaching practice experiences. Again, in South Africa, policy is silent on this issue. Universities have therefore allowed student teachers in the past to choose their own schools for teaching practice, with predictable patterns of reproduction in terms of race and class (Sayed et al. 2018).

The third policy moment concerns teacher recruitment. In this respect, the national government has a strong policy voice for choice. The Employment of Educators Act (1996a) explicitly gives teachers the right to choose where to apply for a position. The South African Schools Act (1996b) gives schools the right to be involved in the recruitment of teachers. The result is that teachers tend to apply to schools that are similar to their education history and schools tend to hire teachers that have a similar race, class and linguistic profile to the school (Sayed 2016).

These three policy moments reflect the dilemmas of a post-apartheid government caught in the trade-off between equity and choice. Rather than redistributing resources throughout the education system, it elected to position a pro-poor policy-making and resourcing model within a broader commitment to educational choice (Woolman & Fleisch 2006). This commitment to choice means that, at each step along the path of teacher education and recruitment, the experiential basis of prospective teachers is not expanded. Instead, it is maintained along narrow lines that reflect not only race and class identities, but also the linguistic and regional identities that are salient under an ethnic federal state. In this way, policy in fact *restricts* the set of meaningful choices that education actors can make, because they have limited experience with which to imagine choices that disrupt centuries of segregation. On this reading, a commitment to choice emerges as an instrument for limiting the social imagination.

If this is correct, then common purpose is not sufficient to build a polity from multiple publics. It must also be accompanied by an expansive social imagination, one rooted in lived experience. For without this, common purpose can reproduce segregation and inequality, closing off the generative possibilities of multiple publics. This suggests perhaps a more hopeful role for policy. The past is sometimes invoked as something that weighs down policy, which burdens it and compels it to fail. Yet seen from a different light, policy has the ability to bring actors into confrontation with substantively different historical realities. In doing so, it can contribute to expanding their imaginations, expanding the *set* of choices that actors can imagine for themselves.

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## Notes

1. This article is a product of a Meaning-making Research Initiative (MRI) grant from CODESRIA supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY).
2. The state uses these terms for the purposes of redress. These categories have no biological basis.
3. However, the total proportion of respondents on NSFAS and government funding was very low – 12% of the entire sample. This is consistent with post-1994 education planning at the time, which sought to reduce the supply of new teachers in the education system by reducing funding for initial teacher education (Le Roux & Breier 2012). As a result, students who were economically needy may not have received government funding at the time.
4. We do not examine differences in respondents' school histories and tuition sources, since the number of respondents who had been to no-fee schools ( $n=15$ ) and the number who had received government funding of some sort ( $n=16$ ) are too small to generate reliable results.
5. A Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.9 and above suggests a high level of similarity in what the items are measuring. We can interpret this to mean that the items are coalescing around something to do with the reasons to become a teacher. However, this does not mean that these items are measuring a single underlying construct. To determine this, a factor analysis would be necessary.

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## Appendices

### Tables

**Table 1:** Student teachers' response rates by race

	Intended Sample	Realised Sample	Response Rate %
African	25	11	44
Coloured	127	118	93
White	92	75	82
Indian	3	1	33
Other/missing	-	6	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>85</b>

$\chi^2 = 844$ ; df = 16, p-value = 0.000, n=211

**Table 2:** Respondents whose parents have a post-school qualification

	Coloured	White	Total
No	62	33	56
Yes	34	57	44
Missing	4	9	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

$\chi^2 = 15.1223$ , df = 2, p-value = 0.001, n=193

Source: Authors' own

**Table 3:** Respondents by tuition source

	Coloured	White	Total
I am paying my own tuition	1	7	3
I have received a government bursary	3	0	2
I have received an NSFAS loan	13	1	10
I have received a private bursary or scholarship	4	7	5
I took out a student loan from the bank	8	13	9
I am working part time	2	1	1
My family is paying for my studies	47	68	53
Missing	22	3	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

$\chi^2 = 31.0143$ ; df = 7, p-value = 0.000, n=193

*Source:* Authors' own

**Table 4:** Respondents by high school type

	Coloured	White	Total
No fee government school	8	0	7
Fee paying government school	49	33	42
Fee paying government school (former model C)	33	56	40
Low fee private school	1	1	1
High fee private school	3	4	3
Other	4	0	3
Missing	2	5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Pearson's Chi-squared test:  $\chi^2 = 20.3270$ ; df = 6, p-value = 0.002, n=193

*Source:* Authors' own

**Table 5:** Respondents who identify items as moderate to high importance in becoming a teacher disaggregated by race

<b>Reasons For Becoming A Teacher</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
I can help my community as a teacher	97	96	0.05	0.83
Teachers are important to the future of our country	95	92	0.67	0.41
Teaching is an admirable profession	91	87	0.76	0.38
I can influence social cohesion in my school	89	84	1.01	0.32
I can contribute to enhancing reconciliation	81	73	1.36	0.24
I had a teacher who inspired me to teach	70	69	0.02	0.88
Teachers have good job security	67	67	0.00	0.97
Teachers can always find a job	68	59	1.66	0.20
Teachers are in leadership positions	61	69	1.38	0.24
Teachers are respected in my community	57	51	0.69	0.41
Someone in my family is a teacher	47	27	7.68	0.01
Teaching gives me more freedom than other jobs	27	29	0.11	0.74
Teachers are well paid	28	20	1.56	0.21
I could not get into my first choice of degree	15	9	1.43	0.23
My family pushed me to become a teacher	10	5	1.41	0.24
I received funding to study to be a teacher	8	7	0.06	0.80

\*Note: results from an mtest in Stata

*Source:* Authors' own

**Table 6:** Respondents who identify items as moderate to high importance in becoming a teacher disaggregated by parents' qualifications

Reasons For Becoming A Teacher	Parents Have A Post-School Qualification		Chi- Square	P- Value
	No	Yes		
I can help my community as a teacher	97	98	0.04	0.84
Teachers are important to the future of our country	95	95	0.08	0.77
Teaching is an admirable profession	87	91	0.66	0.42
I can influence social cohesion in my school	86	90	0.53	0.47
I can contribute to enhancing reconciliation	84	72	2.88	0.09
I had a teacher who inspired me to teach	76	65	3.20	0.07
Teachers have good job security	66	69	0.20	0.66
Teachers can always find a job	69	61	1.30	0.26
Teachers are in leadership positions	59	67	1.32	0.25
Teachers are respected in my community	61	49	2.87	0.09
Someone in my family is a teacher	26	56	17.60	0.00
Teaching will give me more freedom than other jobs	27	34	1.08	0.30
Teachers are well paid	28	25	0.25	0.62
I could not get into my first choice of degree	18	10	2.47	0.12
My family pushed me to become a teacher	8	11	0.57	0.45
I received funding to study to be a teacher	8	10	0.25	0.62

\*Note: results from an mtest in Stata

Source: Authors' own

**Table 7:** Respondents' future plans by school type

<b>Where do you Plan to Teach?</b>	<b>Fee-Paying</b>	<b>No-Fee</b>	<b>All</b>
My old school or a school in my community	45	60	46
A no-fee school in a rural area	7	20	8
A no-fee school in an urban area	5	7	5
Private school	1	0	1
Former model C	10	0	9
I want to leave and teach overseas	20	7	19
Other	10	7	10
Missing	3	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

$\chi^2 = 7.3222$ ; df = 7, p-value = 0.396, n=193

Source: Authors' own

**Table 8:** Respondents' future plans by race

<b>Where do you Plan to Teach?</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>All</b>
My old school or a school in my community	44	51	47
A no-fee school in a rural area	9	1	6
A no-fee school in an urban area	4	3	4
Private school	1	3	2
Former model C	5	11	7
I want to leave and teach overseas	21	21	21
Other	11	11	11
Missing	4	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

$\chi^2 = 7.8525$ ; df = 7; p-value = 0.346; n=193.

Columns do not always add up to 100% due to rounding off

Source: Authors' own

**Table 9:** Respondents' future plans by parental qualifications

Where do you Plan to Teach?	Parents Have Post-School Qualifications		All
	No	Yes	
My old school or a school in my community	46	44	45
A no-fee school in a rural area	11	3	8
A no-fee school in an urban area	5	5	5
Private school in a city	1	1	1
Former model C in a city	5	11	8
I want to leave and teach overseas	17	22	19
Other	10	13	11
Missing	4	1	3
Total	100	100	100

$\chi^2 = 11.5763$ ; df = 7; p-value = 0.115; n=193.

Columns do not always add up to 100% due to rounding off

*Source:* Authors' own

**Table 10:** Frequency of anxieties

Anxieties	Frequency	Per Cent
High academic workload	58	27
No response	28	13
Won't enjoy teaching	22	10
Won't benefit learners	19	9
Won't find job	15	7
Difficult learner behaviour	15	7
Personal psychological wellbeing	12	6
No anxieties	8	4
Won't be able to teach well	8	4
Won't be able to pay student fees	7	3
Lack self-confidence	4	2
Won't succeed as teacher	4	2
Being placed in a school that scares me	3	1
Unsure about my anxieties	3	1

Racist lecturers	2	1
Worried about language of instruction	1	0
Low teacher salary	1	0
Low teacher status	1	0

Source: Authors' own

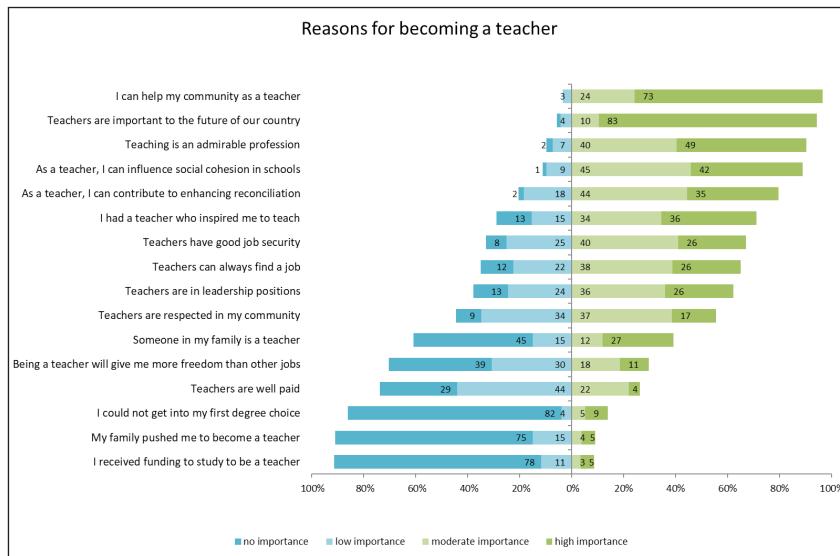
Table 11: Internal consistency of Likert scale

ITEM	Item Test Correlation	Item-Rest Correlation	Average Inter-Item Covariance	Cronbach's Alpha
I had a teacher who inspired me to teach	0.156	0.062	60.242	0.941
Someone in my family is a teacher	0.959	0.952	51.397	0.919
Teaching is an admirable profession	0.814	0.778	51.592	0.922
Teachers are respected in my community	0.635	0.546	51.713	0.932
Teachers are well paid	0.964	0.957	51.376	0.919
I can influence social cohesion in schools	0.729	0.672	51.650	0.925
Teachers have good job security	0.785	0.738	50.757	0.923
Teachers can always find a job	0.961	0.954	51.466	0.919
My family pushed me to become a teacher	0.959	0.951	51.379	0.919
I can contribute to enhancing reconciliation	0.402	0.306	56.591	0.936
I received funding to study to be a teacher	0.785	0.737	50.626	0.923
I could not get into my degree of first choice	0.540	0.481	55.974	0.930
Teachers are in leadership positions	0.963	0.956	51.440	0.919
Teaching gives me more freedom than other jobs	0.959	0.952	51.412	0.919
Teachers are important to the future of our country	0.709	0.680	56.075	0.927
I can help my community as a teacher	0.089	0.084	60.997	0.934
Test scale			53.418	0.930

Note: Cronbach's coefficient reported for total scale; the effects of removing an item from the scale are not reported for the sake of brevity.

Source: Authors' own

## Figure



**Figure 1:** Reasons for becoming a teacher

*Source:* Authors' own





# Entre la rue et l'internet : pratiques revendicatives et stratégies de mobilisation de Y'en a marre, du Balai citoyen, Filimbi et de la Lucha

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& Ibrahima Touré\*\*\*\*

## Résumé

Cet article analyse les pratiques de mobilisation des mouvements citoyens Y'en a marre au Sénégal, le Balai citoyen au Burkina Faso et Filimbi et la Lucha en République démocratique du Congo. Il propose un éclairage qui insiste sur les innovations en matière de militantisme sur le terrain, la part dévolue aux technologies de l'information et de la communication, les pratiques idiomatiques et les canaux et moyens d'expression. L'accent est mis sur les systèmes langagiers structurant les discours, les modes opératoires de la lutte sur le terrain avant de jeter un regard sur les réactions des pouvoirs politiques qui oscillent souvent entre répression, cooptation, corruption subordination, intimidation, instrumentalisation, infiltration, récupération politique, etc.

## Abstract

This article analyses the mobilization practices of the citizen movements Y'en a marre in Senegal, Balai citoyen in Burkina Faso, Filimbi and Lucha in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It proposes an analysis which insists on the innovations in activism on the ground, the share devolved to information and communication technologies, idiomatic practices and channels and means of

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expression. It also focusses on the linguistic systems structuring the discourses, the modus operandi of the fight on the ground before taking a look at the reactions of the political powers which often oscillate between repression, cooptation, subordination, intimidation, corruption, instrumentalization, infiltration, political rip-off etc.

## **Introduction**

Dans la plupart des pays d'Afrique, les jeunes continuent d'être au premier rang dans les actions de contestation et de mobilisation sociopolitiques (Chevrier 1975; Biaya 2000; Hilger et Mazzochetti 2010; Bangré 2016; Berwouts 2016; Neocosmos 2016). Par des pratiques de dissidence, ils portent les révoltes des populations et leur rejet d'un ordre sociopolitique perçu comme injuste, oppressif ou violent. Ils se positionnent comme des caisses de résonance des cris de colère de la jeunesse. Ils tentent également de relayer les sentiments de frustration des populations face à des pratiques politiques et de gestion qui sont perçues comme peu susceptibles de contribuer à la résolution des problèmes sociaux de leurs milieux respectifs. Parmi les questions essentielles, on peut noter, entre autres, l'accentuation de la pauvreté, l'accroissement des inégalités sociales, la corruption, le pillage des ressources nationales, la faiblesse des mécanismes de protection sociale, le chômage des jeunes, l'autoritarisme politique (Siméant 2013).

Les quatre mouvements ayant réussi à acquérir une notoriété médiatique sont Y'en a marre au Sénégal, Filimbi et la Lucha en République démocratique du Congo et le Balai citoyen au Burkina Faso. Ils sont d'ailleurs considérés comme des acteurs majeurs en matière d'engagement citoyen notamment dans les pays d'Afrique francophone (Polet 2017, 2018; Gorovéi 2016; Hagberg et al., 2015; Rimondi 2015; Thiat & Cissokho 2015; Vigneron 2016; Ouedraogo 2014; Simeant 2013).

Depuis leur naissance en 2011 pour Y'en a marre, en 2012 pour la Lucha et officiellement en 2015 pour Filimbi et en 2013 pour le Balai citoyen, ces mouvements ont réussi à se positionner comme des figures de premier plan dans leurs pays respectifs. Ils sont arrivés à conquérir une grande visibilité et à acquérir une réelle capacité d'influence sociopolitique. Ils suscitent ainsi la méfiance des pouvoirs en place tout comme celle des partis politiques. Ces derniers les perçoivent comme des concurrents directs en tant que porte-voix des aspirations des populations. Les mouvements citoyens arrivent à se positionner comme incarnant une nouvelle manière de faire de la politique.

Y'en a marre, le Balai citoyen, Filimbi et la Lucha, qui désirent poser les jalons d'une dynamique transafricaine de la mobilisation citoyenne, ont fondé leur activisme en partie sur une hybridation de leurs pratiques de

mobilisation. Ils ont eu recours à des stratégies conventionnelles de lutte sur le terrain : marches, manifestations, communiqués de presse, sit-in, pétitions. Ils ont également fait un usage judicieux de l'internet, notamment des réseaux sociaux (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube). Cette pratique leur a permis de se démarquer par l'emploi de stratégies de mobilisation fondées sur le pouvoir performatif de la mise en scène ainsi que sur des pratiques langagières dissonantes d'avec celles des élites dominantes. Ces mouvements oscillent ainsi entre l'internet et la rue dans leurs stratégies de mobilisation sur le terrain.

Nés dans le sillage des révolutions des « printemps arabes » qui sont analysés comme des révolutions 2.0 (El Chazli 2013; Aissaoui 2017), Y'en en marre, le Balai citoyen, Filimbi et la Lucha tentent d'impulser un engagement citoyen qui se cristallise dans l'idéologie du panafricanisme et une revivification de la pensée politique de Thomas Sankara, Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, Nelson Mandela, Patrice Lumumba, Cheikh Anta Diop (Touré 2017; Thiat et Cissokho 2011; UPEC 2018). Tout en aspirant à être la « voix de la nouvelle jeunesse africaine engagée<sup>1</sup> », Y'en a marre, Filimbi, la Lucha et le Balai citoyen se sont mutuellement influencés dans leurs stratégies de mobilisation. En mettant à contribution le pouvoir des technologies de l'information et de la communication (Richaud 2017), ces mouvements aspirent à impulser des dynamiques de contestation et de conquête citoyenne devant déboucher sur un mouvement panafricain (Dimé 2017).

La présente contribution se propose de s'interroger sur les consonances et les dissonances dans les pratiques de mobilisation des quatre mouvements. Pour ce faire, nous passons en revue les pratiques de mobilisation dans chaque pays. D'abord, nous analysons de quelle manière Y'en a marre manipule les idiomes de la mobilisation citoyenne pour décliner une grammaire de l'indocilité au Sénégal. Ensuite, nous montrons comment, à travers un maillage territorial et des stratégies de mobilisation fondées sur des innovations langagières, sur la non-violence et sur l'usage de l'internet, Filimbi et la Lucha ont fait face à une violente répression en RD Congo. Puis, nous étudions comment le Balai citoyen est allé à l'assaut des kalachnikovs au Burkina Faso, surtout à l'occasion de la crise ayant entraîné la chute de Blaise Compaoré en 2014. Enfin, nous proposons un regard croisé qui met en lumière les consonances et les dissonances dans les dynamiques de mobilisation entre les quatre mouvements.

Les données de cette recherche proviennent d'une enquête qualitative réalisée au Burkina Faso, en RD Congo et au Sénégal. Les principales méthodes de collecte des matériaux ont été l'observation et les entretiens.

La première a été utilisée lors de diverses activités organisées par ces mouvements : manifestations publiques, réunions, épisodes de contestation, mobilisations au moment des élections. Les entretiens ont été menés, dans chaque pays, avec des leaders et des membres des quatre mouvements. Ils ont été élargis à des acteurs gouvernementaux, à ceux des médias, des partis politiques et de la société civile.

En RD Congo, les enquêtes de terrain ont principalement été faites à Goma, Bukavu et à Kinshasa, lieux de naissance et de déploiement des activités de la Lucha et de Filimbi. Au Sénégal, les entretiens ont été essentiellement effectués à Dakar où sont concentrées les activités de Y'en marre. Au Burkina Faso, le travail de terrain a été mené à Ouagadougou et à Ouahigouya dans le nord du Burkina Faso à l'occasion du «camp citoyen» que le Balai citoyen y a organisé en septembre 2018. La recherche prend également appui au Burkina Faso sur une série d'observations faites à l'occasion de la crise d'octobre 2014 qui a conduit à la chute de Blaise Compaoré et dans laquelle le Balai citoyen a joué un rôle majeur.

Une bonne partie des données sur laquelle reposent nos analyses vient également de l'empreinte numérique des quatre mouvements. Nous avons en effet constitué une base documentaire composée de la production sur l'internet de chaque mouvement à partir de ses tweets, ses messages sur Facebook et ses vidéos sur YouTube.

### **Faux! Pas forcé! *Lu ëpp turu<sup>2</sup>! Pareel<sup>3</sup>* : idiomes et pratiques de mobilisation du mouvement Y'en a marre**

À partir d'une analyse de la trajectoire de Y'en a marre au Sénégal, nous analysons ses pratiques linguistiques et ses stratégies de mobilisation sur le terrain au prisme du métissage et de l'hybridité. Ces deux catégories représentent une sorte d'expression dakaroise territorialement marquée et qui, par le phénomène de la polarité de la ville de Dakar, se diffuse vers les autres centres urbains sénégalais, créant ainsi une culture urbaine de la dissidence reposant sur deux leviers : les jeunes qui en sont les acteurs et un langage qui en est l'outil d'expression.

#### ***Déclinaisons d'une grammaire de l'indocilité***

Le vocabulaire de l'indocilité de Y'en a marre, tel qu'il s'exprime d'ailleurs par son slogan éponyme, est perçu comme un révélateur des mutations en cours au sein de la jeunesse urbaine dans le sens d'un cosmopolitisme qui s'explique par une multi-appartenance identitaire et la pluralité de leurs schèmes référentiels. Aussi est-il judicieux d'interroger, derrière le slogan,

le cri de ralliement et de vocalisation du ras-le-bol qu'est Y'en a marre. Il s'agit de mettre l'accent sur les modes de déclinaison et les praxis de verbalisation de l'engagement citoyen en prêtant attention aux pratiques linguistiques du mouvement à travers ses alternances linguistiques, sa stratégie communicationnelle, le contenu de ses discours et le choix de ses slogans. Les idiomes de la contestation sont articulés à des pratiques de rue qui reposent sur l'art de la mise en scène et la recherche de « l'effet buzz ».

Comme forme typique de mobilisation urbaine, Y'en a marre a fondé sa mobilisation sur un usage débridé des technologies de l'information et de la communication, ainsi que sur sa capacité à saisir les opportunités de sensibilisation et de mobilisation fournies par les réseaux sociaux (Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube). Le mouvement s'est également appuyé sur une présence tonitruante dans les médias dits « traditionnels » (radio, télévision). Ceci lui a procuré une couverture médiatique qui a beaucoup contribué à sa popularité même au-delà des frontières sénégalaises. Y'en a marre continue de susciter la curiosité des médias, même internationaux, car nombreux sont les reportages qui lui sont consacrés par la presse étrangère pour ce qui est présenté à l'origine comme une expérience inédite d'engagement citoyen sur le continent africain. Ce qui contribue à la notoriété du mouvement sur la scène internationale.

La double maîtrise de l'art de la mise en scène et de la truculence verbale par le mouvement Y'en a marre lui vient sans doute du profil du noyau de ses membres fondateurs, constitué essentiellement de journalistes, d'artistes et de rappeurs. D'ailleurs, Y'en a marre se donne à voir comme une dynamique d'affirmation du rôle sociopolitique des rappeurs. Cette posture de la contestation se cristallise dans un art de la spectacularisation, ainsi que dans un positionnement discursif anticonformiste et de rejet du « système » et de « l'establishment ». Y'en a marre a opté pour une stratégie de présence médiatique systématique, par une propension à créer un « effet buzz » autour de ses slogans, de ses discours critiques et de ses actes de défiance envers le pouvoir en place. Les médias sont ainsi mis à contribution pour servir de relais aux revendications et aux prises de position du mouvement et lui garantir une notoriété que ne reflète peut-être pas sa représentativité politique réelle. Une illustration de cette situation peut être trouvée dans l'activité de mobilisation organisée par Y'en a marre le vendredi 7 avril 2017 et qui ciblait le rassemblement d'un million de Sénégalais vêtus de noir pour exprimer leur colère envers les politiques du régime du président Macky Sall. La manifestation visait en outre à fustiger l'instrumentalisation de la justice à des fins partisanes, car *yoon angi jèng* (la justice n'est plus impartiale) et finalement souligner avec force que *lu éppe tuuru* (trop, c'est trop).

Finalement, la manifestation n'a pas atteint le chiffre d'un million, les estimations les plus réalistes faisant état de cent mille manifestants à la place de l'Obélisque, mais l'effet médiatique recherché avait été atteint puisque le mouvement a pu occuper la une de la plupart des journaux de la presse écrite et audiovisuelle. De cette manière, il cherche à se poser comme figure de « *contre-pouvoir, comme des opposants de principe, des opposants de conscience visant la conquête et la sauvegarde d'acquis démocratiques* » selon les mots d'un leader du mouvement lors d'un entretien en août 2018 à Dakar.

Comme mode de contestation citoyenne, Y'en a marre s'est démarqué par sa capacité à créer des idiomes de dissidence et d'affirmation citoyenne puisés dans les langues française et wolof. Le plus populaire est certainement son slogan éponyme *Y'en a marre*. Font également florès les slogans lancés par le mouvement au plus fort de la contestation contre la candidature du président Wade qui a été la bougie d'allumage du mouvement : *Faux! Pas forcé! Ma carte, mon arme! Nouveau type de Sénégalais (NTS), Touche pas à la Constitution, Chantiers citoyens, Esprits Y en a marre* (membres du mouvement), *Dafa doy* (Ça suffit!), *Gor ca wax ja* (respecter sa parole).

L'art de la mise en scène s'est exprimé à travers des campagnes destinées à émouvoir l'opinion publique. C'est par exemple le cas de la campagne dénommée « Plainte contre le gouvernement du Sénégal » à travers laquelle le mouvement a voulu exprimer et dénoncer avec vigueur les maux qui accablent les Sénégalais. Le mouvement ratisse du même coup assez large pour intégrer les différentes couches sociales au nom desquelles le mouvement justifie son engagement citoyen : vendeurs ambulants, chômeurs, jeunes, femmes au foyer, étudiants et élèves, paysans, familles victimes d'inondations, etc.

### **« Wolofiser » le vocabulaire de l'engagement citoyen**

La majorité des slogans du mouvement Y'en a marre est en langue wolof : *Dox ak sa gox* (être au diapason de sa ville) ; *Sama askan, sama bakkan* (mon peuple, ma vie) ; *Lu ëpp tuuru* (trop, c'est trop) ; *Daas fanaanal* (fourbir les armes) ; *Fanaane daas* (veiller à fourbir les armes) ; *Jaay sa carte jaay sa ngor la* (monnayer sa carte, vendre sa conscience) ; *Gor sa wax ja, dige bor la* (pour le respect de la parole donnée), *Leul* (assises du mouvement), *Baaatu askan wi* (la voix du peuple), *Walla askan wi* (la part du peuple), etc.

Le mouvement a puisé dans la langue wolof une bonne partie de ses formules percutantes pour véritablement coller aux mutations linguistiques en cours au Sénégal, qui témoignent d'un recul du français et d'une dynamique croissante de *wolofisation*. Mais il s'agit d'un wolof urbain qui, en sus d'une créativité lexicale foisonnante, allie dans des structures variables des

alternances et des emprunts au français, à l'anglais, à l'arabe ainsi qu'à d'autres langues locales. Autant de paramètres qui en disent long sur l'instance de réception visée par Y'en a marre. Ce dernier a sans doute voulu, par le choix des expressions wolofs, établir une espèce de connivence et de convergence avec les jeunes des milieux populaires, les banlieusards, les débrouillards, etc. Il s'agit également d'établir une distanciation avec le «système» des élites. Cette rupture symbolique est complétée par des choix vestimentaires autour du bonnet d'Amilcar Cabral ostensiblement porté par le coordonnateur du mouvement qui en a même fait son accoutrement distinctif.

Les pratiques linguistiques adoptées par Y'en a marre laissent voir la mise à l'épreuve d'une logique d'hybridité, de métissage et de cosmopolitisme. Le vocabulaire de la dissidence de Y'en a marre peut être lu comme un marqueur des mutations dans les pratiques linguistiques de la jeunesse urbaine dans le sens d'un cosmopolitisme linguistique qui s'explique par un empilement de leurs appartenances, une superposition de leurs identités et un enchevêtrement de leurs schèmes référentiels.

Y'en a marre est majoritairement composé d'artistes rappeurs dont on connaît la fascination pour la *world culture* et l'expression de leurs idées en anglais. Cependant, ce mouvement n'a pas eu recours à des idiomes puisés dans la langue anglaise. Ceci contraste avec le langage des jeunes urbains et les compositions de certains rappeurs sénégalais qui n'hésitent pas à truffer leurs textes et discours d'expressions anglaises. C'est peut-être là un trait de démarcation entre ce mouvement et le mouvement hip-hop. Contrairement à ce dernier, Y'en a marre s'adresse à un auditoire recherché qui, dans ce cas, est plutôt constitué de la couche sociale politisée, de la classe moyenne plus ou moins sensibilisée à la politique et de cette classe sociale sénégalaise dont la précarité des conditions de vie détourne l'attention de la vie politique.

### ***La performativité de la mise en scène***

Y'en a marre s'est toujours évertué à lancer des formules brèves, imagées et percutantes qui facilitent les conditions de leur reprise et de leur circulation dans l'espace public. Dans ses stratégies de mobilisation, Y'en a marre valorise la sollicitation créative et interactive du public. Celle-ci se fait grâce à des événements participatifs comme la *Foire aux problèmes*, la *foire aux solutions*. Cet événement repose sur des mises en scène et des mises en discours généralement allégoriques par des corporations, des groupes, des individus qui exposent les problèmes sociaux et professionnels qu'ils rencontrent et les éventuelles solutions qu'ils proposent. L'activité sert ainsi d'exutoire symbolique pour dénoncer la responsabilité des pouvoirs publics dans ces problèmes et leur inertie à y trouver des solutions pérennes.

Le recours à la mise en scène s'est également exprimé lors de la campagne pour le scrutin présidentiel du 27 février 2019. Mais ici, Y'en a marre s'est approprié une pratique que d'autres organisations de la société civile avaient largement adoptée. Celle-ci a consisté à inviter les cinq candidats à l'élection présidentielle pour discuter des aspects de leur programme concernant l'agriculture, la prise en compte du genre, l'éducation, etc. À grand renfort de publicité, Y'en a marre a pendant longtemps présenté son programme dénommé *Wallu askan wi* (la part du peuple) comme un moment-phare de la campagne électorale. Les cinq candidats devaient ainsi venir engager un dialogue citoyen avec les participants à cet événement. Au final, seuls deux des candidats se sont présentés, en l'occurrence Ousmane Sonko et Madické Niang. L'activité avait été programmée à la place de l'Obélisque devenue place de la Nation avant d'être délocalisée à la maison de la culture Douta Seck.

Une constante dans les stratégies d'action de Y'en a marre est d'opérer une occupation stratégique de sites symboliques comme la place de Obélisque, la place de l'Indépendance, la place Soweto, la place du Souvenir africain tout en s'ancrant au plan territorial dans la banlieue. Outre cet investissement spatial, une autre rupture posée en vue de l'émergence du nouveau type de Sénégalais que le mouvement veut faire naître est l'appropriation des symboles nationaux comme le drapeau national. On remarquera que c'est au moment même où les hommes politiques semblaient renoncer à la rhétorique patriotique que les militants protestataires de Y'en a marre ont multiplié les affichages dans l'espace public avec le drapeau national et l'hymne national.

Tout ceci peut en définitive faire penser que le mouvement a émergé en sécrétant une « contre-culture » qui tient à ceci : avec Y'en a marre, le spectacle de la protestation est indissociable de la protestation, comme le mettent en lumière les cortèges à grand renfort musical qui ont été déployés pour inciter les jeunes à retirer massivement leurs cartes électorales. Intitulée *pareel* (sois prêt), cette campagne a été organisée à la veille du démarrage de la campagne électorale avant qu'elle ne soit rapidement interdite par les pouvoirs publics.

Après plusieurs années qui lui ont permis de se poser comme un acteur de premier plan sur l'échiquier sociopolitique sénégalais et de contribuer à la consolidation d'une dynamique d'affirmation citoyenne en Afrique, Y'en a marre est aujourd'hui à la croisée des chemins. Le mouvement donne l'impression de subir un ressac des vagues de son positionnement contestataire. Il semble devoir batailler contre les effets pervers d'une

banalisation et d'une professionnalisation de son action. Le mouvement donne l'impression actuellement de se mouvoir dans une dynamique d'*ongéisation* et dans un rôle de courtier de l'engagement citoyen. Y'en a marre continue de récolter les retombées de son investissement contestataire à travers la mobilisation de financements auprès d'ONG internationales et de programmes de promotion de la démocratie et de la citoyenneté en Afrique. Une partie des critiques du mouvement tire d'ailleurs ses arguments de ce cantonnement dans cette posture de captation de ressources financières. Avec l'accumulation d'opérations de captation/redistribution de fonds, les leaders de Y'en a marre sont de moins en moins perçus comme de légitimes indignés, mais plutôt comme des rentiers de l'engagement citoyen.

Y'en a marre a semblé retrouver au début de l'année 2020 la flamme protestataire qui a fait sa popularité à la faveur des mobilisations contre la hausse du coût de l'électricité qui a touché la majorité des ménages sénégalais au début du mois de décembre 2019 malgré les promesses des pouvoirs publics contre une telle augmentation. Ces mobilisations ont donné naissance à un collectif de lutte dénommé *Nio lank* (nous disons non) *nio bagne* (nous refusons) dont Y'en a marre est un membre actif. Les marches hebdomadaires de dénonciation de la hausse ont fourni à Y'en a marre une occasion de sortir de sa « torpeur », de retrouver la virulence de son discours critique et ainsi de renouer avec l'activisme sur le terrain. Ces mobilisations tout comme les dénonciations des scandales entourant les contrats d'exploitation du pétrole et du gaz dans le cadre d'une plateforme de la société civile appelée *Aar li ñu bokk* (préserver nos bien communs) ont offert à Y'en a marre et à son nouveau coordonnateur, Aliou Sané<sup>4</sup>, des occasions de retour à la logique protestataire au cœur de l'histoire, de l'identité et de la stratégie du mouvement. Il s'agit d'une dimension essentielle que Y'en a marre partage avec Filimbi et la Lucha.

### **Filimbi et la Lucha : pratiques revendicatives et stratégies de mobilisation en contexte d'incertitude politique et de répression en RD Congo**

Il s'agit ici d'analyser les pratiques langagières qui structurent le discours contestataire de Filimbi et Lucha avant de proposer une lecture de leurs stratégies de mobilisation et de la répression à laquelle ils ont fait face dans un contexte de violence politique et électorale en RD Congo.

### ***Apolitisme et puissance des symboles dans les pratiques langagières de mobilisation***

Grâce à des innovations dans la transmission discursive de leurs messages, la Lucha et Filimbi se crédibilisent de plus en plus dans une société qui ne saisit pas encore très bien le sens de leur lutte. Depuis leur création, les deux mouvements revendiquent une amélioration notable des conditions de vie des populations congolaises. Ils se déclarent apolitiques. Leur apolitisme ne signifie guère l'absence d'un engagement politique puisque les objectifs pour lesquels ils se mobilisent ont un soubassement éminemment politique. Cet apolitisme fait plutôt référence au refus des leaders de la Lucha et Filimbi d'instrumentaliser le mouvement citoyen pour accéder à des fonctions politiques. Par cette posture, ils cherchent à se démarquer d'autres acteurs contestataires, dont les partis politiques d'opposition, les syndicats et nombre d'organisations de la société civile. Leur refus de se donner des ambitions politiques est lié au discrédit qui frappe les partis politiques, toutes tendances confondues. C'est une attitude qui leur permet aussi de se présenter en porte-voix désintéressés et crédibles des revendications de la population. Ils apparaissent ainsi aux yeux des populations congolaises comme étant les acteurs qui se soucient réellement de leurs problèmes.

La crédibilité de la Lucha et de Filimbi s'est construite progressivement à partir des arguments utilisés dans leurs discours et des résultats des actions posées en faveur des populations. La Lucha et Filimbi ont adopté la langue française dans leurs activités de mobilisation, le français étant la langue officielle de l'administration et du système éducatif en RD Congo. Cependant, le français est utilisé en symbiose avec l'une des quatre langues nationales véhiculaires selon les sphères territoriales de mobilisation et d'action. Il s'agit du swahili parlé dans toute la partie orientale de la RD Congo, notamment à Goma et à Bukavu, du lingala dans tout le pays et particulièrement dans la partie occidentale et à Kinshasa, du tshiluba dans les provinces centrales du pays et du kikongo dans les deux provinces du sud-ouest de la RD Congo. Les messages transmis dans ces langues jouent un rôle indéniable dans la mobilisation. L'usage du français comme langue principale pour sensibiliser et mobiliser les citoyens est également motivé par la nécessité d'interpeller les acteurs politiques, aussi bien du pouvoir que de l'opposition.

C'est dans la rue qu'il est possible de mieux observer les pratiques de mobilisation de la Lucha et de Filimbi et les pratiques communicationnelles auxquelles ils ont recours pour acquérir de la visibilité. Pour ce qui est de la Lucha particulièrement, elles prennent la forme de marches silencieuses pendant lesquelles leurs membres brandissent des pancartes sur lesquelles

sont indiquées leurs revendications comme : « MONUSCO<sup>5</sup>, le mandat d'imposition de la paix est enfin là. Faites vite. 10 mois de promenade, c'était déjà trop » (sit-in Lucha à Goma, banderole, 2012) ; « MONUSCO, 17 000 hommes. 1 milliard de dollars l'an. Pour nous “protéger”... comme ça! » (sit-in de la Lucha à Goma, banderole, 2012)

Des symboles sont utilisés pendant ces marches silencieuses pour mettre en exergue la non-violence. Ils ont consisté à se déplacer en file indienne avec la bouche bandée et les poignets liés.

*Ces symboles, bouche bandée et poignets liés, c'est pour exprimer l'absence de liberté d'expression et la prise en otage dont la population congolaise est victime. Associés à la marche silencieuse, c'est pour exprimer le caractère non violent de notre lutte.*

[Entretien avec un activiste de la Lucha, Goma, août 2018]

### ***La nécessité de défier au quotidien une violente répression***

Filimbi et la Lucha ont su se donner une dimension collective d'envergure. Cette dimension a été acquise grâce à un important travail de communication. Elle a également pris appui sur les actions de mobilisation sur le terrain ainsi que sur le recours aux réseaux sociaux. Ces actions ont exposé les leaders et les membres des deux mouvements à une violente répression de la part du pouvoir. Filimbi et la Lucha ont fondé leurs actions de mobilisation sur la puissance de la mise en scène.

Les occupations des places publiques dans la non-violence sont le trait distinctif des deux mouvements et particulièrement de la Lucha, tandis que Filimbi a plus investi les réseaux sociaux comme espace d'expression. Certaines de leurs activités se sont souvent terminées par des arrestations, lorsque le groupe rencontrait un barrage de policiers que les jeunes n'avaient nullement peur de braver en s'asseyant pacifiquement par terre. Seule la violence des répressions des forces de l'ordre mettait fin à leurs manifestations. Il en est ainsi des campagnes de la Lucha et Filimbi tant à Goma, Bukavu qu'à Kinshasa contre un troisième mandat de Kabila, intitulées « *Bye Bye Kabila* ». Les actions organisées dans le cadre de cette campagne ont été fortement réprimées et ont entraîné des arrestations de membres des deux mouvements, qui ont purgé des peines de prison. Même lorsqu'il leur était promis leur libération sous certaines conditionnalités, ils préféraient purger leurs peines jusqu'à la fin plutôt que de s'humilier en acceptant les modalités imposées, dont le silence. C'est le cas de deux femmes leaders de Lucha. Il s'agit en l'occurrence de Rebecca Kavugho qui, après avoir purgé sa peine de prison, a repris le chemin de l'université pour terminer ses études. Telle est la situation de Gloria Senga qui, malgré les menaces qu'elle reçoit, ne manque

pas de participer discrètement à certaines manifestations. Les actions de ces deux femmes illustrent et mettent en lumière l'engagement féminin dans ces mouvements citoyens.

Même si bon nombre de leurs actions ont buté sur une violente répression de la police, la Lucha et Filimbi ont tenté de la contourner grâce à une stratégie basée sur des manifestations en petits groupes. Par le biais de la manipulation des symboles et le passage de la parole à l'acte, Filimbi et la Lucha ont essayé d'impulser un changement de comportement chez les populations. Ce qui est une manière de rappeler à l'État ses responsabilités non assumées. Ainsi, à Goma, à la suite de la campagne citée plus haut, des fontaines d'eau ont été placées dans certains quartiers pour favoriser un accès à l'eau potable. Certaines chaussées fortement dégradées ont été réhabilitées.

En plus d'autres pressions internes et externes, la participation de la Lucha et de Filimbi en RD Congo aux côtés d'autres mouvements de la société civile, dont le Comité laïc des chrétiens catholiques (CLCC), dans la mobilisation contre un troisième mandat de Kabila en 2016 et 2017 a contribué à pousser ce dernier à ne pas se représenter. La Lucha et Filimbi se disent satisfaits d'avoir participé aux efforts ayant permis d'empêcher les plans du régime de Kabila en le contraignant à ne pas se présenter à un troisième mandat. Sauf que pour eux, leur combat n'a pas débouché sur une véritable alternance. Selon deux de leurs leaders que nous avons interrogés après l'élection ayant conduit au pouvoir Félix Tshisekedi à la place de Joseph Kabila, il n'y a pas un renversement effectif du système de mal-gouvernance qui caractérise la RD Congo. Ils déclarent même qu'il y a eu un «deal» de partage du pouvoir entre les deux. Ce que le nouveau président a lui-même reconnu devant la communauté congolaise à Windhoek en février 2019.

### ***La non-violence pour faire effet de contraste***

Filimbi et la Lucha mettent en avant la dimension «pacifique» de leur lutte et le recours systématique à la non-violence dans leurs stratégies de mobilisation. Cela leur permet de mettre en relief, de manière symbolique, par le truchement de la puissance du contraste, ce que leurs membres considèrent comme un usage fortement disproportionné de la violence que l'État leur oppose au quotidien. Les réactions de l'État prennent la forme d'arrestations tous azimuts, de la dispersion récurrente de leurs manifestations, du harcèlement judiciaire, de l'emprisonnement et de l'exil. La violence de l'État peut même aller, de leur avis, jusqu'à ce qu'ils appellent des assassinats déguisés en accidents. Tel est d'ailleurs le cas de Luc Nkulula, leader très en vue de la Lucha, retrouvé mort après l'incendie de sa maison dans la nuit du 9 au 10 juin 2018 à Goma. Un incendie qualifié

d'accidentel par le pouvoir en place, mais que les membres de la Lucha lui ont directement imputé en raison des multiples menaces reçues du fait de son militantisme au sein de la Lucha.

Les leaders de la Lucha et Filimbi que nous avons interrogés dans cette recherche n'ont cessé de mettre en exergue le fait qu'ils rejettent la violence. À la place, ils cherchent par des moyens spectaculaires à attirer les projecteurs médiatiques sur le ras-le-bol des Congolais. Ils espèrent de cette manière se placer dans une posture de porte-voix des populations durement touchées par la mauvaise gestion des ressources du pays malgré ses immenses richesses.

Dans leur dynamique de mobilisation, la Lucha et Filimbi interpellent l'État et les autres acteurs du champ politique congolais avec des propositions pour éviter d'être caricaturés comme étant cantonnés dans une opposition stérile. Une constante de leur démarche revendicative est de vouloir être dans une posture propositionnelle. Il s'agit pour eux de ne pas rester confinés dans la critique uniquement, mais d'être un vecteur de propositions alternatives à travers des plaidoyers et des prises de position sur divers domaines touchant la gouvernance de la RD Congo. La Lucha l'a fait, par exemple, à Goma et à Bukavu, en interpellant leurs gouverneurs successifs par des plaidoyers sur des stratégies de gestion des problèmes que connaissent ces villes dans les domaines de la voirie, de l'assainissement, de l'eau, de la sécurité, de la santé, de l'éducation, etc.

Les leaders de la Lucha et de Filimbi ont payé un lourd tribut à la violence que l'État congolais a essentiellement développée comme réponse aux deux mouvements. Certains de leurs leaders les plus en vue ont fait face à plusieurs tentatives de corruption auxquelles ils ont essayé de résister. Les déclarations de certains responsables des forces de sécurité de la RD Congo permettent de mettre en lumière la violence d'État éprouvée par les membres de ces mouvements. Un haut gradé de la police n'a pas hésité à menacer : «*réprimez ces ennemis du Congo, par tous les moyens*». Un autre haut gradé de renchérir : «*tuez-moi tous ces imbéciles qui veulent soulever la population contre le Commandant suprême*». Plutôt que d'ébranler le moral des militants, cette violence d'État semble, au contraire, avoir décuplé leur détermination, comme en témoignent les leaders des deux mouvements qui ont accepté de faire face aux risques d'emprisonnement plutôt que de renoncer à leurs convictions et à leur combat. La Commission Justice et paix de la Conférence nationale épiscopale de la RD Congo révèle que le nombre d'arrestations dans les rangs de la Lucha et de Filimbi pendant la période allant d'avril 2017 à octobre 2017 a atteint près de 200 activistes membres des deux mouvements dans plusieurs villes de la RD Congo (Justice et paix/CENCO, 2017).

Filimbi et la Lucha tirent leur légitimité de la cause qu'ils défendent ainsi que de leur ancrage territorial. Celui de la Lucha revêt un caractère singulier du fait que le mouvement est né à Goma et non à Kinshasa comme c'est habituellement le cas pour la plupart des mouvements citoyens. Ces derniers sont souvent des révoltes qui naissent dans les capitales qui sont des espaces de dissidence. Les circonstances de naissance de Filimbi ainsi que sa trajectoire s'inscrivent plus dans cette orientation.

Les contextes sociopolitiques ayant conduit à l'élosion de deux mouvements sont des éléments à prendre en considération pour apprécier la portée des réponses protestataires dont ils veulent être les catalyseurs. Lors d'entretiens avec des membres de la Lucha et de Filimbi, il est ressorti que les deux mouvements sont nés de la révolte des jeunes contre les conditions de vie jugées exécrables : pauvreté, chômage, pénurie d'eau, délestages électriques, absence d'infrastructures, forte dégradation des routes aussi bien urbaines qu'interurbaines et d'accès aux milieux ruraux, gestion catastrophique de l'épidémie d'Ebola. Ce contexte politique est brandi pour justifier la nécessité d'un changement radical, afin que soient résolus progressivement les problèmes ayant motivé la naissance de ces mouvements et dont la responsabilité est attribuée à tout le système dirigé par Joseph Kabilà. La révolte de La Lucha et de Filimbi réfère donc à un soulèvement «anti-système».

Le contexte politique de l'année de naissance de Filimbi (2015 en tant que collectif) et de la Lucha (2012) a été caractérisé par les manœuvres de Joseph Kabilà pour se maintenir au pouvoir alors qu'au plan constitutionnel, il n'en avait plus le droit, car ayant déjà effectué ses deux mandats. Il est parvenu, grâce à diverses manœuvres politiques, à se donner deux années de plus au pouvoir avant l'organisation d'élections fortement critiquées en décembre 2018. Ainsi, ce contexte politique a participé à la construction progressive de ces mouvements.

Une autre dimension et non des moindres dans l'analyse des stratégies de Filimbi et de la Lucha est le niveau de scolarisation de leurs membres. Les deux mouvements ont beaucoup recruté auprès de la frange instruite de la jeunesse congolaise. Leurs leaders ont pour la plupart été à l'université et ont atteint le niveau de la maîtrise. Certains travaillaient dans de grandes entreprises pour ce qui est de Filimbi. L'un des premiers initiateurs de Filimbi était banquier jusqu'à son départ forcé en exil, un autre est médecin. Du côté de la Lucha, les jeunes qui l'ont créé ont pour la plupart le diplôme de la maîtrise. Les deux mouvements comptent parmi leurs membres des artistes, des informaticiens, des étudiants, bref des personnes possédant les capacités de communication nécessaires pour innover dans les stratégies de lutte.

## ***S'appuyer sur l'internet pour innover en matière de mobilisation citoyenne***

L'internet et les différentes facilités de communication qu'il offre à travers Facebook, Twitter et WhatsApp ont permis aux mouvements citoyens de construire leur identité, de légitimer leurs actions et de justifier leurs revendications. Grâce à l'internet, Lucha et Filimbi ont constitué un réseau intercommunicationnel en temps réel qui leur a permis d'échanger sur de nouveaux objectifs, sur leurs stratégies, et de se transmettre des informations sur leurs contextes mutuels selon les circonstances.

L'internet a également été un outil stratégique pour créer des réseaux avec d'autres acteurs aussi bien locaux qu'étrangers. Filimbi a fait de l'internet son moyen de communication dès sa création, contrairement à la Lucha qui l'a intégré dans sa stratégie plus tard. Cela s'explique par le fait que la capitale Kinshasa où s'était d'abord implanté Filimbi était à l'époque mieux pourvue en matière de connexion à l'internet que Goma, ville de naissance de la Lucha. Malgré les contraintes de l'accès à l'internet, les deux mouvements ont actuellement fait de cet instrument un levier fondamental de leurs communications et actions.

Grâce aux sites Web qu'ils ont mis en place, Filimbi et la Lucha énoncent et donnent une visibilité à leur lutte pour la justice sociale, pour plus d'accès à la liberté ainsi que pour la démocratie. L'internet leur a permis d'étendre leur audience en suscitant le soutien et l'adhésion des populations, notamment des jeunes. L'internet est également un moyen pour faire contrepoids aux médias « traditionnels », dont certains ont été caporalisés par le pouvoir. Ce dernier a recours aux médias qu'il contrôle pour discréditer les deux mouvements par le truchement de la caricature et de la désinformation.

La diffusion sur Facebook, WhatsApp et Twitter des activités organisées sur le terrain (marches, opérations villes mortes, occupations non violentes d'espaces publics) permet ainsi de donner un visage à l'ampleur de la violence exercée sur les deux mouvements. La mise en ligne des messages enregistrés à travers des capsules vidéo sur YouTube leur permet de poursuivre la mobilisation sans être dans la rue. C'est pourquoi le gouvernement congolais n'hésite pas à couper l'internet pendant les périodes de tension, comme à l'occasion des élections de décembre 2018.

## **Le Balai citoyen à l'assaut des kalachnikovs : stratégies de mobilisation citoyenne au Burkina Faso**

### ***L'implication de la population, gage de succès dans la mobilisation citoyenne***

Pour le Balai citoyen, aucun changement n'est possible sans une prise en charge des situations par les populations au nom desquelles le mouvement mène sa lutte. Ce qui est d'abord recherché, c'est avant tout l'implication de la population illustrée par l'adage moaga selon lequel : «on ne rase la tête de personne en son absence». Le Balai citoyen s'inspire principalement de Thomas Sankara qui, pour montrer son attachement à l'implication du peuple dans la gouvernance publique disait : « nous préférons un pas avec le peuple, que dix pas sans le peuple ». Du reste, dans l'article 3 de ses statuts, le Balai citoyen ambitionne de «rendre effective l'implication responsable et consciente des populations dans la gestion de la chose publique». Ce type d'implication ne peut être atteint que si les populations prennent conscience de leurs responsabilités et de leurs devoirs dans la gouvernance nationale. Le mouvement veut faire en sorte qu'il revienne à la population de prendre en charge la défense de ses intérêts, la revendication pour l'amélioration de ses conditions de vie, la lutte en faveur de la bonne gouvernance. C'est ainsi que le Balai citoyen fait de l'éducation des populations un axe fondamental de son action. Il cherche à éclairer la conscience collective en amenant les populations à s'approprier les questions quotidiennes touchant à leur environnement.

*Notre mouvement a un objectif premier qui est de sensibiliser, d'éduquer aux droits et aux devoirs des citoyens et d'agir également dans le sens de la protection de leurs droits. Notre but était vraiment un but pédagogique. Notre discours est un discours allant dans le sens de la bonne gouvernance politique, économique, la protection des droits des personnes, la défense des intérêts des populations, des citoyens. [Entretien avec un responsable de club «cibal» Thomas Sankara de Ouagadougou]*

Ce que le Balai citoyen cherche à travers cette démarche, c'est d'arriver à faire en sorte que les populations soient elles-mêmes les acteurs des revendications, qu'elles puissent découvrir les secteurs sociaux dans lesquels elles sont lésées et ainsi mener la lutte pour le changement. Pour atteindre cet objectif, divers canaux sont utilisés par le Balai citoyen : des conférences-débats avec des spécialistes des problèmes identifiés, des projections de films éducatifs suivies de débats, etc. Du reste, en suivant les responsables du Balai citoyen, le mouvement lui-même est né d'une longue histoire de rencontres, d'échanges sur les problèmes du pays, mais le déclic est venu d'un partage

d'expérience sur la lutte menée au Sénégal par Y'en a marre lors d'une projection cinématographique pendant Ciné droit libre<sup>6</sup>.

*Le fait d'avoir invité Y'a en marre et d'avoir passé le film, c'était le plus important. Quand les gens ont vu le film, comment les Sénégalais menaient la lutte, les gens se sont dits, on va faire mieux que ça. Il y a eu cette réaction d'orgueil qui a précipité la création du Balai citoyen. On a fait l'ouverture de Ciné droit libre le samedi et dès le mardi, le Balai était déjà lancé. [Entretien avec un membre fondateur et membre de la Coordination nationale du Balai citoyen, Ouagadougou, septembre 2018]*

Les responsables du Balai citoyen ont interprété le lancement de leur mouvement comme la concrétisation de la prise en charge des problèmes sociaux par les populations elles-mêmes. Ils se sont grandement appuyés sur les technologies de l'information et de la communication dans leurs luttes citoyennes.

### ***Le pouvoir de l'internet dans les stratégies de mobilisation***

Le Balai citoyen n'a pas manqué de fonder son action sur l'usage des technologies de la communication et de l'information dans sa stratégie de mobilisation et de lutte. Il s'est appuyé sur les réseaux sociaux et particulièrement sur Facebook pour produire et diffuser des informations sans crainte de censure. L'appropriation de ces outils de communication était capitale pour les leaders du Balai citoyen dans la mesure où ses membres découvraient progressivement qu'ils pouvaient ainsi, grâce à cet outil, contourner les pratiques de répression du pouvoir en place. La présence du Balai citoyen sur les réseaux sociaux lui a permis d'élargir son audience dans toutes les parties géographiques du pays. Elle l'a également aidé à renforcer ses capacités de mobilisation.

*On a vite compris que ce sont des moyens qu'il faut utiliser pour s'implanter. Les choses vont vite. On n'a pas besoin de se déplacer à Bobo pour que tout le monde sache. Il suffit de bien exploiter les réseaux sociaux et ça va bien fonctionner. On a aussi compris comment les réseaux sociaux ont été utiles en Tunisie dans le printemps arabe. Donc, on a compris que, c'est un outil très important de mobilisation. [Entretien avec un membre fondateur et membre de la Coordination nationale du Balai citoyen, Ouagadougou, septembre 2018]*

Les réseaux sociaux ont ainsi donné une autonomie dans la production et la diffusion de messages de mobilisation. L'indépendance dans la production des informations est capitale pour un mouvement comme le Balai citoyen. En se référant à Granjon (2014:21), on comprend que «la production d'expressions citoyennes autonomes tient à l'existence de projets réflexifs et

des formes d'affirmation de soi, lesquels sont couplés à des visées citoyennes qui en spécifient l'actualisation pratique».

Parmi les différents réseaux sociaux, le Balai citoyen s'est surtout appuyé sur Facebook, et sur Twitter dans une moindre dimension. Cela vient du fait que Facebook concentre la proportion la plus importante des populations qui utilisent les réseaux sociaux et qu'il est également un outil ouvert par lequel le partage d'informations devient facile. Le Balai citoyen s'est ainsi doté d'une page Facebook<sup>7</sup> qui compte aujourd'hui 54 626 membres. Ces derniers sont régulièrement informés des revendications politiques du mouvement ainsi que de ses activités sociales. Ce canal de communication est également le lieu de partage des publications avec les trois autres mouvements : Y'en a marre, la Lucha et Filimbi. Grâce à Facebook, le Balai citoyen a pu se rendre populaire auprès des jeunes et susciter leur adhésion au mouvement.

### ***L'efficacité de la mobilisation sur le terrain***

Si l'internet a été un outil capital pour le Balai citoyen, il n'en demeure pas moins que ce qui a fait la renommée du mouvement, c'est sa présence sur le terrain. Dès sa naissance, le mouvement s'est illustré à travers des actions non conventionnelles sur le terrain qui ont marqué les Burkinabè. Ces actions sont l'occupation des locaux de la Société Nationale d'Électricité du Burkina (SONABEL) en avril 2014 pour réclamer la fin des délestages et des pénalités sur les retards de paiement des factures ; l'opération de sauvegarde du centre hospitalier universitaire de Bobo Dioulasso. À chacune de ces manifestations, les leaders du mouvement sont au-devant. Chez les *Cibals* (membres du Balai Citoyen dans un style verlan), le leader doit toujours montrer l'exemple en prenant la tête des différentes manifestations. On peut également retenir sa forte présence sur le terrain de la mobilisation lors de l'insurrection populaire des 30 et 31 octobre 2014.

Engagé pour l'avènement d'une gouvernance saine, après la chute du régime Compaoré, le mouvement a organisé plusieurs manifestations de rue pour dénoncer la présence de *personæ non gratæ* dans le gouvernement de la transition ; des cas de mauvaise gestion des ressources publiques, etc. Depuis 2014, le Balai citoyen est l'un des mouvements au Burkina Faso qui a le plus organisé de marches et de meetings pour dénoncer l'absence de justice, de démocratie et de justice sociale au Burkina Faso. Associé à sa présence dans les manifestations organisées pendant cette période par le chef de file de l'opposition, les populations ont gardé de ce mouvement son côté essentiellement contestataire. Le changement de régime et l'instauration

d'un nouveau mode de gouvernance ont réorienté le caractère contestataire du mouvement. Ce qui a semé chez certains un sentiment de trahison par le Balai citoyen.

*Les gens veulent que le Balai fasse comme quand on chassait Blaise Compaoré, alors que ce n'est pas le même contexte. En ce moment, il y avait un vrai combat à mener, c'est notre démocratie qui était prise en otage. On ne peut pas avoir la même virulence parce que ce n'est pas le même cas. Sinon le Balai continue le même travail, mais ce n'est pas avec la même virulence. On organise des conférences de presse, on fait des déclarations et on mène nos actions quand il faut. [Entretien avec un responsable de la coordination nationale du Balai citoyen, Ouagadougou, septembre 2018]*

La stratégie a effectivement évolué et cela est tributaire du nouveau contexte. Aujourd'hui, le Balai citoyen est moins présent dans la contestation à travers les marches et meetings, mais continue son travail de mobilisation à travers des dénonciations par voie de communiqués et de déclarations.

### **Consonances et dissonances dans les dynamiques de mobilisation citoyenne**

Y'en a marre, Filimbi, la Lucha et le Balai citoyen illustrent les dynamiques de mobilisation citoyenne, principalement dans l'espace africain francophone. Ils ont développé, chacun à sa manière, des formes de militantisme en fonction du contexte du pays, du niveau d'ouverture démocratique, du degré de respect des libertés d'association, de réunion et d'expression, de la structuration du champ politique, de l'attitude des pouvoirs publics, etc. Les quatre mouvements sont nés et ont évolué dans des contextes marqués par un climat de tensions sociopolitiques et électORALES. Cette situation a grandement influé sur la nature des stratégies de contestation citoyenne qui ont été mises en œuvre dans chaque pays. Celles-ci ont oscillé entre des pratiques classiques, qui ont eu pour cadre d'expression la rue, et des stratégies plus novatrices, qui ont été déployées en mettant à contribution le pouvoir des technologies de l'information et de la communication.

Les stratégies de mobilisation ont conféré une place cruciale aux innovations facilitées par les technologies de l'information et de la communication. L'internet s'est révélé être un levier fondamental dans les dynamiques de mobilisation citoyenne dans les trois pays et de légitimation de leur combat en faveur d'un mieux-être des populations. L'internet est utilisé comme un instrument stratégique permettant de communiquer à l'opinion publique les réelles intentions des mouvements. Celles-ci peuvent souvent être déformées par les pouvoirs en place. L'internet a également

été un outil stratégique pour créer des réseaux avec d'autres acteurs aussi bien locaux qu'étrangers. Grâce à leur empreinte numérique sur Twitter et sur Facebook notamment, les mouvements parviennent à acquérir une audience internationale qu'ils arrivent ainsi à instrumentaliser dans leur mobilisation protestataire.

Des limites réelles peuvent être discernées dans cette mobilisation à travers les réseaux sociaux. Elle ne peut dispenser d'une présence sur le terrain, qui est souvent décisive pour impulser les changements souhaités. En plus, les sociétés sénégalaise, burkinabè et congolaise, sont à majorité rurale, ce qui limite le rayon d'accès des messages véhiculés par l'entremise de l'internet et leur appropriation par de larges segments de la population.

Les quatre mouvements ont comme trait fédérateur leur capacité à utiliser des slogans dissonants et captivants, mais aussi iconoclastes et mobilisateurs dans des formes langagières propres à leurs environnements culturels respectifs. En se donnant pour objectif de devenir des vecteurs de transformation sociale à travers une démarche qui réhabilite l'idéal du panafricanisme, les quatre mouvements sont parvenus à acquérir une audience nationale et un rayonnement international grâce à leur capacité à se saisir d'enjeux cruciaux et à se poser en « sentinelles de la démocratie », en « instances de veille citoyenne » dédiées à la préservation des acquis démocratiques.

Formes inédites de mobilisation citoyenne, Filimbi, La Lucha, Le Balai citoyen et Y'en a marre ont été propulsés par la nature même des combats au nom desquels ils sont arrivés au rang d'opposants. Ils ont été ainsi obligés dans certaines circonstances de mener des batailles politiques que les partis d'opposition devaient mener. Cette posture a, entre autres, expliqué la nature des réactions des pouvoirs en place dans les trois pays qui ont pris des formes variables : tolérance bienveillante, intimidation, tentative de corruption, diabolisation, violente répression, etc.

Les dynamiques de mobilisation citoyenne qu'incarnent la Lucha, Filimbi, Le Balai citoyen et Y'en a marre sont aujourd'hui à la croisée des chemins. La question de leur devenir se pose dans des espaces de la citoyenneté investis aujourd'hui par une palette de structures qui cherchent à porter des voix alternatives, notamment sur la question d'une véritable indépendance économique des pays africains, comme l'illustrent les dynamiques de mobilisation pour un abandon de la monnaie CFA dans l'espace ouest-africain. Pour ne pas rester cantonnés dans une posture contestataire sans fin et, par la même occasion, relever les défis de leur légitimité, leur utilité et leur avenir, les mouvements doivent certainement réinventer leurs actions revendicatrices et se définir de nouveaux enjeux de mobilisation.

## Conclusion

Cette recherche a proposé un éclairage sur les dynamiques d'engagement citoyen dont les mouvements Y'en a marre, Filimbi, la Lucha et le Balai citoyen ont été les catalyseurs respectivement au Sénégal, en RD Congo et au Burkina Faso. Elle a mis en lumière les soubassements, et les modalités d'expression sur le terrain, de la dynamique protestataire que les quatre mouvements ont incarnée, chacun à sa manière en fonction d'une pluralité de paramètres (histoire nationale, système politique, degré de démocratie, niveau de respect des libertés politiques, etc.).

Les trajectoires des mouvements ainsi que leurs capacités d'influence, voire de nuisance sont d'ailleurs fortement déterminées par le contexte de leur naissance et la nature des régimes politiques au pouvoir au moment de leur avènement. Leurs dynamiques de mobilisations ont essentiellement reposé sur deux leviers : des stratégies conventionnelles de présence sur le terrain (la rue) et des formes inédites qui ont essentiellement une dimension numérique (l'internet).

Y'en a marre, Filimbi, la Lucha et le Balai citoyen ont été capables de développer une forme de « résistance-performance ». Celle-ci a consisté à faire preuve de créativité devant chaque situation sociale et politique controversée, à jouer de manière inventive et alternative de l'art du discours et du paraître contestataire pour être visible au plus grand nombre quitte à être inintelligible aux élites, habituées à avoir affaire à des appareils contestataires qui sécrètent des énoncés autrement « mieux » structurés et plus « classiques » dans une grammaire de l'indocilité qu'elles arrivent à décrypter. Cette ingéniosité a d'ailleurs dérouté tous les pouvoirs, qui ont tous apporté jusqu'ici de vieilles et inopérantes réponses (intimidation, répression, tentative de corruption, diabolisation, etc.) à une posture protestataire qui s'avère en définitive interactive et créative d'autant plus qu'elle combine protestation et mise en scène de la protestation.

## Notes

1. Voir une tribune parue dans le journal *Le Monde* et signée par les dirigeants des quatre mouvements. Elle est intitulée « Nous sommes la nouvelle jeunesse africaine engagée », ([http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/04/17/nous-sommes-la-nouvelle-jeunesse-africaine-engagee\\_4618336\\_3212.html#RV5fDb8lb0Skvwqz.99](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/04/17/nous-sommes-la-nouvelle-jeunesse-africaine-engagee_4618336_3212.html#RV5fDb8lb0Skvwqz.99)). 29 mars 2019.
2. *Lu ëpp turu* : proverbe de la langue wolof signifiant « trop, c'est trop ».
3. *Pareel* : mot de la langue wolof signifiant « sois prêt ».

4. Aliou Sané est devenu le nouveau coordonnateur de Y'en a marre à la place de Fadel Barro à l'occasion du *leul* (assises) du mouvement ayant eu lieu les 23 et 24 mars 2019. Barro été le visage le plus connu du mouvement depuis sa naissance en 2011. Avant d'être élu comme coordonnateur de Y'en a marre, Aliou Sané occupait les fonctions de Secrétaire exécutif du mouvement. Il était donc le responsable de la structure professionnelle qui s'occupait des actions de développement en collaboration avec des ONG.
5. MONUSCO : Mission de l'Organisation des Nations unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo.
6. Ciné droit libre est une des manifestations les plus importantes en matière de droits de l'homme, organisée par Semfilms Burkina qui est une association dont l'objectif principal est de défendre et de promouvoir les droits humains et la liberté d'expression à travers l'image. L'association dispose d'une cinémathèque très variée et d'une webtélé dédiée aux droits humains ([www.droitlibre.tv](http://www.droitlibre.tv)).
7. <https://www.facebook.com/CitoyenBalayeur/?ref=ts&fref=ts>

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# The Discursive Dynamics of Action-Research and Zimbabwean San People's Production of Audio-Visual Stories

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## Abstract

When conducting research with historically marginalised peoples, such as Zimbabwe's autochthonous San, it is necessary to observe the most sensitive ethical and methodological practice. The San are a group of people living largely on the edges of the contemporary market economy in the whole of southern Africa, including Zimbabwe. The San of Zimbabwe often work as unskilled labourers for their Ndebele and Kalanga neighbours in rural areas of Matebeleland. Historically, the San's identity and culture was denigrated in popular oral and media myths. This article presents a theoretical and methodological approach steeped in critical social sciences and cultural studies to restore the San image through making the San themselves the constructors of contemporary cultural texts about their way of life using modern film and video technologies. The San tell their stories after being trained in filming and editing techniques by researchers from Midlands State University. The negotiation of space and status for both the visiting researcher-trainers and host-student San youths makes a fascinating reflexive reading of researcher-researched power dynamics. What eventually emerges is a scholarship that is cognisant of both existential humanism and the need for respectful engagement by the researchers from university citadels with ordinary people who are often belittled and exploited.

**Keywords:** Zimbabwe San, action-research, critical social sciences, cultural studies, video-filming training, ethics

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## Résumé

Lors de recherches sur des peuples historiquement marginalisés, comme les autochtones San du Zimbabwe, il est nécessaire d'observer les pratiques éthiques et méthodologiques les plus sensibles. Les San sont, en grande partie, un groupe de personnes vivant en marge de l'économie de marché présente dans toute l'Afrique australe, y compris le Zimbabwe. Les San du Zimbabwe travaillent souvent comme ouvriers non qualifiés pour leurs voisins Ndebele et Kalanga dans les zones rurales du Matebeleland. Historiquement, l'identité et la culture des San étaient dénigrées dans les mythes oraux et médiatiques populaires. Cet article présente une approche théorique et méthodologique imprégnée de sciences sociales critiques et d'études culturelles afin de, avec des technologies modernes de cinéma et de vidéo, restaurer l'image des San en en faisant les concepteurs de textes culturels contemporains sur leur propre mode de vie. Après avoir été formés aux techniques de tournage et de montage par des chercheurs de la Midlands State University, les San racontent leurs histoires. La négociation d'espace et de statut à la fois pour les chercheurs-formateurs invités et les jeunes étudiants-hôtes San constitue une lecture réflexive fascinante de la dynamique de pouvoir entre sujets de recherche et chercheurs. Ce qui en émerge finalement est une étude consciente, à la fois, de l'humanisme existentiel et de la nécessité d'engagement respectueux des chercheurs des citadelles universitaires avec des gens ordinaires souvent rabaissés et exploités.

**Mots-clés :** San du Zimbabwe, recherche-action, sciences sociales critiques, études culturelles, formation au tournage vidéo, éthique

## Introduction

Anthropologists, historians, filmmakers and cultural studies scholars often tell cultural or ‘ethnographic’ stories about peoples other than their own. Often the latter communities lack the technologies, skills and expertise to document their cultures beyond their orality (Ong 1982). Although some First Peoples have relayed cultural memory with relative precision for more than 20,000 years (Stille 2002), sophisticated print and audio-visual technologies used in chronicling and archiving are arguably more enduring for preservation purposes. Non-literate or semi-literate First Peoples on different continents have relied on outsiders for the documentation of their cultural capital. Hence, a team of Zimbabwean researchers engaged the San of Bulilima district, Sabase village, in culture-based action-research that involved training San youths to use digital video technology and video-film production for storytelling.

Ten San youths produced two documentary films, *The San of Twai Twai* and *The Golden Story of Makhulela*, which were then screened for

the San community. The youths pitched their filming ideas after learning how to operate cameras and mobile phones for video recording. They divided themselves into two groups, one with five males and another with five females. We, as trainers, followed suit by joining the two groups according to our gender. Our CODESRIA-funded team from Midlands State University occupied the double role of being trainer-facilitators and researchers. The first role entailed imparting film production skills to the San, and the second entailed data-gathering through a mixture of participant observation, observation, interviewing and focus group discussions.

The action-research was strictly an academic endeavour intricately linked to the training project. This article is preoccupied with the ethical, theoretical and methodological challenges and opportunities of engaging a marginalised community which has so far not attracted many researchers, as compared with another Zimbabwean San group, in Tsholotsho, or those in neighbouring countries. Critical social science ethics of praxis and cultural studies methodologies inform the article's ontological perspective. These approaches examine the politics of relations of engagement by all individuals, groups and institutions concerned – including the researchers and the researched – and new digital technologies of expression/communication, to ascertain whether such relations do not perpetuate or normalise domination, degradation, oppression and exploitation.

We conveniently selected a Zimbabwean 'marginalised' San community located in Sabase (or Twai Twai as they call it), a remote rural place 140 kilometres from the border town of Plumtree. Popular media is implicated in reproducing an archetypical, denigrated, stereotyped and mythologised image of the San or 'Bushman' in the global public imagination (Tomaselli & Homiak 1999; Biese & Hitchcock 1999; Hitchcock & Vinding 2004). One of the key motivating factors for this work was that while the San of southern Africa in general are misrepresented as vanishing into extinction, or their remnants are stereotyped as primitive and premodern people through mainly the ethno-fictional film *The Gods Must be Crazy* (Uys 1980), Zimbabwe's San communities rarely feature in mainstream media reportage.

The research straddles the creative arts and critical social sciences/humanities. In the creative arts, there is growing recognition of creative practice as a form of research and expression (MacDougall 1998; Turner 1992). We assumed that the San youths would make films that directly addressed their circumstances of life and how they encountered non-San outsiders. Theory and methodology inform the creation of creative texts, and similarly the analysis of the same texts requires sound theoretical and methodological grounding. In critical social science pedagogics, the text is

best understood when the (con)text of its production and distribution is equally comprehended. The practical and stylistic elements of texts contain a symbiotic relationship with the theory and methodologies underpinning them. This is both research-led practice and practice-led research, and, ultimately, we aspired and endeavoured to produce results that were relevant in the spheres of both academia and culture. The research brought academia to a marginalised community, thus we strove to peel off in our small ways the persistent stigma that academes are alienated in ivory towers. Indigenous peoples have appropriated video filming technologies for their own ends, including asserting social status in their own communities, mediating their cultural identities, documenting their histories and as instruments of social and political protest and affirmation (Turner 1992).

### ***San history, naming and identity problems***

The San are widely acknowledged as an autochthonous people and the first inhabitants of southern and central Africa before the arrival of Bantu people and European colonialism. The Sabase San also refer to themselves as Amasili or Abatwa (meaning ‘person’). Unlike the ≠Khomani San of South Africa, who subverted the term ‘Bushmen’ and use it endearingly (Mhiripiri 2008), the San group in Plumtree has not yet appropriated that identity, which some consider derogatory. The Zimbabwe Constitution recognises the San among sixteen other ethnic groups in the country. San groups found in the Tsholotsho, Bulilima and Plumtree Districts of Zimbabwe are universally known as the Tshwa in current literature, although in other neighbouring countries they are often identified as distinct small groups with different languages and ethnicities (Hitchcock et al 2016; Tomaselli 2007). The Tshwa language is Tshwao and there are very few Tshwao speakers left. In Sabase, a community of about 400 people, only one old woman – Masenyanane Dube – can speak the language proficiently. These San are multilingual; many speak both Ndebele and Kalanga, and a few speak Shona.

Although the community at Sabase identifies itself as a San group, there are ongoing efforts to establish their exact history as a distinct group amongst other San groups of southern Africa. Historian Godfrey Tawona Ncube is writing this history, including the colonial displacement of Zimbabwean San communities from what is now the Hwange Game Park (Ncube forthcoming). Ncube has established that colonial authorities forcibly displaced the San from the Hwange Game Park in the 1920s, thereby disrupting their livelihood, from which most have not recovered. This information is slowly coming from San members such as the female

Sabase village head, Matjena Ncube, and Knowledge Ndlovu (a San youth leader in the same community), but it equally requires cross-referencing and verification with existing historiography. For ethical reasons, we are content with the Sabase community's self-identification and self-recognition as San, and therefore do not consider genetic justification or scrutiny of phenotype as necessary 'evidence' to establish the veracity of this claim. This is in line with the theoretical view that identity can be self-ascribed and identity is a form of or outcome of personal and social construction (Hall & Du Gay 1996), much as identity is performative (Mhiripiri 2008).

## **Selection of Participants and Training Activities**

The trainee filmmakers initially consisted of five males and five females, varying in age from sixteen to thirty-five years.

**Table 1:** Sabase San trainee filmmakers' group composition at the start of the training

Name	Gender	Age
Tongai Ncube	Male	24
Enias Moyo	Male	24
Buyani Moyo	Female	21
Knowledge Ndlovu	Male	35
Zondiwe Moyo	Female	33
Tjulukani Dube	Female	23
Kwenzakele Tshuma	Female	26
Dennis Moyo	Male	18
Mphiliseni Ndlovu	Male	19
Sibongusuku Anita Ncube	Female	16

Source: Authors' own

We had planned that the youngest participants would be eighteen years. But some enthusiastic sixteen-year-olds also wanted to take part. Knowledge was five years and Zondiwe three years older than our maximum cut-off age of thirty. However, they were both enthusiastic and immediately demonstrated their ability to organise and lead their colleagues. They soon developed into critical point persons for planning and managing training sessions. This was especially the case for Knowledge because he owned a cellphone.



**Figure 1:** San trainees and the Meaning-Making Research Initiative Team.  
(Photograph by Servious Chirara)

We conducted four three-day-long research and training activities with the selected participants at Sabase. After that, we held a four-day editing session at Midlands State University in Gweru. We worked with the selected youth filmmakers and their community from May 2018 to mid-April 2019 when we screened the resulting films at the village head's premises. We carried out interviews and focus group discussions at the communal clearing in Sabase the day after the screening. The communal clearing is referred to in our writings as 'The School', adopting the parlance the community used, in recognition of our activities there with the youth. The main feature at the school is a big *mubvumira* (*Kirkia acuminata*) tree. Over the days that we worked in Sabase, the *mubvumira* was the preferred rendezvous with an affective inclusiveness. As researchers, we imagined the space as a generally preferred public sphere.

Matjena's homestead hosted a few meetings, including the screening of the completed video-films. We however noted that Knowledge and others in his class preferred all gatherings to take place at The School. In some ways Matjena's homestead represented officialdom, something from which the community occasionally wanted to escape. The screenings inevitably were done at Matjena's homestead due to the convenience of the hut walls on which we hung the white cloth that served as a screen. Otherwise, there were subtle indications that, due to her position, Matjena benefitted more

from interactions with outsiders than was desirable, hence the need to find a less constrictive public space. The communal School clearly symbolically represented freedom of expression and freedom of association.

### **Critical Social Science, Cultural Studies and the Ethics of Working With the San in Video Production**

This study is partly inspired by Sol Worth and John Adair's (1969), Terence Turner (1992) and David MacDougall's (1998) classic works with indigenous communities outside their own original cultural contexts. In those respective projects, they (as 'outsiders') assisted 'indigenous' peoples to make their own ethnographic films. These researchers spent long periods with the communities, a privilege which our Zimbabwean research team could not afford due to other work commitments and logistical challenges. This technicality disqualifies our research team from the status of 'ethnographers'. By virtue of themselves choosing the components of filmic content to focus on, the San became self-ethnographers because they have intimate knowledge of their culture and traditions. They were born and live 'inside' their own culture, unlike us in relation to the ethnographic/representational objective. We presented the San participants with cameras to make their own films in contradistinction to the dominant cultural 'outsider's' camera gaze. Of significance is the critical concern by filmmakers such as Sembene Ousmane, that 'Western' filmmakers exoticise the African image; hence the need for Africans to make their own images.

As researchers and trainers, we did not intend to impose genres or content on the San people, since such presuppositions could lead to the introduction of topics and subject matter that might not be relevant to their community. The production was not meant to inhibit, but explore, interact with and possibly broaden the imaginative capacities of the participants. We were conscious of our responsibilities as facilitators in the project—a status arising out of our craft literacy and competence in rudimentary production practices. We further contend that contemporary African cultural productions should not be restricted to the dominant old established texts and narrative forms that now seem to typify, if not stereotype, Africa.

In the preface to the book *Contemporary African Cultural Productions*, Mekgwe and Olukoshi (2012:xiii) aptly note that there is an unprecedented explosion of original cultural productions across artistic genres and forms. It is possible to (re)produce African-based ethnographies and an 'anthropology' that empowers and dignifies instead of perpetuating old negative imaginations of Africa. Such 'anthropologies' are steeped in producing a critical 'social knowledge and social reform' for the betterment

of the societies from which empirical materials are drawn and reproduced for textual and epistemic purposes (Ntaragwi, Mills & Babiker 2006).

Our roles as researchers and intellectuals, as well as imparters of technical skills, is to ensure that we remain relevant and useful to the cultural development of African societies. We should move from the citadels of ‘intellectualism’ to get ourselves ‘dirty’ with praxis, interacting with ‘ordinary’ people. We are aware of critiques of African scholarship and intellectualism that focus on how intellectuals on the continent historically position themselves in relation to the state, civil society and other actors, and whether their work is effectual and contributes to policy (Mkandawire 2005). This research tries to ascertain the societal significance of our ethical, philosophical and practical work.

By producing their own epistemic work of a filmic nature we hoped the San participants would emerge as ‘new’ ordinary cultural producers using modern communicative technologies, which simultaneously would lead to the establishment of synergies for public communication and interaction with us, and a tolerant and appreciative intellectual growth of all involved. The action-research was even more pertinent because we were researchers from a public university funded by taxpayers’ money and CODESRIA, which supported the research through the Meaning-making Research Initiative grant programme – equally a pan-African public institution.

### **Cultural Studies and Emancipatory Textual Projects**

As action-research, this study included training selected San men and women in story construction, video filming and editing. The stories they created emanated from the filmmakers’ own life circumstances. The entire production process was a critical component of the San community’s symbolic expressions of ethnic cultural identity. Our research methodology was mainly qualitative but derived from cultural studies, which is a markedly multidisciplinary field of inquiry. Cultural studies methodologies are highly eclectic and can include components of ethnography without fully satisfying the rigours of ethnography. This study is not strictly ‘anthropological’ or ‘ethnographic’ because the researchers and trainers were never long-term participant observers *in situ* – uninterrupted time spent doing participant observation is arguably the mainstay of ethnographic methodology. Secondly, our research is founded in cultural studies traditions in an institutional sense, that is to say the university department from which we do our research consciously locates itself within the genealogy of critical cultural studies (Mhiripiri 2018). Immanuel Wallerstein (1999) has aptly written about the fictional nature of separating disciplines, but

maintains that their organisational and institutional structures and the rules and regulations and codes of operation within specified disciplinarian boundaries are a fact of reality. Our first 'lack', which denies us the identity of ethnographic researchers, is a function of the second definitional premise. Our combined training of and research on the San was based on short-term but fairly regular visits to Sabase village, with at least one reciprocal visit of the small group of the San for editing purposes to our university in Gweru, approximately 400 kilometres away. Our practices extended cultural studies research paradigms by borrowing useful ethnographic techniques, such as doing fieldwork, filming the training and other encounters, observing and making notes, rather than merely confining ourselves to the library and office.

The amorphous boundaries and ambiguous identity of cultural studies is acknowledged, and perhaps therein lies its strength in the quest for understanding. While cultural studies lacks the definitive forms of a discipline as such, it is however recognisable in practice and as documented records, hence its existence is indisputable, thereby availing itself as a teachable and assessable field of study (Gray 2003:3, 11). Larry Grossberg (1996) is on record for stating the dilemma of the identity of cultural studies, which ironically, for us, might be its current and long-term strength and driving impetus. 'Those of us working in "cultural studies" find ourselves caught between the need to define and defend its specificity and the desire to refuse to close off the ongoing history of cultural studies by any such act of definition' (Gray 2004:3). Simon During (1993:1) also notes this ambiguity, arguing that 'Cultural studies is not an academic discipline quite like others ... Cultural studies is, of course, the study of culture, or, more particularly, the study of *contemporary culture*.' Cultural studies entails a 'methodological eclecticism' of the 'critique of everyday life' and 'an investigation of particular ways of using "culture", of what is available as culture to people inhabiting particular social contexts, and of people's ways of making culture'(Gray 2003:12)). The 'materiality of culture' is a basic component in understanding the idea of culture (Mhiripiri 2008:70). Culture is not just:

a set of free-floating ideas or beliefs, nor is it exemplified only by a canon of great works of art or literature. The meanings, processes and artefacts of culture are produced, distributed and consumed within particular material circumstances. In other words, texts and practices are both products of and constitutive of the social world... Therefore, any attempt to understand culture and cultural processes must take account of this always-complex set of material conditions (Gray 2003:12).

Cultural studies prioritises the study of media texts and media audiences and their interactions for interpretations of texts (Fiske 1994). New communication technologies now mean that the areas of production, audiences and the construction of discourses are intertwined. Instead of merely receiving texts produced elsewhere, individuals and communities can create communicative spaces using digital devices. Digital infrastructures and devices now shape people's lives, the way we conduct research and the economies of interaction. Such methodologies express the materialistic, the practice, the ontological and the affective dimensions in cultural and social studies (Gillespie et al 2014; Gregg & Seigworth 2010; Grossberg 2010).

Since culture is actively produced through complex processes, 'signifying practice' happens at every social level and every moment within the cultural process itself. People in different contexts and nationalities make culture for certain reasons and purposes as they live through their everyday lives. Culture then is implicated in the shaping of social relations and in instigating or resisting social transformation. Thus, writes Gray (2003:12):

In order to begin to investigate these complex sets of relationships which are present in cultural processes we require a variety of methods ranging from textual analysis, observation, different ways of gathering knowledge and information from individuals and groups, such as diaries, different kinds of interviews and participant observation.

Since 'lived experience' is a paramount element of cultural studies research, 'texts' include written texts, such as literature and the press, as well as orature (oral stories), music and radio, and visual texts, such as film, photography, advertising and all other kinds of symbolic artefacts and phenomena (Gray 2003). Nonetheless, whatever 'texts' are used in an enquiry should supplement and complement actual lived experience, that is to say there must be a relationship between the text and its social context, as well as how readers interpret the text.

An important facet of cultural studies is the exploration of 'the creativity of ordinary people's experiences while acknowledging that experiences are always shaped by social discourses and context' (Saukko 2018:467). Experiences are influenced by multiple and diverse factors, ranging from human and non-human actors and technological devices that offer discursive platforms, etc. The important task ultimately is to 'map the different elements that come together to configure or enact a specific experience' (Saukko 2018:467), and in our case it is the experience in the filmmaking and film-viewing by the Sabase San.

In the true fashion and tradition of earlier cultural studies, concern and interest (as well as, in this case, empathy) for the less powerful was given

priority. The researchers strategically tried to give a voice to the historically marginalised or at least to legitimise in academia the everyday understandings and passions of ordinary people (Gray 2003:51). The San were discriminated against during apartheid and colonial rule, and they still make up a large number of the underclasses. The epistemological questions to be answered by this research are largely those pertaining to how we know what we know and the relationship between the knower and the known, accepting that ‘there is no such thing as a disinterested knower’ (Gray 2003:2).



Figure 2: First visit to Sabase with MSU students. The village head is Matjena Ncube (seated, in orange T-shirt). (Photo taken by Servious Chirara)

### **Governmentality, National Security and the Politics of Researching Autochthonous Communities in Southern Africa**

Conducting research in Zimbabwe has both its bureaucratic formalities and potential hazards, which admittedly has implications for logistical operations and ultimately the nature and quality of research findings. Currently, there is no powerful civil society organisation that directly controls research over the San or imposes an ethical regulatory framework, as the South African San Institute (SASI) does in South Africa. Our interactions with the San started in May 2018 when we carried out our reconnaissance trip. We established contact and requested permission from the San village head to involve youths in her area to participate in the project, as discussed

earlier. Permission to conduct research and training was granted first by the Matebeleland South Provincial Police Officer in Charge, then the Province's District Intelligence Office and finally the San kraal head<sup>1</sup>.

These formalities fall into the category of what Cannella and Lincoln (2018:179) refer to as 'institutionalised forms of governmentality', where to 'govern' is an action predicated on a 'mentality' which is 'the way people think about accepting control, the internalization of beliefs that allow regulation' (Dean 1999). Research ethics and researchers' acceptance of structures of control are part of 'governmentality', whether values and moral commitments are socially negotiated or arbitrarily adopted by researchers as a 'right to know' the other, or are reflexively applied, or are 'forms of legislated research regulation ... that create an illusion of ethical concern' (Lincoln & Tierney 2004).

Institutional regulation and application of ethical standards and forms of control include and involve at different levels academic institutions with codes of engagements, civil society organisations and professional bodies, and the state machinery. Cannella and Lincoln (2018:178) note that in their diversity and levels of authority all these institutions are 'embedded within the notion of governmentality'. Social groups or populations are controlled through technologies of (regulatory) power. Disciplines of researchers also internalise self-controlling values and norms for their practising individuals. Whether in the state system or in the so-called self-regulatory/autonomous institutions, such as academia and research bodies, there are bureaucratic structures and formalities, which ought to be satisfied. The issue of governmentality is complex in that it has dialectical facets, one being externally imposed on the individual or group, and the other self-imposed by the individual or group. Perhaps Cannella and Lincoln (2018:180) express this better:

Research regulation that is legislated is most often recognized (and critiqued) as an institutionalized form of governmentality, a technology of power that constructs, produces, and limits and is thus tied to the generation of intersecting oppressions. ... We believe that our discussion of ethics within critical social science can be interpreted as a form of governmentality; most likely, any construction of ethics (however flexible) represents a form of governance. To construct a critical ethics regarding research is to address mentality. Any belief structure, however emergent or flexible, certainly serves as discipline and regulation of the self.

Authorisation of research is mandatory, and researchers adhere to it to eliminate restrictions. As Zimbabwean nationals, we submit ourselves to certain strictures. We seek permission from bureaucratic authorities in

what may appear to be ‘informal’ ways, especially when operating in rural environments where the ruling party ZANU–PF is dominant. We often notify the police, the rural district administrators or the state intelligence to access and interact with local populations. This is to avoid conflict and unnecessary suspicions regarding our presence in a potentially volatile environment. We were fortunate to be granted permission the first time we went to Sabase. Our entry was also ‘smooth’ because we incidentally got a police officer who was off duty to operate as our interpreter.

The San community we worked with were aware of the state’s restrictions and were willing to work with us only on condition that central authority was supportive of the interactions. In fact, when the editing team visited us in Gweru, their leader, Knowledge, revealed that he was expected to report not only to his village head but also to the state officials what exactly our intention was in teaching the community to operate communication technologies and tell their own stories. How this relationship frees up imagination or constrains it is open for debate. The two filmed projects the San filmmakers opted for – constructing a traditional hut and discussing the near extinction of their San language, and the exploration of the benefits of herbal medicines – verged on ‘innocuous’ ethnographies as compared to other openly political subject matter. The realisation that we were equally under observation by our research participants in that manner made us more self-conscious and cautious in the way we conducted ourselves. Nevertheless, our realisation that the participants had something to learn from us was gratifying under the circumstances. We must note here that foreign researchers need to satisfy more requirements to practise in Zimbabwe. We also concede that local and foreign journalists have suffered more professional hazards when they visit (especially rural areas) without institutional (state) authorisation, whereas we do not have records of such abuses of academic researchers.

However, the possible safety and security that we enjoy as researchers could not be taken for granted during one of our trips in January 2019 to Sabase, at a time when Zimbabwe was in turmoil. There were demonstrations and riots triggered largely in urban areas due to escalating food and petrol prices. The ZANU–PF government views urban areas as political strongholds for the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change. Our university is based in urban Gweru. Much as academics are regarded as public officials whose institutions rely on government grants, suspicions remain mainly because many among the MDC leadership are former university lecturers and students.

We embarked on our January 2019 trip without making the usual visit to the state gatekeeping authorities to announce our arrival in Plumtree since we feared we could be turned back to Gweru. Previously, during the reconnaissance trip and again when we travelled to Sabase when Zimbabwe was going through national elections, the off-duty police officer mentioned earlier had acted as our guide and interpreter. In spite of the well-documented fear of the security apparatus by Zimbabweans, in this case the police officer's presence might have inspired trust and confidence in all those with whom we associated because he was well known around the area. He had worked and socialised with the San before, whereas – in comparison – we were complete strangers. Generally, our research team's compliance with state authorities brought more benefits of accessibility. Nonetheless, there are some ineluctable practical necessities and concessions that make 'governmentality' an ambiguous fact of praxis. There is arguably more public good in strategically negotiating slippery terrain without undermining the right of the less powerful social groups to associate and express themselves.

### ***The protection of indigenous communities***

The San all over the southern African region enjoy the status of undisputed autochthons. No other group claims the state of original inhabitants of the area, and the ancient rock paintings and the oldest archaeological discoveries in the region are attributed to the San (Buntman 1996a; Buntman 1996b; Chapman 1996; Jeursen 1995). This status needs to be protected. The concerns raised above about the exploitation of research communities and their relations with researchers, filmmakers and other economic players cannot be glossed over. These are theoretical, methodological and political concerns that cannot be dodged.

Civil society organisations or non-governmental organisations specifically concerned with San issues and interests are a recent phenomenon compared to neighbouring countries. The Tsoro-o-tso San Development Trust (TSDT), which advocates for the development of the Tshwao/San people of south-western Zimbabwe, was established in 2014 only. It is currently the only organisation dedicated to the needs of the San in Zimbabwe. In South Africa, there is a coordinated strategy to protect indigenous communities, especially the San, from exploitation of all forms. There is also the supportive involvement of organisations such as WIMSA (Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa) and Survival International. South African San groups together with the South African San Institute (SASI) developed a Code of Ethics for researchers (Callaway 2017). It is still to be seen whether TSDT will also take the same stance towards researchers.

While the Zimbabwe government is concerned with the status of the local San as arguably the poorest ethnic group in the entire sub-region, it still insists that it does not want the San to be treated differently from other racial and ethnic groups in the country. The International Labour Organization (2010) and several researchers on livelihood levels concur that 'Zimbabwe's San have the lowest socioeconomic level compared to all racial and ethnic groups both in the country and across the region' (Hitchcock et al 2016; Suzman 2001; De Wet 2010; Dieckmann et al. 2014). Besides working as very cheap labour for their neighbours from other ethnic groups, the Zimbabwe San continue to forage in search of food and herbal medicines. They have indeed been marginalised compared with San communities in countries such as Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. The general assumption is that the Zimbabwean San simply do not exist. Ironically, the Zimbabwean Constitution included Tshwao, the San language, among the officially recognised languages, and a team of orthographers have since translated the Zimbabwe Constitution into that language.

Just before the 2018 Zimbabwe general election, the First Lady, Auxillia Mnangagwa, visited Sabase and donated goods, signifying a new turn of events (Rupapa 2018). This is notwithstanding the slowly but surely growing research on the Zimbabwe San (Hitchcock & Nangati 1992, 1993; Zhou 2014; Hitchcock et al 2014, 2016), albeit sparse and requiring more committed, conscientious and specialist researchers across the disciplines. A more robust San civil society organisation might emerge. At the theoretical level, research might have some agency, playing a facilitating role for San societal organisation in the cultural sphere.

### **San Handling Video Technology and Heightened Self-Esteem**

The training offered all participants their first opportunity to operate cameras and use computers. Although they had used cellphones before, the First Lady's visit mentioned above ironically stimulated interest in the professional camera. Journalists and other state photographers were part of the visiting entourage and they looked very important holding the filming equipment. 'I never dreamt I could hold something similar and shoot just like they were shooting at us!' exclaimed Knowledge. There was a tinge of pride and heightened self-esteem in the articulation.

The training on camera maintenance and basic shooting elicited a number of interesting responses from the participants, since such experiences are affective. The introduction of new technologies to those who have never used them before elicits different reactions. The recipients can be hesitant and curious, timid and petrified, or enthusiastic and eager

to know more. The San group exhibited all these reactions. Generally, they were eager to interact with new technologies of expression, as evidenced by their punctuality and memorisation of taught concepts. During our second day of camera training, Enias kept repeating the names of some of the accessories and tools he had been introduced to the previous day, such as 'tripod', 'lens', 'zoom' and 'Canon' (the brand of the DSLR cameras we were using). Enias and Knowledge even took it upon themselves to teach others, revealing a promising intra-group/intra-ethnic peer-to-peer skills impartation. This dispelled our earlier assumption that, given the very low or non-existent levels of print literacy in the community (some of our participants had attended only primary grades of school), it would be difficult to provide training on highly technical skills. This assumption was based on evidence that some students enrolled in our universities struggle with new communication technologies when undertaking full-time studies.

While all of the San youths across gender and age quickly embraced the camera, the editing technologies were relatively intimidating. During the editing time in Gweru, Knowledge indicated that older trainees like Enias and Zondiwe would have been more adventurous, as they would not have experienced 'culture shock' in the editing training context. Zondiwe is a married woman and could not travel to Gweru due to family responsibilities, while Enias was travelling in Botswana at that time.





**Figures 3 and 4:** Knowledge Ndlovu (in yellow golf shirt) operating the camera.  
(Photographs by Servious Chirara)



**Figure 5:** Zondiwe Moyo (in striped blue top) operating the camera.  
(Photograph by Servious Chirara)



**Figure 6:** Enias Moyo immediately fell in love with the camera.  
(Photograph by Servious Chirara)

### The Problems Observed During San Filming and Editing

From the beginning of the training, female trainers worked with the women's group closely, and similarly male trainers worked with the male group. The female San group induced this separation by staying apart from their male counterparts. On the surface, it appeared that the women were shy and withdrawn, yet overall their subtle preferences led the trainers and the male group to act in a way that enabled the realisation of the women's interests.

The silent power of San women is vocalised occasionally: Mercy Mubayiwa intimated that in an instance of woman-to-woman banter Kwenzakele told her that local women had so much power that they had made several of their non-San lovers move in to their homes away from their own families in other villages. For instance, Knowledge's stepfather is from Masvingo province over 400 kilometres away. He returned to Masvingo only after the death of Knowledge's mother. And village head Matjena Ncube's husband is a non-San who moved into the San community.

Our research group was obliquely susceptible to the subtle San women's power; we smoothly reassigned trainers/overseers into gender-defined training groups, something that we had not planned before in our methodology. The power dynamics between the trainees/observed and the trainers/observers thus did not always assure the retention of research control, certainty and authority of the latter. Such dynamics persuaded the researchers to believe that the women's pitched ideas, at least, and their filmic practice and decision-making, were of their own initiative in an intriguing manner. The testimony from Mubayiwa reinforces the San women's subliminal influence on the encounter, on our intercultural social relations, the film production process and discursive existence.

The men chose the subject of the construction of a San hut and the discussion around the use of the San language, which now has very few speakers. The women settled on herbal medicines and traditional health care for San women pertaining to childbirth. In the men's film, the filmmakers sometimes move from behind the camera to become pro-filmic informants. There was arguably more technical discipline on the women's team, in terms of maintaining the professional filmmaker's distance that allows other voices, than was found in the males' pro-filmic operations. Restraining one's intrusion as film director has its technical advantages, especially where diverse community voices are anticipated. The handler of the film devices is already 'empowered' by virtue of the possession of equipment, and the ability to select, include or exclude subjects and who can be filmed. That power of selection is, however, not absolute since the making of a diversely vocal film requires more presences than the filmmaker's own. Authorities on cultural and community subject matter, for instance, might not always be those who handle the film and video devices. The women's film was arguably more successful in incorporating people who were not trained to film, compared to the men's production, which relied more on the filmmakers as pro-filmic subjects. The performative role of the men – especially Knowledge – places them in the film space as both filmmakers and the filmed, implying that they aspire for a starring role on both sides of the camera lens.

The San who were selected to visit Gweru for the edit actively decided on what material to include or exclude from the footage. Our initial intention was to hand over the filmmaking process in its entirety to them, just as David MacDougall or Terence Turner did with the Australian and Amazonian Aborigines respectively in the later stages of their ethnographic films. We soon realised that this was over-ambitious since the selected San youths needed a lot of handholding, especially in the critical stages of editorial work. None of them had ever worked with editing software or computers before. A simple task such as manoeuvring a computer mouse could be daunting; the displacement from their own familiar environment to the university studio was disorienting enough for youngsters such as Denis and Anita. Kwenzakhele and Anita – the female editors – would do virtually no handling of the editing equipment, nor would the youthful Denis. The three needed more prodding and urging even for the selection of material to include into the films. Knowledge complained that they were not participating enough, even though we had provided young male and female facilitators and trainers eloquent in Ndebele. The edit suite accentuated the differences between trainers/researchers and trainee filmmakers, but also between the San trainees themselves. It made us realise that it was all very well to provide a channel for San expression, but whose voice would prevail even amongst them? Such is the age and gender difference amongst the San that both Knowledge and the women agreed that the women's film production –*The Golden Story of Makhulela* – was not going to be shown to the entire village since it had sensitive material suitable only for a mature female audience.

The choice of herbal medicines as a subject was a convenient cultural affirmation in a space of need and want. There are no modern hospitals in the region, hence the women are practical and proactive in their choice of herbal remedies. They resort to traditional communal knowledge paradoxically, having been displaced from their traditional structures. They live in proximity to relative 'affluence', but they do not have schools or modern health facilities in their neighbourhood. That they resort to 'traditional' medicine is expedient and understandable. They want hope and confidence where the 'modern' offers little as recourse. The efficacy of the herbal medicine is unknown to us as researchers in social sciences, and perhaps pharmacists and physicists are best equipped to test the effectiveness of these herbs. In the absence of such research, our research team can only support the community remedies that offer physical and psychic comfort, solace and amelioration.

The intimacy of female health and sexuality were significant in restricting the screening of the film. Respect for the privacy and dignity of the women

was a critical ethical consideration. However, the mention of herbs and their uses placed the researchers in a complex position where non-disclosure of the plants and procedures is not just an issue of propriety but one of protecting San communal intellectual property rights. The researchers have a legal and ethical responsibility not to disclose the uses of the medicinal plants, an awareness heightened by the debacle between the San of South Africa and Big Pharma over *Hoodia gordinii*, an appetite suppressant.

### **Turning the Camera Gaze on the Outsider**

During an interview-training session, researchers urged the trainees to consider turning the camera gaze on us as the outsiders/visitors and to ask us questions about anything. From shy inquiry, Knowledge's confidence grew until he eventually pointedly asked why we were there and what we wanted from them. He was concerned about the possibility of the 'pilfering' of their cultural ideas and mores. Nhamo Mhiripiri was asked these radical questions. He replied that the research team was interested only in imparting filming skills to the San so that they could represent themselves through audio-visual imagery. The imagery of teaching a person to fish instead of giving out fish was used to clarify the aim.

Within the scope of the current research, we may not be able to ascertain that the explanation was fully absorbed by the community. That we were teaching a skill to empower the community might not have been immediately visible to them. Some of the community members seemed to have understood the notion of opportunity in collaboration, and Knowledge and a few others were interested in the actual ideational value of skills acquisition more than receiving material handouts. A frequently mentioned appreciation of the film projects was their importance in conserving the community's history and culture through documentation. The older San concurred with Knowledge that, in the absence of print literacy, modern technologies of communication offered a new opportunity and potential for cultural restoration. The film devices could record and package a considerable amount of information expressed in their ordinary language. They could also revive the old, nearly dying San language, as Masenyanane had demonstrated in one of the films.

The films assumed efferent and educational status among the elders. Just as writing was extolled as a powerful device of recording and preserving cultural memory in some oral cultures faced with rapid changes (Stille 2002), film similarly assumes the same status in the San community with scant print literacy skills. The most impressive response of the San under the rapid homogenising effects of globalisation and the market economy is to

offer to teach their youths to handle the new communication devices and manage the documentation and storage of their history and culture. This is the reason why even the head of the neighbouring San village came to plead for the inclusion of some of his own youths into the filming training project. One elderly resident from Sabase objected to the idea but the rest welcomed the inclusion of at least four more youths. The rejection by the one resident was typical of a contestation for scarce resources but it also underlined the existence of inter-village jealousies and vendettas. Our training team was now a protected 'local' resource, which could be used in intervillage negotiations and overtures for community sharing and unity. This is the typical traditional sharing for which the San are legendary (see Marshall 1959) and which some people see as a weakness. Our Kalanga host Forward Dube noted that the Ndebele and Kalanga are often wary of intermarrying with the San. Twenty San in-laws could move in with the bride!

Some members of the community, who did not appreciate the positives of the training, requested payment for receiving training. This is not as ridiculous as it may seem, nor is it an inversion of the principles of the capitalist funding of education. According to economist and social scientist Friedrich Hayek (2006:325) critical knowledge and (skills acquisition) 'is perhaps the chief good that can be got at a price'. Knowledge is a public good that benefits the individual and the public, although those without knowledge or useful education may not immediately realise the incentive to possess it. There is expenditure of money and resources in spreading knowledge and skills. Many successful students in the modern age benefit from grants and scholarships in order to excel! The public purse for education and training of marginalised communities like the San ought to include the same mechanism used to cushion public education in social welfarist and socialist states. Mentoring San graduate and postgraduate students in the social sciences, and particularly in cultural studies and/or ethnographic studies, will create a necessary intellectual alter-ego to all those interested in this marginalised society, instead of speaking about or on behalf of them. Issues of voice and authority are therefore partly addressed in this democratisation of cultural studies.

While the possibility of filming other cultures and other peoples was open to them, the Sabase San remained inward-looking. The only outward gaze and interviewing of the other is manifest in the scene when Knowledge interviews Mhiripiri, an urban Shona academic. The community was still preoccupied with itself. The creation of its own record from its own perspective was apparently more important at this juncture than the outward gaze and interest in how others appear beyond their own spatial conditions.

The inside gaze is both an individual and community cultural affirmation which is necessary for a people that have been marginalised. They are placing themselves at the centre first, to stabilise themselves conceptually, reconstruct their historical memory and relate it to the present, before they dare venture out to test intercultural dynamics.



Figures 7 and 8: Buyani Moyo turns the camera gaze on Nhamo Mhiripiri while Knowledge interviews. (Photographs by Oswelled Ureke)

### **The San And Technology: Confrontation and Negotiation**

Regardless of the challenges the participants faced in operating the editing suites, it was not lost to them that a film is a sequential assemblage of selected shots and scenes. In spite of the general reluctance to do practical editing – that is, cutting and pasting together selected shots and scenes to create a narrative – the teams did select the materials to be included in the films. For instance, Knowledge was adamant that the scene where Mhiripiri is filmed answering interview questions about the essence of the film-training project should find space right at the end of the men's film. Mhiripiri's answer in part was metaphorical: 'It is important to teach someone to fish instead of providing fish.' Knowledge's ontology about the encounter with the trainers and the purpose of the project, and his desires for cultural recuperation through adopting and adapting new technologies, manifested themselves in this choice. He believes the condition of the San can be improved only through collaboration with

others but that the relations between the one and (an)other must be based on cordial respect and equality. Film is then the space for mutual but strategic exchanges, play, role performance and interaction.

This is something David MacDougall realised about his own work with other peoples. Writing about MacDougall in the *London Review of Books*, Paul Henley (2001:36) noted:

For him, an ethnographic film should be understood as a record not just of another culture, but of an encounter between film-maker and film-subjects who between them achieve a form of communication across the cultural divide. Far from seeking to present a disengaged account of another society, good practice should be measured by the degree to which the film-maker has been able to work through the personal relationship established with the subjects in order to provide an insight into the world in which they live.

Knowledge used the post-screening focus group discussion to initiate community discussion about their distressing encounters with drones. A drone had terrorised the villagers before. Several villagers added testimonies of their encounters with the intrusive device ‘that flew over their homesteads making a whirring sound like a giant bee’. The drone – nowadays used for aerial shots – is a welcome and convenient filming and surveillance device, but with associated political and ethical implications and ambiguities. When used by state institutions such as the military, intelligence and defence forces, its roles and purposes are obvious. However, when filmmakers and hunters use this technology there are several problematiques. The use of drones can breach all notions of ethics when filmmakers film without permission and disregard people’s privacy and integrity, especially when the filmed are presumed to be ignorant of the nature and purpose of the invasive technologies.

During the visit for editing in Gweru, we introduced Knowledge, Anita, Kwenzakhele and Denis to how to operate a drone for filming. While the other three were timid about handling or operating the instrument, Knowledge manoeuvred it with characteristic enthusiasm and curiosity, watching activities on campus on the screen. On his return to Sabase, he told others about the drone. When we visited the village to screen the films the Sabase team had made, Knowledge excitedly recounted his introduction to the drone in Gweru, and how he realised a similar gadget had terrorised him right there in Sabase a few months before. He had been resting by the river when a drone had flown over him. He tried to shoot at it using a catapult, but it dodged. He rushed for his bicycle and rode off fast, but the drone continued to hover above him, chasing him. It left him when he entered his hut in a panic. ‘I thought war was about to start’, he told us. Several other

Sabase elderly male residents narrated their own less dramatic encounters with the drone, how it had whizzed and hovered around their homesteads. With new information about the drone acquired during the editing trip to Gweru, old fears were replaced with dismay. They suspected a group of white tourists at a nearby conservancy of filming them without their consent. ‘It took going to Gweru first for me to know that the white tourists used a drone to film us without our permission. It’s bad,’ said Knowledge. The male members requested that we bring a drone for demonstration to the community on our next visit.

The community members’ urge to know more about the device was not mere curiosity about novelties. Lurking underneath was an anxiety to know and understand why ‘strangers’ and ‘outsiders’ should snoop on them and observe them like some exotic curio. Understanding the operations of the flying automated gaze was also a way of exorcising the ghosts of the unknown and to manage alien intrusions. The villagers required the reassurance that came with the knowledge of contemporary devices and processes so that they could settle into a ‘stable’ psychosocial state in which they felt somewhat in control against the odds. Managing technology, and possibly possession of it, reinforces what Saukko (2018:472) explains as technology’s ability to emphasise the ‘materiality of discourse’. Through the possession and use of technologies it is possible not only to study representations and identities – both textual and performative – that individuals produce, but also to examine how the communicative platforms are created, evolve and shape definitive socio-cultural and political actions (Van Dijck 2013).

### **Conclusion: The End of San/Bushmen Studies?**

This article discussed the broader ethical and political issues of academics conducting research on a marginalised community and the expressive role of new communication technologies in such human encounters. The Sabase San have not as yet appropriated video-filming technologies for direct political self-articulation, as the Amazonian Kayapo have done (Turner 1992), but possibilities that this will happen in future as the San attempt to escape their marginalised status and as they respond to encounters from outsiders. The drone incidence is a case in point.

Ethics as praxis permeates all levels of research and encounters between researchers and the researched, visitors and hosts. Critical social sciences and cultural studies are informed by the lofty ideals of humanism and social justice, love, care and respect for others. The materiality of culture and cultural texts such as films has implications on how individuals and groups construct communicative spaces and shape their lives. The Sabase

San's production of stories on video, and the communal sharing of the same film through public viewing validate the people's lives and experiences. Researchers hence have a moral responsibility to bring back to research communities the products of that research. For example, the film screening was a deliberate act to return to the San people the cultural products that emanated from the research and training activities. Besides screening the films, still photographs of the San community were given to them. This was done to give back cultural resources to the participating community that was central to the production of the particular cultural text.

In countries where the San are over-researched, researchers have become introspective. Researchers do not only question their research purposes and intentions amongst the San, but whether the area of study should be abandoned outright so as not to create a debilitating San exceptionalism. While Zimbabwe's San are extremely under-researched in comparison to their counterparts in other southern African countries, it is daunting to discover these Zimbabwean San at a time when other researchers are reconsidering their relations with San topics. The Zimbabwean San are neglected in both research activities and socio-economic development projects.

At the end of yet another conference on the San, John Wright predicted 'The end of Bushmen studies'. Writing with Jill Weintroub, Wright acerbically noted that San studies tend to ahistoricise them as a people, presenting them as living in the present but as 'authentic' and frozen in prehistory. They suggest that a recuperation of the San studies ought to place them within historical context across millennia right to contemporary times (Wright & Weintroub 2014:735–736). The pure 'authentic other' is probably no longer to be found, hence researchers must be reflexive enough to acknowledge that most San now constitute the impoverished underclasses of capitalism on the subcontinent. The existential grievances of the San and the realities of the socio-cultural–technological politics within which they survive must be enunciated and solutions provided. In the postcolony '(t) he veneer of culture, language, purity and whatever other aura of Bushmen' need peeling off, in order as it were, to reveal the 'metaphoric pornography' of the 'naked, hungry, snot-nosed and dirty people' who are icons of rural poverty and disease (Tomaselli 2014:723). These are the very people (the researched) with whom researchers often interact.

Articulate San such as Deon Arends (2014:737–738) must demand and find space for self-articulation of their personal and community grievances and disillusionment. There is a ray of hope and possibility of epistemic reflexivity for scholars such as the Midlands State University team in that we are aware of the politics of knowledge production around marginalised

people such as the Zimbabwean San. We can take experiences from the region and endeavour not to repeat the (un)witting epistemological condescension and arrogance exhibited by counterparts elsewhere. The study of the San communities in Zimbabwe is gathering steam. However, it is very important to avoid the theoretical, epistemological, methodological and ontological pitfalls that have been identified in previous studies of the San or other First Peoples elsewhere. The Zimbabwean San are fortunately under-researched, and the epistemic violence that has been perpetrated on similar groups in other parts of the world is not as devastating as has been the case elsewhere. The action-research is cognisant of the epistemic, methodological and symbolic violence perpetrated by researchers previously, hence, our effort to impart skills as unobtrusively as possible in our modest endeavour to compensate for past professional injustices. New technologies allowed the San use of a variety of technologies of self-expression, film included, with which organic intellectuals can now articulate their grievances against oppressive systems, as well as their hopes for structures that enable respect and dignity for their contemporary struggles.

## Note

1. Zimbabwean village heads are part of the state administrative structure and they receive a very modest monthly wage, even though they are appointed from amongst community members.

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# La scène musicale populaire kinoise à l'épreuve du genre et de l'androcentrisme

Léon Tsambu\*

## Résumé

Dans une perspective théorique genrée et transdisciplinaire (théories des champs et de l'intersectionnalité), le présent article discute de l'androcentrisme en tant qu'ensemble de rapports de pouvoir focalisés sur l'hégémonie masculine, tel qu'il se déploie sur la scène musicale populaire de Kinshasa. L'enquête a démontré qu'assujettie sexuellement, débauchable ou « bien d'échange », la femme (chanteuse, choriste, danseuse) a en outre été soumise à un faisceau d'oppressions professionnelles par l'homme à travers a) une division sexuée du travail qui l'a confinée à la tâche érotique de la danse; b) son instrumentalisation comme un corps-machine, support de marketing des spectacles vivants et vidéo à la faveur de son sex-appeal et de ses chorégraphies lascives; c) une rémunération aléatoire; bref, une précarisation sociale, culturelle, psychologique amenuisant, plus que pour son homologue masculin, ses droits humains. Tout cela est à lire dans le contexte du champ (acteurs directs) ou du hors-champ (acteurs périphériques) de cette scène. Cependant, sur cette scène prise pour un reflet du fonctionnement et un facteur de changement de la société kinoise, la femme ne fait toujours pas figure de victime, étant stratégiquement tournée vers des intérêts et désirs d'ingratiation, de célébrité, de mieux-vivre (en Europe), ou d'inversion de la domination – sans toujours y parvenir.

## Abstract

From a gendered and transdisciplinary theoretical perspective (field theory and intersectionality), this study discusses androcentrism as a set of male hegemony power relations, as they unfold on the Kinshasa popular music scene. The study shows that as sexually subjugated, expendable or "exchange goods", women (singers, backing singers, dancers) are also subjected to professional oppression by men through: a) a gendered division of work that confines them

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to the erotic task of dancing; b) their instrumentalization as machine-bodies, a marketing medium for live and video shows thanks to their sex appeal and their lascivious choreographies; c) random remuneration. In short, more than their male counterparts, they are subjected to a social, cultural, and psychological precariousness that infringes on their human rights. All of this should be seen in the context of field (direct actors) or off-the-field (peripheral actors) of this scene. However, on this music scene that is a reflection of the functioning and a factor of change in Kinshasa society, women still do not appear as victims, being strategically turned towards interests and desires of ingratiation, fame, better living (in Europe), or, without always succeeding, an inversion of domination patterns.

## **Introduction**

La musique populaire, celle des bars, de la télévision, des plaisirs profanes ou religieux, est constitutive des armoiries sonores de la ville de Kinshasa, capitale culturelle et politique de la République démocratique du Congo. Et sur la scène profane dont il est question ici, la femme, à titre d'artiste, de muse, de fan ou de consommatrice, apporte une touche érotique. Mais ce constat est loin de balayer le paradoxe entre cette érotisation féminine, d'une part, et la domination masculine dont elle fait l'objet, d'autre part.

Ainsi cette étude cherche-t-elle à démontrer le développement des rapports sociaux de sexe sur la scène musicale populaire kinoise (de Kinshasa) pour enfin comprendre et expliquer l'androcentrisme en tant qu'ensemble de rapports de pouvoir focalisés sur la domination masculine, mais sous-tendus par des rapports de collaboration et de connivence. Ces rapports seront observables, en interférence avec le « hors-champ » musical, d'abord à l'intérieur des groupes (comme rapports verticaux et horizontaux) ; puis entre les groupes musicaux ou les leaders qui, dans le contexte des luttes symboliques pour le leadership, convertissent les femmes ou filles (chanteuses, choristes, danseuses) en « objets d'échange » (Sow 1997) disputés, à savoir en « personnel débauchable ». L'étude se concentre en même temps sur les stratégies d'inversion de l'androcentrisme mobilisées par les femmes.

Faisant pourtant les choux gras des médias, la scène de la musique populaire congolo-kinoise a très peu intéressé les chercheurs et universitaires, en dépit de quelques travaux grand public et académiques dont la plupart portent sur la biographie des auteurs (Lonoh 1969 ; Ewens 1994 ; Matoko 1999 ; Mpisi 2004 ; Gakosso 2002 ; Nimy 2007), le contenu des chansons (Tshonga 1984 ; Debhovampi 1997 ; Trapido 2010 ; Tsambu 2013 ; Manda 2011), l'histoire de cette musique (Lonoh 1969 ; Bemba 1984 ; Manda 1996 ; Stewart 2000), la violence du champ musical (Tsambu 2004, 2012) ou l'ethnographie politique et sociale de ce champ (White 2008).

La thématique du genre, quant à elle, a été abordée en pointillé, d'abord dans une sociographie sériée de chansons (Tshonga 1982, 1984, etc.), ensuite dans deux réflexions (Tsambu 2001, 2009) sur la présence de la femme en scène et hors scène. Trapido (2010) effleure l'inversion du genre par l'usage de la voix masculine pour exprimer les sentiments féminins. Gondola (1997) fait allusion à une autre forme d'inversion du genre masculin/féminin. Seul Kuyu (2008), à mon humble avis, a discuté en détail de la manière dont la chanson populaire devient régulatrice des relations (conflictuelles) entre les sexes. Ne se basant que sur le critère thématique de chansons, toutes ces prises de position sur le genre restent partielles.

Ainsi, cette étude sur les comportements genrés de la scène musicale kinoise cherche à répondre aux questions suivantes : comment se décrit la trajectoire historique des rapports sociaux de sexe sur la scène kinoise ? Sur quel fondement sociologique repose le paradoxe de cette scène très marquée à la fois par l'érotisme féminin et un androcentrisme prononcé ? De quelle manière les femmes ou filles (chanteuses, choristes, danseuses) tenteraient-elles de renverser en leur faveur cette domination masculine ?

À la suite de ce questionnement, je pose les hypothèses suivantes : a) la logique de la concurrence qui structure la scène musicale congolo-kinoise androcentrée se fonde sur la capitalisation du personnel féminin pris pour cible et arme masculines de conquête du pouvoir; b) l'hyper-érotisme féminin de cette scène constitue le masque ludique d'une hégémonie masculine intersectionnelle; c) la domination de l'artiste féminine sur la scène musicale kinoise comporte une dimension stratégique par laquelle la dominée consent à sa propre domination aux fins de renverser les rapports de pouvoir androcentrés.

Encadrée par une introduction et une conclusion, cette étude est structurée autour de cinq axes, à savoir la présentation des cadres théorique et méthodologique; la trajectoire historique des rapports sociaux de sexe, la division sexuée du travail et l'androcentrisme de la scène kinoise; le marketing sexué des spectacles et vidéoclips; les logiques d'ingratiation féminine et d'inversion de la domination masculine.

## Cadres théorique et méthodologique de l'étude

Il s'agit ici de mettre en exergue les approches théoriques qui ont aidé à la mise en relation des concepts clés, soit des variables émanant des questions de recherche et des hypothèses qui sous-tendent l'entreprise interprétative et explicative de la réalité empirique, d'une part. Et d'autre part, de procéder à l'exposition de la démarche intellectuelle de l'enquête et de la nature des données empiriques nécessaires à l'évaluation des hypothèses.

## **Cadre théorique**

En dépit de la nuance qu'il importe d'apprécier entre les expressions « études de genre » et « études sur le genre », le genre lui-même – dans la première expression – est considéré « comme un cadre d'analyse, un regard, une "lentille" ou des "lunettes" posées sur l'ensemble du monde social » (O'Brien, cité en note infrapaginale par Rennes 2016:13), soit une approche théorique. C'est ainsi que Clair (2015:8) écrit :

Dans un monde qui s'entête à masquer les rapports de pouvoir, on montrera combien ces lunettes sont indispensables, mettant au jour un angle mort que les autres lunettes sociologiques ne savent pas réfléchir.

Mais elle légifère tout de suite sur l'impératif de sortir du cercle vicieux qui consisterait à expliquer le genre par le genre, pour mettre à contribution « ses dialogues et malentendus avec les autres paradigmes sociologiques » (Clair 2015:11). C'est à ce titre que la théorie des champs sociaux de Bourdieu et celle de l'intersectionnalité ont été articulées avec l'analyse de genre.

Dès lors, théoriquement, je considère à la lumière de Bourdieu la scène musicale sous étude comme un champ social, genré. En d'autres termes, un espace sur lequel se déclinent des luttes genrées, soit focalisées sur les « corps » masculins et féminins, la « sexualité » et les « rapports sociaux de sexe » asymétriques qui se construisent dans le contexte du fonctionnement du champ. De manière classique, cette scène constitue un champ de forces sociales dont les agents, occupant des positions hiérarchisées et asymétriques, sont d'une part dominants et d'autre part dominés. Ce qui donne lieu à au moins trois positions sociales : la domination, la subordination et l'homologie. Ces agents entrent en compétition autour du capital spécifique de leur champ, pris pour l'enjeu des luttes, en mobilisant des stratégies à partir de leur *habitus*, visant ainsi à maintenir, à renforcer (conservation) ou à transformer et renverser (subversion) les rapports de force au sein du champ.

Il faut alors noter qu'« on peut refuser de voir dans la stratégie le produit d'un programme inconscient sans en faire le produit d'un calcul conscient et rationnel » (Bourdieu 1987:79), « que l'agent n'est jamais complètement le sujet de ses pratiques » (Bourdieu 1997:166), car partagé entre la liberté d'agir et les contraintes structurales de l'action.

Ce capital spécifique du champ musical scénique n'est rien d'autre que le capital symbolique – la domination symbolique, la célébrité, la popularité, les honneurs sociaux, le charisme artistique – propre à un champ de production des biens symboliques (chansons, disques, concerts, danses, vidéoclips).

Le champ de la scène musicale populaire sous étude est alors constitué d'artistes professionnels (agents centraux) : catégorisés en employeurs et

en employés. La compétition se déroule au sein des groupes (sous-champ orchestral) et entre groupes ou leaders de groupe (sous-champ de la starité) : elle consacre la « guerre des stars », ou « guerre de leadership ». À l'intérieur du groupe la femme, conscientement ou inconsciemment, est en confrontation avec l'homme qui cherche à la minorer pour un enjeu perçu directement comme sexuel ou sexiste, mais qui au final reste symbolique au nom de l'idéologie androcentrique. Or même dans les luttes de leadership, les rapports sociaux de sexe s'imposent, dès lors que la femme ou la jeune fille (chanteuse, choriste ou danseuse) débauchable y est prise au piège et instrumentalisée pour le même enjeu artistico-symbolique : préserver ou accumuler du charisme, du pouvoir symbolique vis-à-vis de la vedette rivale.

Quant au « hors-champ », il constitue un hiatus dans la théorie des champs de Bourdieu, d'après Lahire (2001:35) : « La théorie des champs montre donc peu d'intérêt pour la vie hors-scène ou hors-champ des agents luttant au sein d'un champ. » Mais dans cette étude, le « hors-champ », le « contre-champ » ou le « hors-scène » constitue l'univers d'analyse à l'opposé de la population d'enquête, et peut s'entendre ici dans le sens de ce que Bourdieu nomme l'autonomie relative de tout champ, c'est-à-dire la dépendance virtuelle du champ vis-à-vis d'un autre champ ou de l'espace social. Mais il peut encore s'agir ici des sous-champs de l'industrie musicale. C'est là qu'interviennent les agents périphériques ou auxiliaires de la « scène musicale » (producteurs, sponsors, mécènes, fans, médias...), luttant pour des enjeux particuliers ou paramusicaux, qui interagissent avec les artistes et apportent soit à la musique, soit à la scène, leur soutien économique, technique, social et émotionnel.

C'est le lieu où l'artiste chanteuse, choriste ou danseuse est convertie en « objet d'échange » ; il est comme l'angle mort qui la préserve de la domination dans le champ « officiel », les voisnages ou les coulisses du champ où elle tente de subvertir la domination du champ, mais où elle peut tout autant faire l'objet d'une autre forme de domination masculine.

Et pour revenir à Clair (2015), comme l'étude du genre ne peut se contenter du genre lui-même, elle ne peut échapper à la transdisciplinarité, car le genre traverse nos corps biologiques ainsi que toute la sphère sociale. Dans le champ musical la femme ne subit pas seulement l'oppression sexuelle, mais à la fois et inextricablement : l'oppression financière, artistique, physique, politique, sociale, psychologique, culturelle, globale et locale. D'où le besoin d'élargir cet interactionnisme méthodologique avec la théorie de l'intersectionnalité (Janssen 2017; Bilge 2009). Toutes ces formes d'oppression « s'alimentent et se construisent mutuellement », sans possibilité de hiérarchisation (Janssen 2017:2-3).

L'intersectionnalité renvoie à une théorie transdisciplinaire visant à appréhender la complexité des identités et des inégalités sociales par une *approche intégrée*. Elle réfute le cloisonnement et la hiérarchisation des grands axes de la différenciation sociale que sont les catégories de sexe/genre, classe, race, ethnicité, âge, handicap et orientation sexuelle. L'approche intersectionnelle va au-delà d'une simple reconnaissance de la multiplicité des systèmes d'oppression opérant à partir de ces catégories et postule leur interaction dans la production et la reproduction des inégalités sociales [...]. Elle propose d'appréhender la réalité sociale des femmes et des hommes, ainsi que les dynamiques sociales, culturelles, économiques et politiques qui s'y rattachent comme étant *multiples* et déterminées *simultanément* et de façon *interactive* par plusieurs *axes d'organisation sociale* significatifs. (Bilge 2009:70-71)

Il faut donc penser ce déterminisme complexe même à l'intérieur des catégories, en termes de rapports homme-homme ou femme-femme.

### *Cadre méthodologique*

Sur le plan méthodologique, à la faveur du structuralisme constructiviste de Bourdieu qui opère une dialectique permanente entre la logique des acteurs et la contrainte des structures sociales, cette recherche se veut qualitative à travers la nature des données qu'elle exploite. Il s'agit là, en premier lieu, d'une série de neuf entretiens semi-directifs menés pour la plupart à Kinshasa au cours de la période de mai à septembre 2018 (dont un en 2004). Musiciens, chanteurs, chanteuses ou choristes, filles ou jeunes dames danseuses en activité ou en retraite, chroniqueurs de musique, actrices (co-stars ou figurantes) de clips, etc. se sont exprimés autour des réalités de la scène musicale kinoise sous la perspective du genre.

En second lieu, ce travail a été élaboré sur la base de matériaux d'observation directe et documentaire à partir de mon passé professionnel (chroniqueur musical de presse écrite), de mes écrits antérieurs (Tsambu 2012), de mon expérience spectatorielle (télé, vidéoclips, concerts), matériaux recueillis parfois sans qu'ait été consciemment mobilisé sur le vif ce réflexe de chercheur, qui a pour autant fini sur le tard par s'éveiller.

En troisième lieu, des matériaux audiovisuels tirés du Web (trois entretiens de presse publiés sur YouTube) ont apporté des idées pour la réalisation de la présente recherche.

### **Construction des rapports sociaux de sexe, division sexuée du travail et androcentrisme scénique**

La femme marque sa présence sur la scène musicale populaire kinoise dès la fin des années 1940 et le début des années 1950 quand cette musique émerge sous forme de musique des bardes, puisque se forment des bandes.

La femme a alors travaillé comme une individualité, puis en compagnonnage avec les hommes et/ou les autres consœurs au sein des bandes, en studio sous des labels en général grecs et juifs. C'est l'époque de Marie Kitoto, Lucie Eyenga, Marthe Badibala, Anne Ako, Jeanne Ninin & Caroline Mpia, etc., chanteuses-interprètes ou compositrices de plain-pied avec les hommes. Mais en réalité, selon Ne Nzau (2010), au début des années 1930 apparaissait déjà Nathalie, comme première guitariste ; talonnée par Emma Louise Putu Okoko, débarquée à Léopoldville en 1941 et initiée à la guitare par son mari, d'origine gabonaise. Elle maîtrisera ensuite l'harmonica et l'accordéon, abandonnant du coup ses fonctions de monitrice.

Entre les décennies 1960 et 1980, la division sexuée du travail devient plus tranchée sur la scène. Ainsi la femme subit-elle visiblement l'androcentrisme donnant lieu à des rapports sociaux sexués très asymétriques : elle devient davantage l'employée d'une vedette masculine. Toutefois, à partir des années 1970 se révèlent deux grands leaders féminins, la chanteuse-guitariste Antoinette Etiomba, et la diva Abeti Masikini. En 1971, à la faveur de la politique de l'Authenticité mobutienne, apparaît un groupe éphémère totalement féminin, Émancipation, symbole politique de lutte contre le sexism artistique. La danse se définit comme la profession de prédilection pour la jeune fille au cours de la même décennie. C'est le triomphe des « Rocherettes », créées par Tabu Ley Rochereau à l'image des « Clodettes » de Claude François, puis celui des « Tigresses » d'Abeti. Il s'agit alors des jeunes filles (à côté de quelques jeunes gens plus âgés) dont le seul rôle, érotico-artistique, est la danse ; consacrant alors des rapports sociaux de sexe asymétriques.

Les décennies 1970 et 1980 fixent l'âge d'or des stars féminines : Antoinette Etiomba, mais surtout Abeti Masikini (Olympia en 1973, Carnegie Hall en 1974) et Mpongo Love dont les carrières étaient portées par des mentors ou pygmaliens masculins, respectivement le Togolais Gérard Akweson (devenant manager-époux) et le saxophoniste Empompo Loway (mort du Sida à l'écart d'une semaine avec sa « Galatée »).

Par ailleurs, Tshala Muana démarre en 1976 sa carrière comme danseuse durant deux ans chez Mpongo Love, puis accomplit un passage de trois mois chez Abeti avant de s'imposer devant le micro. Dans l'intervalle de 1986-1997, son installation à Paris via Abidjan coïncide avec l'émergence à Kinshasa du tout-féminin TAZ Bolingo – créé et géré par le mécène Ndaye Fano mort un peu plus tard du Sida (détail non moins important!) – de Mbilia Bel (Tabu Ley), de Jolie Detta (Franco, Bozi), de Nana et Baniel (Franco), etc. En dépit de la suprématie masculine sur la scène, la polyvalence artistique de la femme, encore prouvée aujourd'hui par le tout-féminin groupe Kento Bakaji (créé par un propriétaire de studio) qu'a précédé Les

Amazones (2002), contraste avec sa relégation à la danse où Mbilia Bel a débuté dans la carrière. En 1992, l'invention des « Koffiettes » par Koffi Olomide renforcera la vocation artistique des filles à la danse.

Il manquait d'exemple de femme musicienne au sein d'un groupe mixte dont elle n'assume pas le leadership. Mais depuis l'année 2018, le groupe de Werrason, taxé d'exhibitionnisme, se fait gloire de la guitariste Sarah Solo. Dépourvue de talent consensuel, Sarah ne s'inscrit pas dans une compétition de sexe similaire, selon l'opinion d'un leader de groupe, qui exige la parité dans tous les domaines :

*Non, non, le débat sur la parité, je me demande si les femmes ne l'envisagent qu'en politique, parce que ce jeune drummer-là [de mon groupe], s'il y avait une fille qui pouvait le surpasser, ce serait quelque chose de curieux qui forceraient l'admiration du public en disant : « Voilà chez Chay Ngenge, une fille est à la batterie ! » De la même manière quand la TV nous montre une guitariste soliste chez Werrason, et nous voyons quelle publicité Werra fait pour son compte. Pourtant, sur le plan intrinsèque, elle dispose des capacités limitées. [...] seul son statut de femme a déterminé une publicité démesurée à son avantage pour la hisser au sommet. Juste une question de compétences professionnelles, parce que tant que son rendement est au bas du pavé, les gens vont tourner le regard vers le guitariste masculin professionnellement talentueux. [Entretien de Chay Ngenge 2018<sup>1</sup>, notre traduction du lingala]*

Une telle appréciation participe d'une stratégie de subversion masculine, et prouve que de par sa nature biologique, une femme doit faire preuve de talents exceptionnels pour mériter une place au soleil de l'univers masculin. Cela démontre que Sarah n'exerce pas une activité musicale légitime au point de ne pas rendre le « bon service » (Benelli 2016:152).

Les études historiques de la mise au travail des corps mettent en lumière le poids des arguments d'ordre biologique dans la justification ou le déni de l'accès des femmes à des activités déterminées, que ce soit dans l'industrie, les services ou les professions prestigieuses. (Benelli 2016:153)

Dans le champ musico-scénique kinois, il est donc question du « corps légitime » (Boni-Le Goff 2016), de capital artistique prestigieux pour mériter la *lead guitar* au sein d'un groupe hypermasculinisé de renommée, en l'occurrence Wenge Musica Maison Mère.

Le concept de corps légitime se conçoit dans « une bicatégorisation sexuée et hiérarchisée du social » (Boni-Le Goff 2016:158). Il a un caractère à la fois subversif et arbitraire qui relève des contextes sociohistoriques différenciés des sociétés. Et comparée à la scène populaire gospel, la scène profane semble moins prodigue en auteures-compositrices-interprètes, car souvent dépendante des paroliers.

Expression de leur masculinité, la stratégie de sexe devient dans le champ scénique kinois la foi et la loi des leaders de groupe masculins, réincarnation de ces « *Tropical Cowboys virils* » des temps coloniaux (Gondola 2009). Au fur et à mesure que la jeune chanteuse acquiert la compétence artistique et la célébrité aux côtés de son mentor-patron, qui lui assure des toilettes brillantes, elle fait l'objet d'envie sexuelle, risque le débauchage de la part des stars rivales et des agents périphériques du champ. On redoute ensuite qu'elle développe des stratégies subversives pour s'émanciper. Afin de s'attacher sa fidélité, le patron de groupe ne se privera pas d'en faire une maîtresse ou une seconde épouse.

Sans fusion des sexes, aucune femme ne peut faire carrière sous le leadership ou *mentorship* masculin sur la scène kinoise. Cette expression de la virilité constitue la *doxa*, la norme indiscutée de fonctionnement des groupes musicaux (mixtes) de cette scène. Elle trouve ses origines dans le patriarcat en tant qu'hégémonie masculine, « une ascendance acquise par le biais de la culture » (Connell & Messerschmidt 2015:155) : les proverbes, les chansons, les traditions, la religion, les rites d'initiation et toutes les représentations sociales subordonnent les femmes aux hommes.

Sur la scène mondiale, Martha High et James Brown, Dalida et Lucien Morisse, Nicki Minaj et Lil Wayne, Lil'Kim et BIG Notorius, Foxy Brown et Jay-Z offrent des exemples qui mêlent sexe et carrière musicale féminine. La masculinité hégémonique fait florès dans le showbusiness mondial et justifie les mouvements *Femen* et *#Me Too*. Dans le contexte local, les commentaires des médias, taxés d'« iconoclasme féminin » (entretiens de Sandra Mpongo 2018<sup>2</sup> ; de Belange Angidi 2018<sup>3</sup> ; de Jenny Amundala 2018<sup>4</sup>), et les représentations socio-mentales ne manquent pas de dénoncer ces liaisons. Ils sont confirmés par des aveux et déclarations des anciennes danseuses à la télévision, sur les réseaux sociaux et au cours de l'enquête : « On ne mêle pas la chèvre [l'homme] avec les feuilles de manioc [la femme] ! » (Entretien de FBI 2018<sup>5</sup>). D'ailleurs, les agents médiatiques eux-mêmes entretiennent des liaisons charnelles avec des chanteuses en échange de la promotion *payola* (Entretien de Gisèle Mfuyi 2018<sup>6</sup>).

À propos de la chanteuse Mbilia Bel mise en vedette par Tabu Ley Rochereau, voici un épisode de la fin de leurs amours et de sa prestation salariée :

En effet, depuis quelque temps déjà, le torchon brûle entre Tabu Ley et Mbilia Bel, son épouse-salariée. À la base du contentieux, l'album « Contre ma volonté », une composition de Rochereau Tabu Ley, l'absence de transparence dans la gestion de l'orchestre, le recrutement de Faya Tess et enfin, le mélange du genre entre amour et travail. Mbilia Bel quitte peu de temps après Tabu Ley et se rend en France. (URC 2012)

Il est donc clair qu'outre les questions d'argent, des scènes de jalousie s'éclatent au sein des groupes lorsque les femmes sont nombreuses, ou que la première ou l'unique, qui se croit «corps légitime», se sent exacerbée par la libido débordante – jusque dans les «bassins» des (autres) danseuses – du leader. Certaines danseuses vont jusqu'à entrer successivement en altercation avec l'épouse légitime du leader et son épouse-chanteuse-salariée (Entretien de Yolande Litalia<sup>7</sup>).

Ce qui précède signifie que sur le plan des rapports sociaux de sexe verticaux, les danseuses, à côté des chanteuses ou choristes, constituent des *bileyi ya mokonzi*, repas du chef dont elles tatouent le nom sur leurs cuisses : la plus belle ou la plus sexy, généralement sous le masque de «cheffe des danseuses», deviendra une sorte de maîtresse officielle. Mais il n'est pas rare que l'une ou l'autre soit enceinte de son patron, proxénète potentiel, ou soit forcée à l'avortement.

Enviées ou courtisées en sourdine au sein du groupe d'appartenance ou extérieur, et par les agents périphériques ou auxiliaires (sous-champ, hors-champ ou contre-champ), les danseuses constituent un appât pour hameçonner un producteur réticent, autant qu'un riche donateur. Leur débauchage par une star rivale, loin d'être toujours une stratégie féminine de subversion, devient une manière de torpiller le charisme d'un concurrent, faisant ainsi circuler les femmes comme des biens d'échange entre les groupes ou leurs leaders respectifs.

Bourdieu fait de la domination masculine et scolaire, la forme par excellence de la violence symbolique. Or l'enquête dévoile ici une forme de violence physico-sexuelle, «une somatisation des rapports de domination» (Bourdieu 1990:2) qui place le personnel artistique féminin dans des rapports charnels ancillaires avec le patron de groupe. Et cette domination s'articule indistinctement avec la domination financière, sociale, face à un travail mal rémunéré et taxé de prostitution camouflée.

Dans un groupe bien connu, le recours à la biopolitique foucaldienne demeure très manifeste. Elle vise à la disciplinarisation des corps et des esprits afin de les rendre dociles au leader, mais fait du champ musico-scénique kinois un espace social sexiste et discriminatoire, laissant plus de liberté au personnel masculin en imposant plus de contraintes humiliantes au personnel féminin : tête rase, bannissement du maquillage, tenue de scène sexy, sédentarisation au domicile du patron dont la famille est basée en Europe, restriction des liens de voisinage entre danseuses, «séquestration» à l'hôtel lors des tournées occidentales, ou dans un véhicule avant et après le concert à Kinshasa (Entretien de Pamela Bemongo<sup>8</sup>), grossesses indésirables, avortements forcés, etc., autant des preuves de l'intersectionnalité de l'oppression.

Cependant, sans sentiments d'homophobie, l'avènement de l'homosexualité sur la scène kinoise, outre sa participation à la métaphorisation subversive du genre, montre comment certains artistes masculins sont à leur tour en butte à une domination sexuelle masculine de leur patron, au-delà d'autres formes d'oppression, notamment financière.

Après une carrière en dents de scie chez Wazekwa, puis chez Karmapa, devenue fille-mère d'un amour de jeunesse, avachie et souffreteuse, N. P. traversa un passage à vide jusqu'au jour où, accompagnant une amie danseuse qui reprenait du service au sein de son groupe, elle fut sur-le-champ embauchée par le patron. Son nouvel employeur, sans atermoiement, lui présenta le « règlement d'ordre intérieur » :

*« Oh ! toi tu es danseuse, tu danses dans quel groupe ? » Je lui ai dit que je dansais, mais j'ai mis un bémol à ma carrière ces derniers jours. « Oh, vraiment ! ? Quel est ton nom ? » Je lui ai répondu en disant « N. » [...] « C'est bon ! Maintenant, tu connais les normes d'ici ? Il te faut faire couper les cheveux ». Ah, imagine-toi que je ne m'y attendais pas ! Le seul orchestre et le seul leader en face de moi... je ne pouvais pas croire que moi-là j'étais en face de vieux R. Il dit : « Ici telles que les choses se passent, il faut te faire couper les cheveux, il faut tête rase. En plus, comme vous l'entendez dire à la cité, ici c'est un cachot, ici c'est un cachot, les gens ne sortent pas. Telle que tu es entrée ici, c'est pour toujours. Plus encore, tes copains de la rue, oublie-les quoi ! Va leur dire que là-haut on va vivre dans l'enfermement définitif. [...] Tu as le libre choix, soit tu entres, soit tu n'entres pas. » Moi, tellement que j'étais dans l'embarras du choix, je suis allée pour un intérêt, à savoir gagner un salaire pour me procurer des médicaments, prendre soin de moi [...], je n'avais pas le choix, j'ai accepté les conditionnalités. [Entretien de N. P. 2018<sup>9</sup>, traduction du lingala]*

Comme plusieurs anciennes danseuses, N. P. a avoué qu'elle entretenait des relations sexuelles avec son dernier patron au cours de sa carrière. Dans une enquête antérieure (Tsambu 2009), une danseuse déclara avoir échappé à un viol collectif planifié par les sbires du leader du groupe. Les filles sont victimes de la précarité professionnelle :

Dans le cadre du travail, qu'elle ait cédé après une longue phase de harcèlement ou qu'elle ait été violée subitement, par surprise, la victime est d'autant plus captive que sa situation d'emploi est précaire. (Jaspard 2011:67)

Mais il faut au départ noter l'émerveillement de la petite N. P. devant la starité de « R ». Les patrons de groupe exploitent la détresse de leurs employées, dont certaines entrent dans le métier à 14 ans, et l'idolâtrie qu'elles leur vouent au point que leur soumission, par effet alchimique, est, selon Bourdieu, « spontanée et extorquée » (Chauviré & Fontaine 2003:34). Le consentement, le comportement aguichant qu'elles affichent vis-à-vis du

leader m'incitent à ne pas considérer les femmes comme systématiquement des victimes, mais aussi comme des acteurs (*agency*), à l'instar de l'analyse menée par Utas (2005) sur la guerre civile au Liberia.

Au final, à propos du salaire des danseuses, dont nombre assument des charges sociales, voici sa réelle structure chez Koffi Olomide, le seul à l'assurer à Kinshasa : 50 \$ pour la recrue, 100 \$ à 150 \$ pour l'ancienne, et 200 \$ pour la cheffe de danse. Or, selon la victime du célèbre coup de pied de son « patron » à l'aéroport Jomo Kenyatta, le salaire durant ses 16 ans de service dépendait encore du facteur chance au sein de ce groupe (Entretien de Pamela Bemongo<sup>10</sup>).

### **Le marketing sexué des spectacles et vidéos musicaux de la scène kinoise**

La pratique musicale passe entre autres par des apparitions scéniques. Il arrive très souvent que ces dernières soient filmées et converties en vidéoconcerts. De même que les disques sont vite traduits en vidéoclips. Tous ces produits, originaux comme dérivés, constituent de la marchandise qui génère du profit. Ainsi peut être compensé le manque à gagner causé par la piraterie, qui a pris la vitesse du laser. Assujetties sexuellement, les danseuses le sont aussi économiquement puisque leurs corps doivent servir à la production des richesses. Pour Foucault, cité et commenté par Muchembled (1978:231) : « “le corps [féminin] ne devient force utile que s'il est à la fois corps productif et assujetti”. [...] En d'autres termes, la contrainte des corps procède bien d'une stratégie du pouvoir, destinée à obtenir l'obéissance la plus parfaite possible de la part des sujets, mais ne constitue nullement un plan cohérent et systématique».

Car il existe la rébellion, la révolte, la stratégie...

Bref tout est conçu, dans un rapport social de sexe, pour penser le corps de la danseuse comme un corps-machine : « Son dressage, la majoration de ses aptitudes, l'extorsion de ses forces, la croissance parallèle de son utilité et de sa docilité, son intégration à des systèmes de contrôles efficaces et économiques » (Foucault, cité par Kempeneers 2006:78) doivent conduire, en tant que stratégies, à la rentabilité de l'entreprise musicale. Et l'un des atouts recherchés dans le corps de la danseuse demeure le *sex-appeal* : c'est un capital esthétique, symbolique, qui sert à attirer et séduire les consommateurs des productions vivantes et des vidéoclips, qui ont cessé d'être de simples supports promotionnels pour devenir des produits commerciaux dérivés.

Pour ce chanteur, leader de groupe :

*Les danseuses sont des pots de fleurs. [...] Dieu a créé Adam, et a compris qu'il faut qu'il crée Eve pour combler un vide, et pourquoi pas en musique? Si nous démarrons un concert sans la présence des danseuses, tu vas sentir un vide. Les danseuses apportent*

*une grande plus-value. Il y a aussi des gens, des fans qui ne viennent pas pour écouter ma voix, mais uniquement pour admirer les danseuses. En plus, un orchestre sans danseuses ressemble à un paradis sans femme.* [Entretien de Chay Ngenge 2018]

Si donc les artistes savent que nombreux sont ceux qui, parmi le public masculin des spectacles vivants, fantasment devant les danseuses, plus d'un vidéoclip est aussi conçu sur le ton érotique aux fins de titiller les affects et d'hameçonner les consciences des consommateurs. A ce titre, les filles (femmes), à l'opposé des garçons (hommes), sont quasi exhibées nues dans des concerts, et parfois placées sous les effets des psychodynamiques. Dans le même registre, moult vidéoclips sont tournés d'après des concepts proches du *gansta rap* ou du *soft porn*, utilisant des danseuses, sinon des co-stars ou des figurantes, en fonction de leur *sex-appeal* dominant. Ces dernières n'échappent pas à leur tour aux effets qu'elles provoquent : «*Les musiciens, ou encore le leader, ou peut-être le chauffeur du leader, tout le monde va te courir [après]. Si ce n'est pas avant que tu tournes le clip, ça peut être après.*» [Entretien de Jenny Amundala 2018]

À l'aube de notre siècle, de plus jeunes danseuses, appelées *fioti-foti* (les toutes-petites), ont supplanté leurs consœurs plus âgées, jusqu'à remonter la note artistique de Papa Wemba qui inaugure le style.

Et sur scène, en effet, des filles de douze ans [en réalité au moins 14 ans] ont remplacé les danseuses plus âgées pour «enchanter» les publics des grands orchestres de Kinshasa par leurs danses et sex-appeal. Dans la foulée de ce phénomène, l'attrait sexuel et les dangers que représentent les petites filles, pendants féminins des enfants-soldats, se sont largement diffusés dans une mythologie urbaine où la figure de la *kamoke sukali*, la «petite sucrée», s'impose comme la dernière version de la femme fatale et de la mangeuse d'hommes. (De Boeck & Plissart 2005:185)

Plus petites que les *fioti-foti*, Papa Wemba engage les *nionio* comme par souci de la relève, mais celles-ci ne firent pas flèche de tout bois, même si l'une d'elles, témoin de la mort de la superstar africaine sur la scène du festival d'Anoumabo, a démarré une carrière de chanteuse. Néanmoins, ces petites «lucioles» (*fioti-foti* et *nionio*) de la scène kinoise exercent une violence métaphorique explosive sur les publics masculins. Elles seront même courtisées par les hommes politiques. En concert ou dans les clips vidéo, les danseuses, *fioti-foti*, *nionio* ou actrices le temps d'un vidéoclip, réduisent au voyeurisme les publics masculins à travers leurs danses lascives, leurs tenues peu scrupuleuses qui laissent entrevoir le slip ou à découvert le nombril.

Certes, l'érotisme et la rentabilité financière flirtent, mais cela agit ici comme une réification du corps féminin dissimulée dans le registre ludique au nom d'un androcentrisme impudent qui révolte les féministes.

Les leaders masculins ne sont pas les seuls à recourir à pareille stratégie sexiste pour vendre et se vendre. Pire, il est un fait notoire qu'un leader féminin de groupe a poussé une jeune chanteuse, alors sous son coaching, à se produire sans cache sexe au cours d'un concert donné dans un pays voisin de la RDC. Ces images ont vite circulé à travers les réseaux sociaux, même si un démenti énergique a été opposé à la réalité béante.

Au-delà des exigences des leaders de groupe qui pour le besoin de marketing instrumentalisent les filles, nombre d'entre elles à leur tour recourent au racolage. Elles profitent du plateau scénique, physique comme virtuel (vidéoclip), pour vendre leurs charmes en taquinant la séduction : « La seule, et irrésistible, puissance de la féminité est celle [...] de la séduction », écrivait Baudrillard (1979:29). Un guitariste (bassiste) a alors déclaré :

*Tu vois, chacun(e) quand il(elle) vient chercher du boulot, surtout les danseuses, a ses ambitions en tête. Certaines arrivent pour travailler, d'autres pour travailler et combiner avec d'autres business – en tant qu'adulte, je suis convaincu que tu comprends. Elle est convaincue qu'en laissant un peu son nombril à la curiosité publique elle pourra accrocher un « client » ce soir. Le monde est devenu ainsi, les gens préfèrent désormais ce genre de choses. Mais moi je n'émets aucun jugement là-dessus, constatons simplement comment le monde évolue.* [Entretien de Shikito 2018<sup>11</sup>]

En dehors de l'enjeu officiel qui structure le champ musical, la scène est l'espace social de plusieurs autres enjeux pour les acteurs comme pour les publics (hors-champ). En plein show, les danseuses amassent un petit pécule grâce aux congratulations en billets de banque qu'elles reçoivent du public qui, dans les normes congolaises, accède jusque sur le plateau scénique. À défaut, certaines danseuses, voire chanteuses, vont dans la nef de la salle danser sous la barbe de leur public afin de forcer des gestes de largesse et provoquer son éveil libidinal. Au final, il est toujours hasardeux de placer les femmes du côté des victimes (Utas 2005), car elles savent parfois tirer leur épingle du jeu, et contourner la domination masculine quand il le faut :

Une fille doit montrer ce qu'elle a à vendre. Elle doit exposer sa marchandise. [...] On croyait avoir compris qu'un droit féminin intangible est de ne se déshabiller que devant celui (ou celle) qu'on a choisi pour ce faire. Mais non. Il est impératif d'esquisser le déshabillage à tout instant. Qui garde à couvert ce qu'il met sur le marché n'est pas un marchand loyal. (Badiou, cité par Chollet 2015:181)

Par ailleurs, dans ces rapports sociaux de sexe, vus sous l'angle des rapports de pouvoir, l'on note absolument l'écart d'accoutrement entre les hommes, bien costumés, et les filles, en tenue de nature à provoquer la concupiscence, restant ainsi assujetties au rôle de charme très exploité dans la vocation publicitaire et de marketing assignée au clip. Le même rôle revient à l'« amante du héros

hollywoodien », une espèce de *co-star* qui ne danse ou ne joue la fiction qu'avec le leader-star du groupe. Elle est plus ou moins placée en posture de poupée érotique (clips *Babou* (Koffi Olomide), *Mimo* (Emeneya), *Orgasy* (Fally Ipupa) avec qui, sur le plan scénographique, le « héros hollywoodien » entre métaphoriquement en fusion sexuelle. Mais sur le plan fictionnel, la danseuse ou l'« amante » désire le public, pour qui elle s'exhibe, autant qu'elle est désirée par ce dernier et par la star-leader qui en fait son égérie et son amante onirique ou réelle. Il n'est pas rare qu'elle soit convertie en « *marchandise revendue aux enchères à Brazzaville ou à Kinshasa* » (Entretien de Charité Zamba 2018<sup>12</sup>).

Bref, au concert comme dans les clips, le corps féminin devient un corps-décor, corps-objet, réifié, ce qui nous révèle comment les hommes cherchent à reproduire les structures de domination sur les femmes sociologiquement confinées aux tâches de la domesticité, du « plaisir, du paraître » (Bourdieu 2002:135).

### **De l'ingratiation féminine au défi d'inversion de l'androcentrisme de la scène musicale**

La dynamique de groupe enseigne que les membres subalternes s'engagent souvent dans un processus d'« ingratiation ».

Dans la condition d'*ingratiation*, et sur les dimensions qui sont en rapport avec la différence hiérarchique, les participants de bas statut recherchent la conformité avec le partenaire de haut statut, tandis que ce dernier recherche la différenciation. Le comportement des subordonnés semble ainsi relever d'une tactique visant à gagner la bienveillance du dirigeant. (Lorenzi-Cioldi 2002:157-158)

Au sein du groupe, les danseuses, chanteuses ou choristes, comme les employés, recherchent les bonnes grâces du leader, du dominant : cet « objet mis à la place de leur idéal du moi (le chef) », selon Lacan (Roudinesco 1993:234), auquel elles cherchent à s'identifier. C'est « la thèse freudienne du primat de l'axe vertical » (Roudinesco 1993:236) :

Dans sa théorie de l'identification, Freud accordait à l'axe vertical une fonction primordiale dont dépendait l'axe horizontal. Dans cette perspective, l'identification au père, au chef ou à une idée était première par rapport à la relation entre les membres d'un même groupe. (Roudinesco 1993:234)

Parallèlement donc à ce rapprochement stratégique avec le supérieur, le personnel artistique féminin reste en quête permanente de la célébrité, visant le statut de *prima donna* :

*Durant l'ère moderne, la prima donna était la "première dame" de l'opéra italien, la principale chanteuse d'une compagnie d'opéra. La légende veut que ces prima*

*donna* aient été affectées par le "complexe de la diva" en conséquence de leur succès, qui les a conduites à devenir superficielles, matérialistes, vaniteuses, imprévisibles, irritables, déraisonnables, égoïstes, obsédées par leur propre renommée et narcissiques. Les *prima donnas* (postmodernes) d'aujourd'hui sont, dirait-on, quelque peu différentes, à en juger, à l'évidence, par les personnalités publiques qu'elles affichent. Bien qu'elles conservent quelques unes des caractéristiques de leurs homologues antérieures et modernes, elles ont également tendance à ressembler à ce que Connell (1987) a appelé la féminité accentuée et à embrasser certains des traits que certains théoriciens ont jugé être communs dans notre culture contemporaine et postmoderne. Cette façon de faire de la féminité [...] est liée aux domaines traditionnels de la maison et de la chambre à coucher. Les scénarios qui mettent en relief la féminité exigent qu'une femme soit en paix avec la satisfaction des désirs des hommes et qu'elle tire une grande partie de son sens de la valeur de sa popularité auprès d'eux. (Kotarba *et al.* 2013:141)<sup>13</sup> (Notre traduction NDE)

Pour ce faire, la danseuse, la chanteuse, la patronne sont tenues aux apparences sexy, et surtout aux toilettes luxueuses et à la célébrité afin de répondre aux exigences du show-business. Or ces «apparences sexy sont ainsi présentées comme un pouvoir, avec ce qu'il faut d'agressivité et sans incompatibilité avec le féminisme» (Bard 2010:64). Et puisque «nulle femme n'est à l'abri de la convoitise masculine» (Bard 2010:11), les chanteuses actuelles de la scène populaire kinoise, pour la plupart des vedettes en herbe, et les danseuses sont toutes taclées par les soucis du look, du plaisir, du lucre et de la célébrité.

Comme chez les chanteuses américaines auxquelles il est tout de même risqué de les comparer, ces artifices, tout en alimentant la rumeur et le capital symbolique, constituent des arguments nécessaires pour accorder aux artistes kinoises le statut de *prima donna* postmoderne. Mariées ou maîtresses du leader de groupe, du producteur, elles sont hantées par la «*celebrity culture*» (Heinich 2011), ce qui du coup les rend vulnérables. Quoi qu'aujourd'hui «*le look sexy ait pris la démesure chez les danseuses*» (Entretien de Arny Badikita 2018<sup>14</sup>), leurs chances de célébrité restent amenuisées, car les stratégies de leur médiatisation ont évolué dans le sens inverse de leur démographie.

Il faudra noter qu'à la faveur de la stratégie d'*ingratiation*, le dominé collabore inconsciemment à sa propre domination. Cette collaboration finit pour autant par prendre la forme d'une stratégie subversive visant à affaiblir le dominant en obtenant les faveurs par lesquelles ce dernier construit et reproduit son pouvoir symbolique.

Il faut noter par ailleurs que la stratégie féminine la plus performante pour affaiblir le dominant masculin procède des liens sexuels. Car le rapport sexuel n'est pas toujours l'expression de la virilité ou de l'ordre dominant androcentrique.

Le privilège masculin est aussi un piège et il trouve sa contrepartie dans la tension et la concentration permanentes, parfois poussées jusqu'à l'absurde, qui impose à chaque homme le devoir d'affirmer en toutes circonstances sa virilité. (Bourdieu 2002:75)

Dans ce rapport de force, réduit à l'état d'enfançon, reprenant ses réflexes de nourrisson devant le sein «maternel», l'homme s'assoupit. L'esclave du champ musical serait ainsi devenue le maître dans l'«obscur» champ sexuel, dans le hors-champ ou contre-champ musical. Dès lors, les formes de résistance à la domination deviennent plus subtiles au point de conduire à une :

sorte de trêve miraculeuse où la domination semble dominée ou, mieux, annulée, et la violence virile apaisée (les femmes, on l'a maintes fois établi, civilisent en dépoignant les rapports sociaux de leur grossièreté et de leur brutalité) (Bourdieu 2002:149).

Ainsi, le patron, dont la nudité a été exposée devant sa danseuse, sa choriste, perd de son autorité, et davantage lorsqu'il a été victime d'une faillite au cours de l'acte sexuel. Le pouvoir n'est donc pas une propriété indivise et définitivement acquise, selon Foucault, il est microphysique, atomisé et diffus. Aussi la domination n'exclut-elle pas la révolte, soit l'autopraxis de libération :

Il est pourtant trop expéditif de décrire les femmes comme de simples «corps dociles» pour reprendre les mots de Michel Foucault, trop facile de les représenter en victimes d'une exploitation commerciale ou en collaboratrices de leur oppression. (Bordo, cité par Yalom 2010:277)

La danseuse dominée détient en retour un pouvoir souvent escamoté par nombre de théories sur la domination masculine qui présentent, par exemple, le harcèlement sexuel toujours dans un registre masculin :

«L'ordre archétypiel de la droite et de la gauche et, de ce fait, du féminin et du masculin se complexifie encore lorsque nous découvrons qu'une part féminine est dans le masculin et vice versa.» (de Souzenelle 1997:254)

La danse étant un métier limité dans le temps, l'acceptation de la domination participe en même temps de l'ordre stratégique pour la danseuse qui a planifié de s'établir en Europe en utilisant son activité comme un tremplin, un passeur des frontières physiques et sociales. Certaines peuvent quitter un groupe vers un autre, révoltées et/ou débauchées en se mettant à vilipender et couvrir d'avaries l'ancien dominant sous l'instigation éventuelle du nouveau. Afin de mettre «dignement» fin à leur carrière, un procès pour viols et séquestrations a même été intenté en France par ses anciennes danseuses au chanteur Koffi Olomide qui, en cette matière pénale, demeure la star la plus médiatisée de la scène kinoise, aujourd'hui rejoints par le pasteur-chanteur gospel Moïse Mbiye.

Restons dans l'épistémologie intersectionnelle pour dire que la violence dirigée contre les danseuses commence par le processus d'embauche au cours duquel le casting, lorsqu'il n'est pas directement opéré par le « président-fondateur » du groupe, est d'abord une tâche accomplie par des sous-traitants formels ou informels, soit son entourage. Ainsi, par exemple, on va jusqu'à menacer la fille de louper son test malgré son talent au moindre soupçon que son corps soit strié de *nduta* (vergetures). Obligée de l'exhiber pour dissuader le « jury », elle tombe dans le panier érotique du jeu musical. Mais le dernier requin, le « président-fondateur », fort de ses droits de cuissage et de véto, en fera sa chasse gardée et érigera des mesures disciplinaires rigides contre les « braconniers » (Tsambu 2009). Néanmoins, les trajectoires de recrutement diffèrent en dépit des invariants transhistoriques.

Dans la quête de l'émancipation, dotées de leur capital symbolique, quelques danseuses se convertissent en chanteuses, ou deviennent évangélisatrices à Paris, serveuses de bar à Bruxelles, coiffeuses ou prostituées à Londres ; sinon restauratrices à Luanda ou mères de famille à Kinshasa, pour n'avoir pas trouvé la « Voie lactée » menant en Europe.

Mais au fond, sur le plan vertical, renversent-elles la domination ? L'enquête ne l'a pas démontré, mais a plutôt prouvé les possibilités d'émancipation illusoire en changeant de patron, sinon d'une vraie émancipation en changeant de métier ou en trouvant le mariage à partir du capital social et symbolique accumulé dans le champ musical. Sur le plan horizontal, homologique, celle qui devient le chouchou du chef se donnera autant de marge d'influence sur les autres congénères du groupe, voire sur le leader qui en tant que partenaire sexuel devient son égal. Du coup, comme par alchimie, le lien sexuel engendre un pouvoir occulte, psychanalytique, que les danseuses exercent sur leur « dominant », et qui redessine *ipso facto* les rapports de force par le bas.

Il faut de ce fait rappeler que les rapports de genre ou rapports sociaux de sexe doivent aussi se lire à l'intérieur de chaque catégorie de la catégorisation binaire classique masculin/féminin. La concurrence genrée sur l'espace musical démontre comment les femmes s'opposent autour d'un enjeu extramusical : le plaisir sexuel et bien sûr tous les avantages professionnels et extra-professionnels qu'il implique en vertu de l'ingratiation. « Naomi Wolof soutient que si les femmes doivent incarner la beauté, ce serait uniquement pour créer une rude concurrence entre elles. » (Ghigi 2016:81)

Dans cet ordre d'idée, mes enquêtes antérieures ont révélé comment la plus petite des danseuses d'un groupe qu'elle a intégré à 14 ans, après avoir engrangé les faveurs du chef à la faveur de son âge et de son capital somato-érotique, prenait l'ascendant sur ses aînées d'âge jusqu'à

leur proférer des menaces du genre : *Oyo nakomona na JPW, nakobeta ye !* (« celle que je vais surprendre avec JPW sera passée à tabac ! ») (Entretien de N. M. 2004<sup>15</sup>). « Le plaisir sexuel » devenant « un opérateur hiérarchique » (Legouge 2016:461), classait telle au-dessus de ses « rivales » qu'elle déclassait en même temps. Du côté des hommes, deux chanteurs d'un groupe ont vécu dans une rivalité artistico-sexuelle masquée en tant que partenaires sexuels de leur star-leader-sapeur.

Même les leaders de groupe féminins, conscients de la fragilité de leurs employées, n'hésitent pas, à l'instar de leurs homologues masculins, à les soumettre à des contraintes intimes telles que, cas insolite dans l'histoire de la scène kinoise, se produire en scène sans slip, outre le fait de les « marchander » avec une clientèle huppée. À son tour, je l'ai dit, dans le hors-champ musical, un leader féminin a peu de chance d'échapper à l'imperium phalocratique d'un mécène ou producteur, si elle tient au statut de *prima donna*. La tradition part des années 1950 avec la chanteuse Marie Kitoto, maîtresse du Grec Papadimitriou, patron de son label *Loningisa*.

## Conclusion

Dans une perspective genrée (rapports aux corps, à la sexualité et rapports sociaux) et transdisciplinaire, la présente étude a porté sur l'androcentrisme qui se déploie sur la scène musicale populaire de Kinshasa, considérée comme un champ de luttes (Bourdieu) entre des agents (acteurs) masculins, souvent pris pour des dominants, et des agents (acteurs) féminins pris pour des dominées sous plusieurs dimensions justifiant l'approche théorique intersectionnelle.

Ainsi, fort des données d'enquête et documentaires, je me suis employé à vérifier trois hypothèses concurrentes, à savoir a) la logique de la concurrence qui structure la scène musicale kinoise androcentrée se fonde sur la capitalisation du personnel féminin pris pour cible et arme masculines de conquête du pouvoir; b) l'hyper-érotisme féminin de cette scène constitue le masque ludique d'une hégémonie masculine intersectionnelle; c) la domination de la femme (artiste) sur la scène musicale kinoise comporte une dimension stratégique par laquelle la dominée consent à sa propre domination aux fins de renverser les rapports de pouvoir androcentrés.

À la suite de l'interprétation et de l'explication des données, je suis arrivé aux conclusions respectives suivantes : a) la présence de la femme au sein des groupes musicaux procure des intérêts artistique, socioéconomique et symbolique aux leaders qui se livrent une concurrence. Cela entraîne *ipso facto* qu'elles soient victimes d'exploitation tous azimuts dans le champ et le hors-champ, et la cible du débauchage dicté par les rivalités artistiques;

b) la présence féminine sur la scène physique comme virtuelle provoque réellement un torrent d'érotisme propice au marketing musical, mais semble masquer au public l'exploitation en présentant le travail féminin pour un jeu (ludisme) ; c) au sein du groupe musical, la domination du féminin par le masculin, voire du féminin par le féminin, est multifactorielle, intersectionnelle, mais aussi « spontanée et extorquée » (Bourdieu). Ainsi, libres ou déterminées, les filles danseuses comme les chanteuses recourent à l'ingratiation. Ce rapprochement avec le sommet de l'axe vertical, qui les fragilise sexuellement tout en infantilisant le dominant masculin, devient en même temps une stratégie mobilisée pour déviriliser la domination, sans jamais la renverser professionnellement ; d) le personnel artistique masculin à son tour (domination du masculin par le masculin) subit une oppression multidimensionnelle autant que le personnel féminin, sans pour autant généraliser celle qui passe par la pratique homosexuelle.

De ce qui précède, je conclus que je puis légitérer sur mes hypothèses en disant que la première n'est pas totalement corroborée, car en dépit de l'importance que le personnel féminin représente dans le capital symbolique d'un leader, les filles seules ne font pas encore fonctionner un groupe musical, même totalement féminin, car le genre masculin reste omniprésent dans le champ ou le hors-champ (acteurs périphériques).

Quant à la seconde hypothèse, elle n'est pas non plus corroborée, car les danseuses se rendent bien compte de leurs conditions de travail et finissent même sur le tard par les dénoncer, décident de quitter ou de changer de métier au-delà de la force de l'âge. Nombreuses s'y attardent parce que la musique leur sert de tremplin pour atteindre l'Europe idéalisée, mais aussi du fait de la visibilité médiatique (célébrité, statut de *prima donna*) qui leur permet d'exercer une débauche de luxe.

À propos de la dernière hypothèse, bien qu'il y ait à la fois une part de liberté et une part de coercition dans la domination subie, les dominées n'arrivent pas, jusqu'à preuve du contraire, à renverser professionnellement la domination, mais peuvent atteindre une émancipation statutaire en changeant de métier ou de poste artistique, en émigrant vers l'Europe idéalisée, ou en trouvant le mariage grâce au capital symbolique accumulé dans le champ scénique. Ce qui me conduit aussi, à la faveur de l'épistémologie poppérienne, à la falsification de l'hypothèse. Il faut plutôt corroborer cette autopraxie de libération auprès des dominés masculins ayant accédé à un statut égalitaire ou ascendant vis-à-vis de l'ancien dominant : cas de Fally Ipupa face à Koffi Olomide, de Ferré Gola comparé à Werrason.

Au total, cette étude aura offert un reflet de la société congolo-kinois à travers sa scène musicale. Mais il ne s'agit pas d'assigner à celle-ci le simple

rôle de miroir, car tout en répondant à sa propre logique, la scène musicale influence aussi les rapports sociaux de sexe dans cette société. Par ailleurs – l'étude l'aura démontré à la lumière de Foucault –, la domination n'est pas un pouvoir détenu en bloc et en permanence par une catégorie sociale, elle est plutôt diffuse. Les manifestations de ce phénomène sous sa forme artistique et ludique ne doivent pas masquer l'ampleur de la violence qu'elle implique dans les esprits des hommes et des femmes, car cette oppression procède d'une détermination plurielle : économique, politique, culturelle, sexuelle, idéologique, etc. Il faut au final retenir que la société ne fonctionne pas dans une dualité entre les hommes d'un côté et les femmes de l'autre, moins encore dans une dualité permanente des genres, car entre les deux, les frontières sont poreuses et les identités confuses, mieux, inextricables.

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## Notes

1. Entretien de Chay Ngenge (ex-chanteur de Wenge BCBG et leader de groupe), 2018, Kinshasa, 9 juin.
2. Entretien de Sandra Mpongo (chanteuse amateur, fille de Mpongo Love), 2018, Kinshasa, 26 juin.
3. Entretien de Belange Angidi (danseuse professionnelle de Danse pour tous et Flow Lest), 2018, Kinshasa, 1er juin.
4. Entretien de Jenny Amundala (co-star de clip », CD *Flèche Ingeta* de Werrason), 2018, Kinshasa, 11 juillet.
5. Entretien de Gisèle Mfuyi (chronique musicale à Canal numérique Télévision), 2018 Kinshasa, 31 juillet.
6. Entretien de FBI de Niama (ex-chanteur de Cultura Pays-Vie et leader de groupe), 2018, Kinshasa, 29 mai.
7. Entretien de Yolande Litalia « ex-danseuse de koffi olomide abimisi ba verites somo ya bitumba n'alya na ki impolitesse ya cyndi ». (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KMEEA2MGI&t=1456s>). 28 janvier 2019.
8. Entretien de Pamela Bemongo 1 – « Koffi Olomide danseuse Pamela oyo akotisisaki Koffi na prison alongue pe abimisi ba verites ». (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-D4eICgYOU>). 28 janvier 2019.
9. Entretien de N. P. (ex-danseuse), 2018, Kinshasa, 15 septembre.

10. Entretien de Pamela Bemongo – « La danseuse qui avait reçu le pied de Koffi dans le ventre, mis à la porte ! abimisi ba vérité ». (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgHs1AVa4ns>). 28 janvier 2019.
11. Entretien de Shikito Duki (guitariste de Zaïko), 2018, Kinshasa, 7 juillet.
12. Entretien de Charité Zamba (témoignage sur sa grande soeur co-star de clips), 2018, Kinshasa, 18 juillet.
13. During the modern era the prima donna was the “first lady” of Italian opera, the leading female singer of an opera company. Legend has it that these prima donnas were affected by the “diva complex” in that their success led them to become superficial, materialistic, vain, unpredictable, irritable, unreasonable, egotistical, obsessed with their own fame, and narcissistic. Today’s (postmodern) prima donnas are seemingly a bit different, judging, of course, from the public personas they display. While they maintain some of the characteristics of their earlier and modern counterparts, they also tend to resemble what Connell (1987) has called emphasized femininity and to embrace some of the traits that some theorists have found to be common in our contemporary, postmodern culture. [...] This way of doing femininity [...] is linked with the traditional realms of the home and the bedroom. Emphasized femininity scripts demand that a woman be at peace with accommodating the desires of men and that she draw much of her sense of worth from being popular among them. (Kotarba *et al.* 2013:141)»
14. Entretien de Arny Badikita (ancienne danseuse d’Anti-Choc et de Quartier latin), 2018, Kinshasa, 26 mai.
15. Entretien de N. M. (ex-nionio), 2004, Kinshasa, le 4 décembre.

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# **Impact Pathways of Weather Information for Smallholder Farmers: A Qualitative ex ante Analysis**

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## **Abstract**

This article explores ex ante the impact pathways of a hypothetical intervention which consists in providing smallholder farmers with weather-related information. It uses a qualitative approach based on focus group discussions in three villages with smallholder farmers and agricultural extension officers to build a theory of change. Results suggest that providing smallholder farmers with weather-related information has the potential to help them in taking informed production decisions. In doing so, smallholder farmers can better allocate their production resources and eventually record higher yield and income. The ultimate impact is that smallholder farmers will have better lives (i.e. livelihoods). There are several types of weather-related information that can be useful for farmers. There are also several dissemination channels. Some are based on local social networks and others on information and communication technologies. Each channel has strengths and weaknesses and the best or optimal dissemination approach would probably depend on the setting of the intervention area. A number of assumptions need to be in place for an impactful intervention. For instance, weather-related information needs to be accurate, available in a timely manner and easy to use. The described possible impact pathways need to be tested rigorously through policy-oriented research.

**Keywords:** theory of change, weather-related information, impact pathways, Benin.

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## Résumé

Cet article explore de manière ex ante les éventuels mécanismes d'impact d'une intervention hypothétique qui consisterait à fournir des informations météorologiques aux producteurs agricoles. Une approche qualitative basée sur les informations recueillies lors des discussions de groupe dans trois villages avec les producteurs et les agents de vulgarisation agricole afin d'élaborer une théorie du changement a été utilisée. Les résultats suggèrent que fournir aux producteurs des informations sur les conditions météorologiques favoriserait une prise de décision plus appropriée dans l'allocation de leurs ressources de production. L'intervention contribuerait à l'obtention de rendements et de revenus plus élevés et par voie de conséquence, à offrir de meilleures conditions d'existence aux producteurs et à leur ménage. Divers types d'informations météorologiques sont potentiellement utiles pour les producteurs. Il existe aussi plusieurs options en termes de canaux de diffusion de l'information. Certains de ces canaux sont basés sur les réseaux sociaux locaux alors que d'autres s'appuient sur les technologies de l'information et de la communication. Chaque canal présente des atouts et des faiblesses et la meilleure approche dépendra probablement de l'environnement socio-économique de la zone d'intervention. Un certain nombre d'hypothèses et/ou de conditions doivent être en place pour une intervention efficace. Par exemple, les informations météorologiques doivent être précises, disponibles en temps utile et faciles à utiliser (lire et interpréter). De plus, les mécanismes d'impact possibles décrits doivent être testés de manière rigoureuse par la recherche.

**Mots-clés :** théorie du changement, informations météorologiques, mécanismes d'impact, Bénin.

## Introduction

With the focus on weather-related information for smallholder farmers, we use a different perspective to approach climate change adaptation research. The core research hypothesis of our analysis suggests that smallholder farmers provided with weather forecasts can better allocate their production resources and therefore record higher agricultural outputs. Though the research does not extend up to the hypothesis testing stage, it represents an important contribution to our understanding of how a context-specific and low-cost intervention can be implemented and scaled-up to strengthen smallholder farmers' adaptive response to climate change. Thanks to the participatory and qualitative approach used, our results further highlight how and under which key conditions engaging smallholder farmers with weather-related information can be impactful.

It is now acknowledged that climate change and its related environmental stresses will lead to economic constraints that will in turn worsen social issues

such as poverty and food insecurity. For farmers, the increasing burdens of poverty and food insecurity due to economic constraints will weaken their investments in agriculture, keeping them within a vicious cycle of poverty. The poor in rural semi-arid and dry areas are the most vulnerable and require relevant support to build their resilience to climate change. Lack of adaptive capacities is one of the major limiting factors of rain-fed agricultural production in smallholder farming systems (Waongo, Laux and Kunstmann 2015). The crop planting date, a low-cost agricultural management strategy aiming to alleviate crop water stress can contribute to enhance agricultural decision-making, particularly as a climate change adaptation strategy. By considering the crop water requirements throughout the crop growing cycle using a process-based crop model in conjunction with a fuzzy rule-based planting date approach, location-specific planting rules were derived for maize cropping in Burkina Faso (BF). Additionally, the lack of relevant weather-related information which is overtly understudied represents an important issue to consider in the adaptation process. Adaptation is now recognised as a key policy option for reducing the negative impact of climate change (Kurukulasuriya and Mendelsohn 2008). Farmers will be negatively affected if they do not adjust to changing climate conditions (Mendelsohn, Nordhaus and Shaw 1994). Hence, a better understanding of farmers' perception of climate change, ongoing adaptation measures, and the related decision-making process are important to inform policy-makers (Bryan et al. 2013; Bryan et al. 2009).

Talking about the decision-making process, smallholder farmers shape their adaptive response to climate change based on their prior experience and knowledge. This traditional or common decision-making process is associated with a high level of uncertainty about future changes, implying high vulnerability. The challenge is therefore to engage smallholder farmers so that they are fully aware of future climate conditions and are able to take informed production decisions based on their experience and knowledge in relation to both past and future climate.

Previous studies (Roudier et al. 2014) found that providing farmers with relevant climate-related information is likely to help them shape (better) their adaptive response. Roudier et al. (2014) posited that climate forecasts have shown potential for improving the resilience of African agriculture to climate shocks even though there are some uncertainties about how farmers would use such information in crop management decisions and how beneficial this will be to them. Using results of simulation exercises conducted through participatory research with farmers from two agro-ecological zones of Senegal (West Africa), Roudier et al. (2014) concluded that climate forecasts could help farmers adapt to climate variability,

especially by capitalising on anticipated favourable conditions. Reportedly maize producers in northern Benin are willing to pay for having information about climate change predictions and documented adaption strategies. Indeed, providing farmers with climate related information could raise their awareness on climate change and further enhance their capacity for (better) adaptation. Yet, this will require a mechanism to be set-up that could help to gather climate weather-related information and transfer such information to farmers.

Though the expected results are quite clear and sound straightforward, there may be gaps between providing smallholder farmers with weather-related information, having them make informed production decisions, and recording improved agricultural production. Indeed, setting-up a mechanism to gather weather-related information and sharing such information with farmers could be complex and tricky. Against this backdrop, the present study aimed to explore possible impact pathways of a hypothetical intervention which consists in providing smallholder farmers with weather-related information. The central research question is: what could be the theory of change of building smallholder famers' resilience to climate variability through access and use of weather-related information? Framed differently, what are the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts involved in facilitating smallholder farmers' access to weather information and what are the related assumptions?

The remainder of the article is organised in four main sections, including a description of the study zone and the methodology, presentation and discussion of the results and their limitations, a note on perspectives, and a concluding note summarising the findings.

## **Methodology**

This section presents the study zone and the specific methodology developed and used to carry out the research.

### ***Study zone***

The case study was conducted in three villages (i.e. Ina, Pedarou and Beroubouay) of the municipal area of Bembèrèkè in North Benin. Bembèrèkè is located between 09°58' and 10°40' latitude north, and 02°04' and 03° longitude east. The area covers about 3,348 square kilometers. The population is up to 131,255 people (INSAE, 2013). About 74.2 per cent of the population live in rural areas and have agriculture as their main livelihood activity. The production systems are mostly slash-and-burn-

based with the use of rudimentary tools such as the hoes, cutters, etc. The rates of mechanisation, use of improved seed and extension services are still low though there have been some improvements over the past ten years. The common crops cultivated include: yams, maize, cotton, rice, cassava and sorghum.

The municipal area of Bembèrèkè was primarily selected as it represents one of the major and typical agricultural production areas of Benin. In that respect, Bembèrèkè has the advantage of ensuring good external validity of the results. Figure 1 presents the map of the study area.

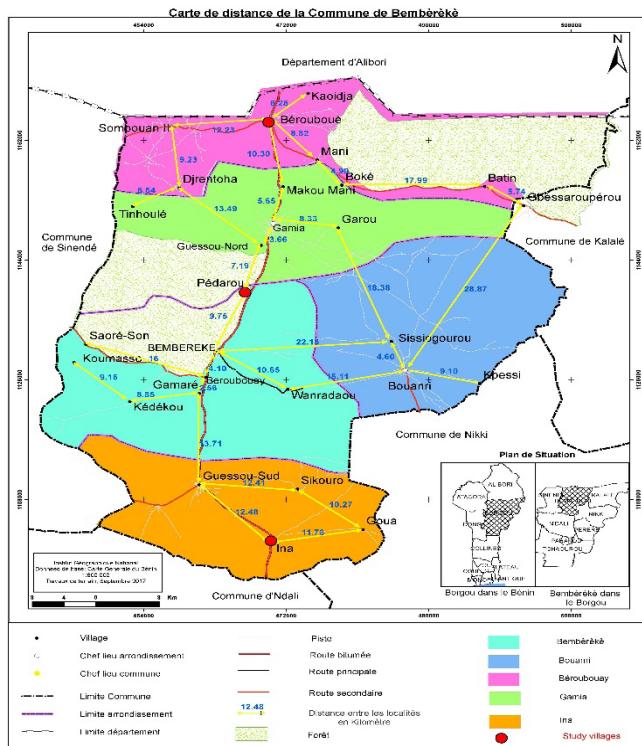


Figure 1: Map of the municipal area of Bembèrèkè

### **Research approach**

The study applied a qualitative approach to explore the impact of providing weather-related information on smallholder farmers' performance. It is broadly acknowledged that qualitative research is primarily exploratory research though it might also become explanatory research. Qualitative

research can potentially serve one or more of the following objectives: a) gain initial deeper understanding of a phenomenon (i.e. a problem, a new or existing situation or behaviour, a process, etc.) and its internal (and sometimes external) dynamics through the underlying reasons, driven forces and/or motivations; b) provide insights into a phenomenon or help to motive and/or develop interventions, ideas and hypotheses for potential quantitative or further qualitative research.

There is a range of qualitative methods but common ones include unstructured or semi-structured data collection techniques such as focus group discussions (FGDs), individual interviews and particularly in-depth interviews (IDIs), and participation and observation. It is important to note that each technique is known to be particularly suited to dealing with a specific type of data. For instance, FGDs are viewed as most effective in collecting data on the social and cultural norms of a group and in generating broad pictures of a phenomenon. IDIs are typically recommended when it comes to gathering information on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, perception and experiences. They are also widely used to collect sensitive information. Participation and observation are often used to collect data on naturally occurring behaviours in their usual contexts.

Following the central research question of the present study, a qualitative research approach built upon FGD techniques for data collection was used. According to Babbie (2011), FGDs are a qualitative data collection method to systematically and simultaneously interview a group of individuals through guided discussion. FGDs do not only generate information on collective views but also reveal a rich understanding of the experiences and beliefs that lie behind those views (Akter et al. 2017). As the overall purpose of the study was to understand possible impact pathways of an intervention which consists in providing smallholder farmers with weather-related information and develop a theory of change (ToC), the remainder of the methodology focused on the ToC development process, including both the data collection and data analysis methods.

### ***Development of theory of change***

The study used a qualitative approach to do an ex-ante analysis of possible impact pathways of a hypothetical intervention that would consist in providing smallholder farmers with weather-related information. In that respect, a ToC was developed. A ToC is broadly defined as a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change (i.e. improvement of a situation or a process, change of a behaviour, etc.) is expected to happen in a particular context.

A two-stage approach was used in the frame of this study. This included first the development of a ‘naïve’ intervention ToC through a desk review. Then the ‘naïve’ intervention ToC was improved/validated through a field study.

### *The desk review: development of a ‘naïve’ ToC*

This first version of the ToC was developed based on previous studies (on climate change adaptation, use of ICTs in agriculture, etc.) and the extensive researchers’ field experience (Figure 2).

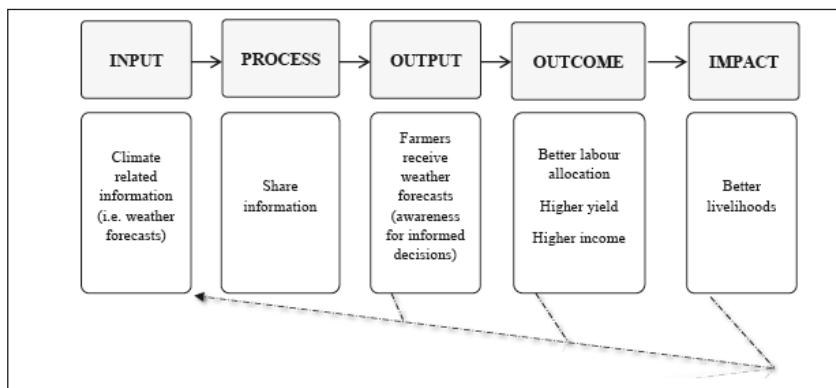


Figure 2: ‘Naïve’ ToC

The ‘naïve’ ToC suggests that providing farmers with weather-related information will help them to better allocate their production resources and this will result in higher yield and income. The ultimate impact is that farmers will have better lives (i.e. livelihoods). The process described through this ToC relies on building the social capital of the smallholder farmers through information and knowledge (here related to weather). Both information and knowledge can then be used/applied by farmers to improve the ways they run their production systems. The arrows at the bottom of the diagram indicate a continuity loop. Indeed, with better livelihoods, smallholder farmers could be more independent or empowered to access by themselves weather-related information and improve other aspects of their daily life. For instance, by purchasing a phone, a TV, internet or any other devices or services to access information. They can also afford training to better understand and use weather-related information. All this will further help smallholder farmers improve their efficiency in production resources allocation with net positive effects on yield and income. The ‘naïve’ ToC was further revised and validated in the field with agricultural extension officers and smallholder farmers through interviews and FDGs organised between March and April 2018.

### *The field study: FGDs to improve and validate the ToC*

The purpose of this stage of the methodology was to walk selected respondents through the ‘naïve’ ToC and get their perspectives on areas of improvement. FGDs mainly involved farmers and agricultural extension officers. Both men and women were selected in the groups. Each FGD was composed of seven to eight people, including farmer leaders (five to six) and agricultural extension officers (up to two). The composition of each focus group was made based on criteria such as gender and experience in agriculture and of course willingness and informed consent to participate in the study. It is important to note that local ethical approvals were secured before the research was conducted.

In total, three FGDs were organised; one in each village. The group discussions were conducted and moderated by researchers following the general guidelines provided by Ritchie and Lewis (2012 [2003]). Indeed, beyond the composition of the group, the moderation techniques and communication processes are quite crucial to ensure good results. In practice, each discussion was organised in several participatory activities or steps: introduction of the research and the objective of the exercise; introduction of participants in the FGD and ice-breaking activity; presentation of the format and the rules of the discussion; opening discussion on the perception of and adaptation to climate change; introduction and discussion on the hypothetical intervention (the possibility of having access to weather information), the different channels or media that can be used and what kind of weather-related information could be useful; discussion around how weather-related information provided via mobile phone SMS could help smallholder farmers to take informed decisions and further improve agricultural performance; and concluding discussion.

In terms of process and methodological approach, the idea of the FGDs was not to share/present at the beginning of the discussion the ‘naïve’ ToC but, rather, to ask open questions on what inputs, activities or outputs need to be in place to deliver useful and impactful weather-related information to smallholder farmers. A few key questions that guided the debate were: What weather-related information is useful for you to take informed production decisions? How can you possibly access the information? How can you use the information to improve your production decisions and, further, your agricultural performance? Participants in FGDs were given enough time to interact with each other, to discuss and to reach some consensus when required.

## ***Data analysis***

Data collected through FGDs were transcribed and later on analysed using qualitative methods. As argued above at the beginning of the methodology section, qualitative research helps researchers delve deeper into the social reality on the ground and identify key inputs and outcomes that can contribute to better understanding of the impact pathways. For this purpose, an inductive approach was used during the course of this research. At first, inductive theory does not require strong pre-defined research hypotheses and theories. It starts with either questions addressed to key stakeholders or observations, and the key theories are constructed based on the findings. More specifically, it involves the search for patterns from observations and the development of explanations – theories – for those patterns through series of hypotheses and then generating meanings from the data in order to identify patterns and relationships to build a theory (Bernard 2011; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012).

Three techniques were used in this research in a complementary manner. These are: discourse analysis, thematic analysis and grounded theories. The use of qualitative descriptive approaches such as content analysis and thematic analysis is suitable for researchers who wish to employ a relatively low level of interpretation, in contrast to grounded theory in which a higher level of interpretive complexity is required (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas 2013). Content analysis describes the characteristics of the data by capturing the answer to each question as well as the underlining reasons. It has been applied in this research to analyse text information in order to determine trends and patterns of the data as well as the underlying relationship. Thematic analysis approach is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting key patterns (themes or thematic) within data (Braun and Clarke 2006) and organising the analysis around the aforesaid patterns. This approach is useful in summarising findings, and where relevant, presenting them in the form of figures. As for grounded theory, this is applied in social sciences research for the purpose of constructing theories and is based on identification of patterns, changes and underlining effects. It is useful when the research intends to develop a theoretical account to facilitate discussions of the features of the topic under study and is firmly based on data collection (Martin and Turner 1986). It applied in our case since we intend to build a thorough theory of change for the hypothetical intervention of interest.

Based on these combined techniques, the researchers together with key informants present during the meeting summarise each discussion from each FGD to have a common understanding and to make sure of the accuracy

of the information provided. Key important aspects from the discussions were summarised on billposting and everyone agrees on its contents. This facilitates further analysis by the researchers themselves. After fieldwork, the first step was to go through all the FGDs and further summarise information along key thematics such as inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts as well as the assumptions. Afterwards, the findings from all FGDs were put together, depending on the relevance of the information to the study in order to provide a short report of the possible inputs, delivery chains and impact pathways that can be related to the hypothetical intervention. During that process, specific findings were derived as the results of the analysis of information captured through FGDs.

### ***Results and discussion***

The results are organised around the key components of a typical ToC. These include inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts as well as the assumptions that need to be in place so that the causal chain works well.

#### *Inputs*

Here the discussion helped to identify weather-related information which smallholder farmers acknowledged as useful and relevant to consider in decision-making as far as agriculture is concerned. From the FGDs, factors that matter the most are rainfall (quantity and timing), drought and flood occurrence (timing and intensity) and wind (speed and direction). Other factors such as temperature and humidity were also mentioned but not rated as highly relevant though they could play a key role in the crops development cycle.

Rainfall-related information could potentially help farmers to take several decisions that would significantly minimise crop losses. For instance, with a better knowledge of the geographical and temporal distribution of rainfall or instances of droughts/floods, farmers can decide when to carry out specific activities such as sowing, application of fertilisers or pesticides. Many farmers pointed out that heavy rain right after the application of fertilisers or pesticides implies that the inputs are washed away, and the farmers would need to re-do the application. This potentially means losses in terms of both money (to buy fertilisers or pesticides) and time (cost of labour to apply fertilisers and pesticides). This also implies losses of transaction costs such as time and/or money to seek inputs into price information, to purchase inputs and move them from the markets/shops to the field, to seek and hire paid labour, etc.

Wind-related information can help to decide when and how to apply pesticides. It can also help to know whether or not the farmers should reinforce the plants (by adding more sand at the bottom for instance) to avoid physical damage.

### *Process*

The literature on the use of ICTs in agriculture suggests a few tools such as the phone, videos, radio, television and computer. With the development of information technology, agricultural information dissemination models are constantly evolving. They vary from very basic or simple tools to complicated and sophisticated techniques. Current agricultural information dissemination models include for instance web portals, voice-based service (i.e. call centers), text-based service (i.e. SMS), self-support online communities, interactive video conferencing services, mobile internet-based services, and the unified multi-channel service that utilises multiple methods to effectively disseminate information through telephones, computers and mobile phones. Considering the low infrastructure in rural areas, some channels might be more preferable or appropriate than others.

In the FGDs, possible and appropriate weather-information delivery mechanisms were explored. Though the focus of the study was on SMS, discussions were aimed at exploring alternative delivery mechanisms. In that respect, farmers highlighted a number of potential delivery channels through which they can be informed about weather-related information. These channels include:

- *Selected leaders in the village:* The advantage of this channel is that farmers are sure to be informed (thanks to the strong social network which characterised most of the rural areas in the study zone) but there might be some delays in getting the information. A given farmers' leader could be busy or can even forget to exchange with his/her fellow farmers. As a result, some farmers might not be informed on time or at all. There is also the risk of information distortion due to translation or reporting speech. Additionally, the asymmetry of information between farmers depending on their personal relationship with the village leaders is a potential risk. This could be a source of social conflict as new forms of clientelism between the village leaders and farmers might appear.
- *Popular (community) meetings in the village:* This community approach has the advantage of informing all farmers at the same time but this might be difficult to implement in practice as it will be very time consuming especially if meetings should be on a regular basis like many

times per week. At the other end, weather information is typically quite dynamic and could require too many meetings, preventing farmers from attending to other business that could matter for them.

- *Door-to-door campaigning:* This could be an ideal approach to reach out to farmers but again is difficult to implement due to the nature and time-sensitive feature of weather information. Such an approach will also require a lot of logistics. For instance, there will be a need to know when farmers are at home, keeping in mind that some have their fields far away from the home state and can expend days in the fields before coming back home.
- *Phone calls:* This is the most powerful and direct channel. The disadvantages are that it is time and resource consuming (if calls have to be initiated by the farmers themselves) and not all farmers might be quick to understand information given to them in oral form and by someone they might not know. In the event that calls were initiated by a third party and that smallholder farmers do not have to bear the costs, implementation could still be an issue. Farmers can be quickly overwhelmed with too many phone calls. They will also have issues in recalling the weather information especially if they did not note down the same. Here, the low literacy rates in most rural areas will be another constraining factor.
- *Mobile phone SMS:* Through SMS as a means of communication, farmers can get forecast information in real time. Depending on the language of the SMS, some farmers might not be able to decipher SMS contents. However, they can still get a relative to help with reading. Depending on how good farmers are as mobile phone users, a practical issue here is that the memories of the phones could quickly become full, making it impossible to receive new incoming SMS.
- *Radio and/or television:* These media are not frequently used by many farmers. Thus, it will be only a selected number of farmers who will be able to enjoy the weather-related information. On the other hand, radio, or at least television, typically works with energy which is not always a given in rural settings.
- *Internet:* The major advantage of this channel is that farmers could browse and check the information at any time. Internet also offers the possibility to share with farmers high-frequency information in real time. The major challenge remains accessibility as not all farmers have internet let alone a smartphone. Additionally, some remote areas still lack internet coverage or do not have good coverage and therefore would be excluded.

- *Local or village kiosks:* The kiosks will work like access points where any farmers can go and get weather-related information. The issue here could be operating such kiosks. Most importantly, farmers often have their fields far away from the village and, sometimes, expend days in the field without coming back to the village. In such contexts, a fixed access point will not be appropriate.
- *Other channels:* These include newspapers, posters, documentary, etc. All these approaches were found to be difficult to implement in practice due to the nature and time-sensitive feature of weather information. Access to newspapers is limited if not absent in rural areas. Posters could be useful but might need to be in local languages. But even if they are readable, they won't be very effective in motivating behaviour changes and will be typically used to fix political or any other forms of advertisement. The dynamic nature of weather information will also make posters difficult to implement or at least very expensive as they will need to be updated very frequently. Documentary could require other forms of materials or tools such as radio or TV to be accessible.

The literature suggests that farmers do not generally receive forecast information in formats they can understand or through communication channels they find relevant, limiting the possibility of full use and measuring outcomes (Tall et al. 2014; Tall, Coulibaly and Diop 2018). To address this challenge, a participatory approach with farmers can be used to define the preferred format of the information and the most relevant channel of communication.

In the current study, farmers seemed to have a stronger preference for ICTs in general and particularly for mobile phone SMS. Indeed, ICTs offer a number of advantages and have a key role to play in bridging information gaps. They are not very expensive, and they can be used to reach a large number of people in real time. This prospect is extensively discussed later in the article.

## **Outputs and outcomes**

Provided that useful weather-information and the right communication channels are identified and selected, the immediate output is that farmers are aware about climate forecasts. The expected outcome is that farmers would be fully able to take informed production decisions based on their experience and knowledge in relation to both the past and future climate. As argued above, farmers, by having access to adequate weather information (rainfall for instance), might know exactly when to plan and conduct specific activities, what and how many resources are needed.

## **Impacts**

Following Chiappetta et al. (2015), ICT programmes in general and particularly information interventions could have impacts under two mechanisms: 1) they can increase farmers' production through use of better farming practices; and they can improve farmers' ability to negotiate better prices for their inputs and outputs. It is therefore expected that providing smallholder farmers with weather-related information would bring about potential benefits. Indeed, through informed production decisions, farmers will improve their agricultural performance. For instance, farmers would usually sow maize many times a year if there was not enough rain for the germination of the seeds. Not only labour is lost in this case but also production factors used in the activity along with related transaction costs. An informed decision would help to plan better the optimal period for sowing so as to avoid the drought spells. From the FGDs, the potential impacts identified through the group discussions can be summarised as follows:

- better plan the agricultural calendar as well as related farming practices;
- be more efficient in the allocation of labour and production resources;
- observe increases in yield, and;
- observe increases in income.

These impacts will result in a better life as famers would improve their food security and generate a surplus of income to afford non-food needs such as children's education, healthcare, etc.

## **Linking the salient features**

From a global perspective, setting-up a mechanism to provide smallholder farmers with weather-related information requires some inputs. These include staff, some financial resources, and weather-related information. From inputs to outputs, a number of delivery channels could be used. Participants in the FGDs suggested using mobile phone SMS which they argued is the optimal channel in their socio-economic settings. Beyond the choice of delivery channels, it is important to ensure that beneficiary farmers are trained to understand the weather-related information shared with them. This is a critical aspect as there will be no results if farmers are unable to link or translate weather-related information into actual opportunities or threats (gains or losses) to their production systems.

Assuming that farmers are aware of the forecasts and can easily interpret them, they will better allocate their production resources (i.e. labour). One of the most illustrative examples is the sowing period: if farmers know when it will probably rain, they can better schedule their labour for seeding. Here, it is also assumed that a better allocation of production resources will lead to increase in productivity and therefore in yield and income. Increases in income can also have a feedback effect by increasing productivity as farmers can afford new or improved production equipment and technologies like tractors, improved seeds, etc. The ultimate outcome of this process is that farmers will have better living standards. As hypothesised in the ‘naïve’ ToC, there is a continuity loop between accessing weather-related information and better livelihoods. Better livelihoods enable smallholder farmers to be more independent or empowered to access by themselves weather-related information and eventually afford training to better understand and use weather-related information. This will amplify the expected positive impact on production resources allocation with net gains in terms of income.

Putting together the dots of the ToC suggests key assumptions which can be summarised as follows:

- climate related information is available at any time;
- financial resources available on time;
- forecasts are transmitted on time;
- network is available;
- farmers receive relevant and accurate weather-related information;
- farmers trust the forecasts;
- farmers understand how to interpret forecasts;
- farmers use the forecasts for decision-making; and
- farmers are rational.

It is important to note that within the framework of this research we could not explore further and test the different assumptions due to time and resource constraints. Our hope is that any evaluation work that will intend to share weather-related information with smallholder farmers will consider these hypotheses and collect data on them through a robust monitoring system. In so-doing, it will be possible to test qualitatively and/or quantitatively each of the above-mentioned assumptions. Figure 3 summaries the revised ToC, including the perspectives described above. It is important to note that this ToC was developed based on the assumption that mobile phone SMS are the preferred delivery channels.

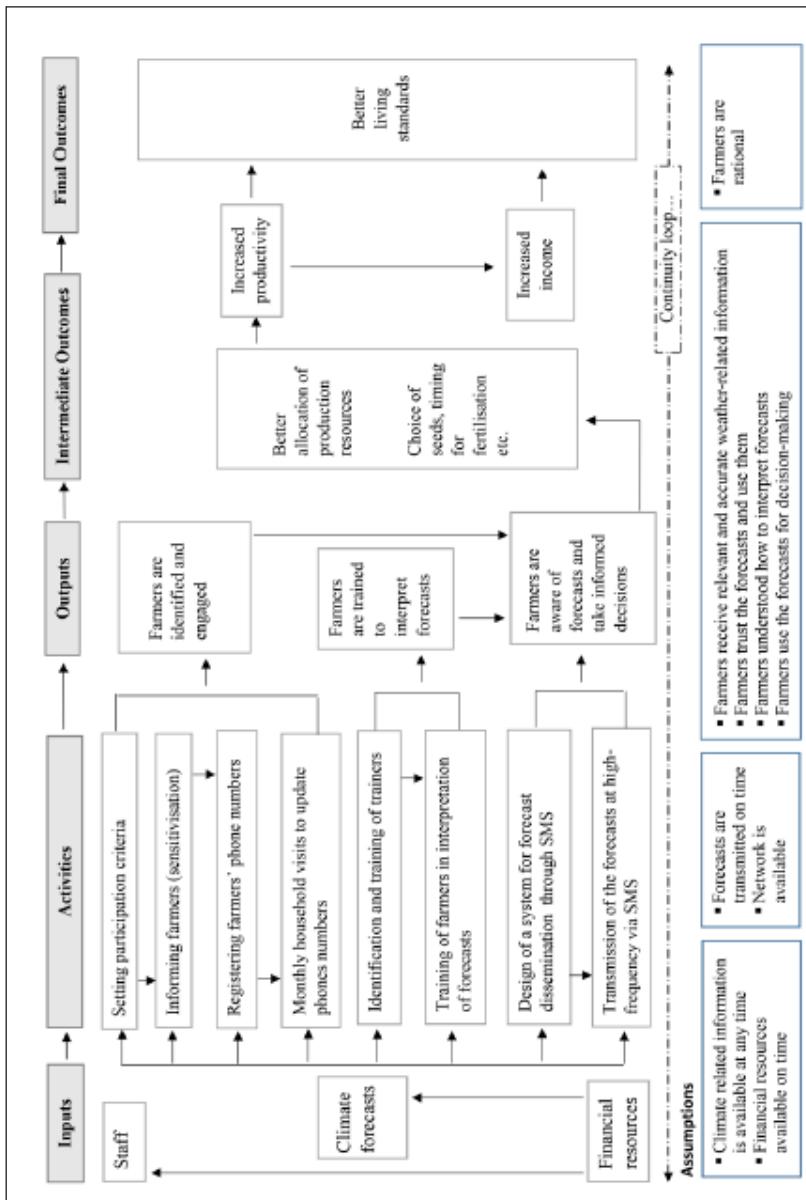


Figure 3: Revised ToC

## Perspectives

To better engage with and frame the relevance of this work, it is useful to highlight the existing literature, starting from the context to where we are and the current trend.

### *From the context*

Information and knowledge are essential if production systems are to respond to the evolving dynamics, constraints and opportunities of their environment, including to climate change. Information and knowledge can be described as critical production resources in any sector. Many international organisations such as the FAO and World Bank recognise the importance of information and knowledge as key inputs for economic development and growth that play a key role in ensuring food security and sustainable development (Oladele 2015).

Information and knowledge can help engagement with innovation and potentially increase productivity. In most production systems, innovation is often the result of informal learning processes, in which social networks play an important role, with farm managers learning by creating networks of colleagues and advisers (Gielen, Hoeve and Nieuwenhuis 2003). Yet, these social networks are not always fully equipped to generate certain types of information such as high-frequency weather forecasts and this suggests the need to find tools to engage with external information and knowledge. In that respect, ICTs can be used to enable, strengthen or replace existing information systems and networks (Oladele 2015).

Accelerating information flow, communication and the rapid development of technology is a new phenomenon named information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Koutsouris 2010). ICTs generally refer to an expanding assembly of technologies that are used to handle information and aid communication. These include hardware, software, and media for collection, storage, processing, transmission and presentation of information in any format (i.e., voice, data, text and image (Asenso-Okyere and Mekonnen 2012)).

According to Singh, Kumar and Singh (2015), ICTs promise a fundamental change in all aspects of our lives, including knowledge dissemination, social interaction, economic and business practices, political engagement, media, education, health, leisure and entertainment. The potential impact of ICTs in rural areas where agriculture remains one of the key pillars of livelihoods is largely agreed upon. According to Munyua (2007), information and knowledge play a central role in rural agricultural

development; and it is readily accepted that increased information flow has a positive effect on the agricultural sector (Adamides et al. 2013). Indeed, ICTs are now used to promote and distribute new and existing farming information and knowledge which is communicated within the agricultural sector since information is essential for facilitating agricultural and rural development and bringing about social and economic change (Swanson and Rajalahti 2010).

The evolving literature on the use of ICTs in agriculture clearly suggests that information technology can have an important role in promoting several facets (economy, society, culture, etc.) of rural areas. ICTs can play a significant role in combating rural and urban poverty and fostering sustainable development through creating information rich societies and supporting livelihoods (Singh, Kumar and Singh 2015).

### ***Where we are***

Over the past decades, Africa has experienced a high uptake of ICTs, including mobile phones that have become an important tool for communication in rural areas (George, Simba and Zaipuna 2014; Asenso-Okyere and Mekonnen 2012; Mwombe et al. 2014). This new trend is changing the way farmers communicate and the way they access and exchange information, especially among younger generations (Odiaka 2015). It is also important to note that the fast penetration of ICTs comes along with new opportunities for African farmers to access a larger range of information and improve their knowledge and livelihoods (Aker & Mbiti 2010; Asongu 2015; Demombynes & Thegeya 2012). Nevertheless, collecting and disseminating information is often in itself difficult and costly. This could also depend on the nature of the information of interest.

Despite this broad consensus, the potential of ICTs as a means for knowledge sharing and transfer remains overtly poorly explored and underused. Attempts to understand and explain the mechanism and constraints of technological innovation adoption are not new. A few studies have looked at the drivers of ICTs in agriculture. According to Asenso-Okyere and Mekonnen (2012), factors that affect use of ICTs for agricultural extension include the policy environment, the rural setting, infrastructure and capacity problems, and the nature of local communities, including their ability to use the technology to access information for their work. Vosough, Eghtedari and Binaian (2015) highlighted that a majority of factors affecting adoption of ICTs are generic in nature and include cost effectiveness and speed of information transfer, organisational characteristics

like business size, system characteristics such as the availability of and access to ICT services, and internal and external characteristics of the business household like education, past experience in using ICTs, attitude towards ICTs, business objectives and incomes, among others.

There are several micro-, meso- and macro-level advantages associated with the use of ICTs. ICTs are rapidly consolidating global communication networks and international trade with implications for people in developing countries (Oladele 2015). ICTs are believed to bring about social and economic development by creating an enabling environment (Asenso-Okyere and Mekonnen 2012). The literature suggests an overall understanding of how ICTs can have impacts through improvements in efficiency and increasing productivity. As described by Oladele (2015), the impact of ICTs can take place in different ways including improving efficiency in resource allocation, reducing transaction costs, and technical improvements that result in an outward shifting of the production function. In particular, through the provision of information from a source that is relative affordable, accessible and broadly available, ICTs can contribute to the reduction of uncertainty in activities and transactions, reduce the extent to which markets are thin, missing or incomplete, and reduce the extent to which information asymmetries can be exploited by the relatively informed to extract rent when transacting with the relatively uninformed.

### ***The current trend***

According to Asenso-Okyere and Mekonnen (2012), a promising area to do agricultural extension to reach large number of farmers is using ICTs (including mobile telephony, innovative community radio and television programmes, mobile phones in combination with radio, video shows, information kiosks, web portals, rural tele-centres, farmer call centers, video-conference, offline multimedia CDs, open distance learning, etc.). Following Asenso-Okyere and Mekonnen (*ibid.*), ICT-based agricultural extension brings incredible opportunities and has the potential of enabling the empowerment of farming communities. This matters for the need to strengthen smallholder farmers' adaptive response to climate change.

Emerging initiatives around the world suggest that there are broadly two types of ICT-based extension services: market information and other (non-market) interventions. The former type of services provide market information (mainly prices) and give farmers the potential to bargain and improve their incomes, to seize market opportunities through the adjustment of production plans and better allocation of production factors, and also to use the information to make choices about marketing (Asenso-Okyere and

Mekonnen 2012). The other extension services include financial, utilisation of best agriculture practices, research, weather, climate, and distribution and supply chain management. Very few initiatives are known to focus on weather-related information and this represents a promising investment area.

At this point, it is important to note that the main focus of ICTs application in agriculture is to meet the information need of farmers (Lokeswari 2016). The review of several applications and studies by the FAO (2017) suggests that information relayed by ICTs should be properly targeted and relevant if it is to affect farmers' production decisions. Contents of the message is crucial, and existing evidence suggests that content quality matters; and to have an impact, information must be provided to farmers locally. In that respect attempts to research agricultural information considered relevant to the needs of farmers in their socio- economic and political environment are an important prerequisite that the ToC approach developed and applied in this article could potentially help to meet.

The current work, by exploring possible impact pathways of a hypothetical intervention which consists in providing smallholder farmers with weather-related information, suggests a broad research avenue that could be worth investigating. Furthermore, a growing body of evidence suggests that in many circumstances ICTs, specifically mobile phones, are thought to increase access to both information and capacity-building opportunities for rural populations in developing countries, and that this brings tangible benefits (FAO 2017). Farmers can achieve higher crop yields, as they get access to timely and better-quality information on products and inputs as well as environmental and market conditions through ICTs (FAO 2017; Torero 2015). While such literature backs-up the findings of the present research, more quantitative or mixed methods research is needed to generate rigorous evidence.

## **Conclusion**

We used a qualitative approach to explore possible impact pathways of a hypothetical intervention which consists in providing smallholder farmers with weather-related information. The results suggest that the intervention does have the potential to help farmers in taking informed production decisions and to further improve their agricultural performance. Previous evidence already showed through subjective design how weather-related information can increase farm productivity but fails to provide suitable delivery channels and possible other impacts pathways. Therefore, researchers should take the lead and conduct more thorough research on the possible impact pathways

associated with providing weather information to smallholder farmers in developing countries. While development agencies, governments and research institutions intensively work to make and promote new adaptation options, providing weather information could help farmers to adjust their farming practices to the changing climate. This seems to be a relevant way of improving the resilience of rural households. Several adaptation options to climate change have been promoted in the recent past, including new seed varieties, changes in inputs and off-farm activities. However, most of these options have showed their limitations as food insecurity resulting from low production and failure of adaptive options to climate change is still an issue. Weather-related information can be made available and accessible in almost all countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, policy-makers need to define a clear strategy to value weather-related information. Initiatives should also be taken to support smallholders to engage and use weather-related information as a way to better adapt to climate change. Before reaching this ideal, it is important that the described possible impact pathways are tested rigorously through policy-oriented research in different socio-economic and environmental contexts.

Another important finding of this research lies in the different mechanisms through which the intervention can impact on farmers. While many intervention packages are pre-defined and based on a top-down model, this study suggests, from the intervention design stage, walking through a deep participatory process to engage with farmers' expectations, delivery channels and other programme aspects. By suggesting mechanisms through which farmers can be reached and by analysing advantages and weaknesses of each mechanism together, this study also appears as a strong case for providing information and knowledge that can help smallholder farmers meet current development challenges such as climate change. Indeed, there are several options, each with strengths and weaknesses that need to be specified. The best option would probably depend on the setting of the intervention area. The existing literature was also highlighted to better engage with and frame the relevance of this work.

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## Locked-in Metaphorically: The War on Hawking in Nairobi's CBD and the Cat-and-Mouse Game<sup>1</sup>

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& George Mbugua Kariuki\*\*\*

### Abstract

This article investigates how hawking in the streets of the Nairobi Central Business District (CBD) produces political spaces where processes related to belonging, inclusion and exclusion are played out and contested at both discursive and material levels. The article adopts the Conceptual Metaphor Framework to critically evaluate the conceptualisation of hawkers and hawking in Nairobi's CBD by varied actors. The study finds that two dominant metaphors – the 'war' metaphor and the 'cat-and-mouse' metaphor – have persistently and resiliently defined the life-world of hawkers in the CBD and the hawkers' relations with the City authorities. Further, that this conceptualisation has had adverse consequences, including providing a false clarity to this social phenomenon, which dehumanises the hawkers as well as naturalising and justifying the antagonistic relations between them and the authorities, thereby limiting the effective management of hawking within the CBD. The article concludes that there is a need for a revisionary framing of both the hawking phenomenon and the hawker-city-authorities relationship to facilitate broadened and progressive strategies and policies that would impact more positively on the material world of the hawker in the city.

**Keywords:** Belonging, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, exclusion, hawking, Nairobi CBD, urban space

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## Résumé

Cet article examine comment le colportage dans les rues du quartier central des affaires de Nairobi (Central Business District) produit des espaces politiques où se déroulent des processus d'appartenance, d'inclusion et d'exclusion contestés aux niveaux discursif et matériel. Le document adopte le cadre conceptuel de la métaphore pour, de manière critique, évaluer la conceptualisation, par divers acteurs, des colporteurs et du colportage dans le CDB de Nairobi. L'étude constate que deux métaphores dominantes, celle de la « guerre » et celle du « chat et de la souris », définissent, de manière persistante et résiliente, le monde et la vie des colporteurs dans le CBD et les relations des colporteurs avec les autorités municipales. De plus, cette conceptualisation a eu des conséquences néfastes, notamment en apportant un faux éclairage à ce phénomène social, « éclairage » qui déshumanise les colporteurs et naturalise et justifie leurs relations antagonistes avec les autorités, limitant ainsi la gestion efficace du colportage au sein du CDB. Le document conclut qu'il est nécessaire de redéfinir le cadre, à la fois, du phénomène du colportage et de la relation colporteur-ville-autorités afin de développer des stratégies et des politiques ouvertes et progressives qui auront un impact plus positif sur le monde matériel du colporteur dans la cité.

**Mots-clés :** appartenance, théorie de la métaphore conceptuelle, exclusion, colportage, CBD de Nairobi, espace urbain

## Introduction

This article proceeds from the understanding that metaphors frame people's reality of the world; that is, they activate various specific identities, socio-political and economic practices and moral-legal and governance configurations in the material world. Drawing from this perspective, the paper seeks to investigate how hawking in the streets of the Nairobi Central Business District (CBD) produces 'political spaces where processes related to belonging, inclusion and exclusion are played out and contested' (Gordon 2007:447), at both discursive and material levels that operate dialectically. In this regard, the paper discusses two dominant and opposing conceptual metaphors, namely, the 'war' metaphor and the 'cat-and-mouse' metaphor that characterise the meaning-making contestation of the utilisation of the Nairobi CBD space, as held by the Nairobi City authorities on the one hand and hawkers on the other, with affirmation by the print media. After explicating how the two metaphors emerge and are interwoven in discourses about hawkers and hawking in the Nairobi CBD streets, the study critiques how the adoption of these dominant metaphors advance and constrain hawkers' claims to their right to the city – the right to access and utilise the street space as an economic asset to the benefit of all city inhabitants.

This article uses the term ‘hawking’ as commonly used in Kenya, with the knowledge that, as noted by Brown and Mackie (2017:2), terms such as ‘street trading’ and ‘vending’ among others are used to describe the same phenomenon in different parts of the world. Hawking as a practice in Nairobi CBD streets, and hawkers as the actors, are as old as the city itself. However, they are an urban phenomenon that has been mostly reviled and only occasionally tolerated or merely officially recognised on paper but not practically integrated in the planning of the city throughout the history of Nairobi (Dragsted-Mutengwa 2018; Linehan 2007; Mitullah 1991; Morange 2015b; Parker 1948; Werlin 1974). Hawking is bound to remain a feature of the urban landscape in Nairobi in the foreseeable future given the rapid urbanisation rate in Kenya, estimated at 4.3 per cent, with the proportion of Kenyans living in urban areas expected to rise from 27 per cent in 2016 to 33 per cent by 2030 (Cira, Kamunyori & Babijes 2016). Specifically, the population of Nairobi is expected to grow from four million to seven million by 2030 (*ibid*). Moreover, street hawking in Kenya forms a significant part of the micro, small and medium enterprises that constitute around 95 per cent of the country’s businesses and entrepreneurs (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2016).

Hawking in Nairobi CBD is a complex and dynamic phenomenon, as in other parts of the world (Bromley 2000). It varies in terms of the range of goods and services sold, the time of the day it is carried out, whether the hawkers are mobile or fixed, full-time or part-time, seasonal or occasional, types of ownership of the business, types of relationship with off-street businesses, and motivation, which could range from survival to the diversification of existing businesses or strategies for moving stock, among others. However, this study is interested in the hawkers who sell varied types of goods but not services, who are mobile and spread their merchandise on the ground or improvised stands.

Despite the prolonged existence and dynamism of hawking in Nairobi, just as in many cities in Africa, there exists a ‘paucity of national and city-level data’ about it (Brown & Mackie 2018:2). In fact, Mitullah (2003:3) observes that hawking remains ‘unaccounted and unrecognized’ in national economic statistics in Africa because of the long-held opinion by authorities that street trade is ‘an underground activity that undermines the healthy function of the formal economy’. As such, hawking in the city is met with repressive treatment by authorities who are guided by the ideologies of gentrification, hygienism, aesthetics and modernism, which view hawking as an antithesis to these ideologies (Brown & Mackie 2018; Morange 2015a, 2015b; Musoni 2010).

This article is organised in the following manner. The methodology and data used in the study are discussed, followed by the theoretical framework, which explains the use of conceptual metaphor theory in the study. The next section analyses the data in two sub-sections. The first begins by reviewing data from the print media in Kenya and interviews with Nairobi City County authorities, showing how hawkers and the authorities are depicted in the fairy tale of the ‘just war’ metaphor. This sub-section ends with a critique of the adoption of the war metaphor and its implication for the hawkers’ right to the city. The second sub-section discusses the cat-and-mouse metaphor as used by the hawkers and media to counteract the war metaphor. It first describes how the cat-and-mouse imagery plays out in the Nairobi CBD street space and ends with a critique of this metaphor. The final section concludes the paper.

## **Methodology and Data**

This article adopts an interpretive qualitative design by specifically adopting the metaphor-in-discourse approach, which analyses authentic metaphors in language data extracted from interviews, newspaper content and focus group discussions (FGDs). In so doing, the approach takes into account the metaphors’ forms and functions, who uses them, why, in what contexts and with what possible effects and consequences (Semino, Demjén & Demmen 2016). Additionally, the researchers engaged in non-participant observation as the hawkers traded in the streets.

The newspaper data constituted news reports on hawkers and hawking in the Nairobi CBD streets from three English national newspapers (*Daily Nation*, *The Standard* and *People Daily*) between 2003 and 2018. The second set of data was from interviews with hawkers and with city authorities. Hawkers interviewed were from all the major streets in which hawking takes place, including Tom Mboya Street, Moi Avenue, Ronald Ngala Street, River Road, Taveta Road and Latema Road. In addition, senior officers were interviewed from four Nairobi City County departments directly involved in policy formulation, implementation and enforcement, namely: Urban Planning; Environment and Natural Resources; Security, Compliance and Disaster Management; and Commerce, Trade and Industrialisation. The interviews were conducted between September 2018 and January 2019 and subsequently transcribed to enable close analysis. The final set of data was from two homogeneous FGDs with hawkers from the above-listed streets, in order to triangulate the interview data.

Given the difficulty of gaining access to the hawkers, the researchers employed the snowballing method whereby hawker acquaintances linked the researchers to other hawkers. The researchers took care that the initial

contacts operated from different streets and did not come from the same pool of acquaintances, so as to ensure rich and diverse data. The targeted hawkers were of mixed genders and ages. In total, we interviewed twenty-four hawkers, four of whom were living with disabilities. We used the Kiswahili language for both the interviews and FGDs with hawkers and provided English translations of this data.

## Theoretical Framework

This article adopts Conceptual Metaphor Theory as a starting point towards understanding the interplay between the discursive construction and the material practices involved in the contestation of hawkers' claims to the right to the city. Conceptual Metaphor Theory is informed by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal ideas that, firstly, conceptual metaphors are 'pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action' (1980:4); secondly, that metaphors structure how we relate to the world and other people, thereby defining our 'realities' of the world. In defining these realities, metaphors can and do activate various specific identities, socio-political and economic practices and moral-legal and governance configurations in the material world (Boniburini 2015).

The choice of one metaphor over others reflects a certain worldview, and in this sense metaphors are ideological, in that they can be analysed as instruments of power and resistance used to naturalise and contest things and events in a manner that legitimises some and delegitimises others (Stenvoll 2008). Thus, metaphors can be used to qualify and disqualify socio-political and economic arrangements and developments, social groups and individuals in certain spaces (Musloff 2012) with actual consequences in the material world. Furthermore, if certain metaphors are used repetitively they may appear as 'inevitable', 'familiar' or 'natural' realities of the world.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory involves understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another. Researchers using this theory 'typically employ a more abstract concept as a target and a more concrete concept as their source', in that the concrete source domain concepts are a foundational basis for understanding the more abstract, intangible, complex and difficult-to-understand target domain concepts (Kövecses 2010:7).

Concrete concepts that form source domains include what is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell and taste. Kövecses (2010) discusses common source domains as involving the human body, health and illness, animals, and movement and direction, among others. On the other hand, common target domains include emotion, desire, morality, thought, society, religion, politics, the economy, and human relationships, among others. Urban

spaces and the actors therein can be conceived as certain source domains as well, with the consequence that the domains in which they are so conceived activate various identities, relations and socio-political, economic and moral-legal and governance configurations.

Another way in which metaphors are ideological is through the mapping process. Mapping is the transfer of certain attributes from the source to the target domain. Metaphors necessarily highlight aspects of a source domain and hide others, thereby expressing certain worldviews of the same concept.

If we understand urban spaces, such as streets, as political spaces in which inclusion and exclusion are played out, the ideological nature of conceptual metaphors can be insightful in understanding the interplay between the discursive construction and the material practices involved in the contestation of hawkers' claims to the right to the city.

The identification and analysis of metaphors is a recognition that: 'A [m]etaphor operates through the interplay of language's denotative value, what it says clearly and obviously, and its connotative value, what it evocatively and often subjectively calls up, its overtones, allusions, and associations' (Steuter & Wills 2008:3). Thus, metaphor analysis needs to show how a metaphor is used in discourse; that is, how one entity stands for another entity, an idea or cultural association and how it plays out practically.

### **Conceptualising the Hawker in the Nairobi CBD as the Villain, in the War Metaphor**

Lakoff (1992) conceives of the war metaphor as 'the fairy tale of the just war', positing that war has to be morally justified. Lakoff observes that morality is conceptualised as a matter of keeping the moral books balanced, where the 'wrongdoer' or villain needs to be punished in order to balance the moral books. If the wrongdoer refuses to settle his or her moral account, then someone must go after the criminal to ensure moral equity is established. The other characters in this war are: the hero, who is moral, courageous, rational, unwilling to negotiate with villains and compelled to defend the victim; the victim, the innocent character who lives in the shadow of the evil villain, enduring cruel treatment. This war is triggered by the villain committing a crime against an innocent victim, creating a moral imbalance. The hero is compelled to step forward to restore the moral balance and achieve victory by defeating the villain.

The next sub-sections give an overview of how the hawker is depicted as the villain in the CBD, as derived firstly from newspaper data and secondly from interviews with Nairobi City authorities.

### ***The hawker as villain in newspaper reports***

Data capturing the recurring motif of the depiction of hawkers as villains in Nairobi CBD streets was drawn from three newspapers over a period spanning fifteen years. The descriptions use the actual phrasing in the newspapers. Our focus on media reports is informed by the observation that media news is ubiquitous in modern society and is a primary source for understanding the world and helps to constitute people's realities (Talbot 2007). The media exerts power and influence not only on individuals but also on major institutions of society and government (*ibid*). This power and influence is mostly reflected in the news genre because news carries with it the aura of 'objective' information. However, news is a construction of reality based on the news values and ideological leanings of the media (Bednarek & Caple 2012; Schudson 2003). Furthermore, newspapers carry the prestige and authority that come with the written word, thus making news in the newspaper much more influential.

In these newspapers, hawkers and hawking are described as a 'menace'.<sup>2</sup> They are also depicted as 'flooding',<sup>3</sup> 'invading'<sup>4</sup> and 'swarming'<sup>5</sup> the CBD, with their presence portrayed as an 'influx'<sup>6</sup> that creates a 'sea of humanity'<sup>7</sup> 'submerging'<sup>8</sup> the city with their numbers and wares. The CBD is said to be 'overrun'<sup>9</sup> by hawkers, who are further accused of causing the city to come to a 'standstill'<sup>10</sup> as they 'pitch tents'<sup>11</sup> outside licensed business premises. For their part, the 'city traders feel the heat of hawkers invasion' and rise 'up in arms'.<sup>12</sup> '[U]gly actions by Nairobi hawkers of terrorising people, motorists, passengers, businessmen and beating up [police] officers',<sup>13</sup> are depicted as 'finally driving the last nail into the casket of the once "Green City in the Sun"'.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the Nairobi City authorities are forced to 'deal'<sup>15</sup> with hawkers variably. One way is by having 'special [police] force[s] formed to deal with the hawkers'.<sup>16</sup> The City Inspectorate also regularly mounts 'crackdown[s]'<sup>17</sup> against hawkers or conducts 'routine operations against illegal traders'<sup>18</sup> in order to 'contain' them. In other instances the 'city deploys teams [of enforcement officers] to clear hawkers', during operations in which the public is 'caught in police-hawker crossfire',<sup>19</sup> suffers 'blood and tears as police fight hawkers'<sup>20</sup> while 'hawkers refuse to move out'.<sup>21</sup> When hawkers are overpowered, they move out of the CBD and the fights abate. However, before long there is 'the return of the hawkers',<sup>22</sup> a 'resurgence', an 'influx', a 'flooding' as hawkers act on their own or 'at the behest of powerful political cartels seeking election'.<sup>23</sup> At this point, the familiar script starts again and proceeds in more or less the manner reconstructed here – as the 'relocation of hawkers fail[s] again'.<sup>24</sup>

Besides the newspapers' use of the specific forms of language highlighted above, the depiction of hawkers as villains is reinforced in other ways. Firstly,

news on hawking is mostly reported from the perspective of the authorities and rarely from that of the hawkers. Secondly, hawkers' opinions are rarely sought and the hawkers are not as frequently quoted as the authorities, the licensed traders or the public. Where hawkers' opinions are sought, these are rarely placed in prominent positions of the newspapers, such as the headline or at the beginning of the news report, unless they are negative, for instance when hawkers declare they will not leave the city, which may be construed as obstinacy.

The image of hawker as villain is also sustained through the occasional inclusion of run-on reports on crime, such as murders, carjackings or acts of lawlessness in the *matatu* (public service vehicles), carried under headlines on hawkers and hawking, yet such reports have no connection whatsoever with news on hawkers (*Daily Nation* 2/06/2006, 3/06/2006, 5/03/2008; *The Standard* 2/06/2006 and *People Daily* 1/06/2009). This strategy seems to consciously or unconsciously activate a metaphor transfer effect on readers, a proximity-is-similarity effect, which works on the basis that people tend to judge entities to be more similar to each other when they are placed closely in space (Winter & Matlock 2013). Thus, when unrelated reports on crime are included and juxtaposed in news about hawking, the suggestion of criminality is imputed in the act of hawking in a manner that suggests that hawking and hawkers in their entirety are criminal. A similar strategy to such metaphor transfer is discussed by Wills and Steuter (2014) in their critique of the 'war-on-terror' metaphor in what they call attempts to 'redraw semantic boundaries', where the metaphoric speech of powerful actors in the war on terror represents the individual terrorist actors in a manner that suggests that all those of similar religion, ethnicity or nationality are terrorists. This has devastating consequences for entire communities or populations.

The hawker as villain is further reinforced through the use of photography taken at angles that portray hawking as a larger-than-life phenomenon that inconceivably dwarfs all other urban life, to suggest that hawking has suffocated all other activities in the CBD (*People Daily* 14/07/2016 and 13/07/2016; *Daily Nation* 5/03/2008).

### ***The hawker as villain in interviews with city authorities***

During our interview with the Licensing Officer in the Nairobi City County Department of Commerce, Trade and Industrialisation, about the status of hawkers in the Nairobi CBD, he was categorical that the department had nothing to do with the kind of hawker this study was interested in. He said:

The hawkers you are asking me about are handled by the Inspectorate. This department has nothing to do with hawkers that ply their trade from place to place. We only deal with hawkers who have a permanent location, who are issued with licenses after being inspected and issued with relevant certificates and clearances such as public health certificates and a report filed by the Inspectorate that they are not obstructing free flow of movement or obstructing licensed business.

The officer reiterated, ‘other departments refer people to the Trade department for hawkers’ issues yet the department has nothing to do with hawkers’. The Licensing Officer’s comments portray the hawkers as economic non-persons and therefore as an illegality that needs to be banished from the streets by the Security, Compliance and Disaster Management department. This view is indicative of the demonisation of the informal economy, which by virtue of operating beyond the regulation of the state is considered in developmental theory as ‘primitive’ and considered as a threat to modern governance (Lobato & Thomas 2015). This line of thinking further connects to exclusionary practices in urban development that disadvantage those in the informal sector who, in this regard, are thought of as undeserving of any state support and protection. Such thinking disenfranchises hawkers’ urban citizenship.

The representative of the Director: Environment and Natural Resources said in the interviews that the department’s contact with hawkers was minimal but ‘we only come into contact with hawkers when we are asked to testify about contravention of bylaws such as nuisance or solid waste management bylaws’. In this comment, hawkers are likewise seen as non-persons in environmental planning, who come into the picture only as defilers of the environment or unruly polluters. This resonates with the newspaper report data above, in which hawkers are described as ‘finally driving the last nail into the casket of the once “Green City in the Sun”’. Just as in the interview with the Licensing Officer, hawkers are unaccounted for in urban development and are perceived as not belonging in the city, despite being actors throughout the city’s history.

The director in the Department of Security, Compliance and Disaster Management had the most to say about hawkers in Nairobi CBD: ‘The policy on hawking is very clear; check the bylaws: hawking is banned in the CBD.’ However, he admitted, ‘despite the ban, hawkers influx still persists’ causing ‘unfair competition to genuine businesses that pay licences’. He explained that, ‘the department has seven sector commanders with officers under them in the CBD who are on standby to mount patrols to ensure there are no illegalities’. The officer also said that ‘*Mungiki* controls

hawkers.' *Mungiki* was a murderous gang that had infiltrated many sectors of society in Nairobi and central regions of Kenya, and whose mode of operation was to instill fear through intimidation, violence and killings and thereby indiscriminately extorting money from citizens. Whereas it is not inconceivable that they had infiltrated hawking in Nairobi, it would seem absurd to condemn all hawkers as having been at the service of the gang. The Inspectorate department took the most unequivocally militaristic perspective towards hawkers, who are highly homogenised, as inextricably linked to the murderous *Mungiki*. Hawkers in the CBD were thus by association criminal enemies who had to be militarily banished from the CBD by the aid of 'sector commanders'.

Contrastingly, the Director: Urban Planning highlighted the department's past efforts to integrate street hawking into urban planning policies and provided master plans and policy documents as evidence. He however decried their non-implementation. This officer stood out as the only County personnel interviewed who held an inclusive view of the hawkers' place in the city. This suggests that the dominant exclusionary narrative of the hawker is not the only one, but that the inclusive narrative has been suppressed.

In a nutshell, from the interviews it emerged that the hawker was considered *persona non grata* in the Nairobi CBD and depicted as an irredeemable security risk, criminal, an illegality, a tax evader, a nuisance and an environmental polluter. This image of the hawker as villain was reinforced 'across several discursive venues' (Wills & Steuter, 2014:275) of the City County officialdom, with the exception of the Urban Planning department, thus potentially constituting a meta-narrative of who the hawker in the Nairobi CBD essentially is. Thus, the image of the hawker as villain to be handled by the Department of Security, Compliance and Disaster Management sets up the hawker as an actor upon whom war should be waged.

In the newspaper and interview data presented above, the hero is the Nairobi City County, who works with the support of the national government. The villain conflates the hawker as a category of persons with the act of hawking. The victims are the city dwellers and the general public who have 'legitimate' business in the CBD but who are negatively affected by the hawkers' 'invasion' of and 'menace' in the CBD. This notion, however, underplays the numerous symbiotic relations of the hawker with the 'victim' groups observed in our study. The primary crime committed by the villain is to 'invade' the Nairobi CBD street space and engage in attendant negative activities that the word 'invade' entails, such as hostile occupation, a mass

of people, an attack or the act of preventing others from enjoying what is theirs. What counts as victory in the war against hawkers/hawking in the CBD is their decisive elimination from the CBD.

### ***A critique of the ‘war-on-hawking’ metaphor in the Nairobi CBD***

The study finds that the use of the war metaphor in conceptualising hawkers and hawking in the Nairobi CBD has possible effects on and consequences for the hawkers’ claims to the right to the city.

Flusberg, Matlock and Thibodeau (2018) point to the ubiquity of war metaphors in framing many social and political issues, such as the ‘war on poverty’, ‘war against crime’, ‘war on terror’, ‘war on drugs’ and ‘war on overpopulation’ (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002). On the one hand, the war metaphor can positively motivate people to pay attention to social problems, galvanise action on important social issues and help mobilise resources towards social causes in different contexts, such as the medical, political, trade and climate change domains (Flusberg et al 2018). On the other hand, war metaphors may promote negative or even dangerous effects and consequences at both discursive and material realms of human society (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002; Steuter & Wills 2008; Flusberg et al 2018). It is these dangers that the study uses as a basis for critiquing the conceptualisation of hawking in the Nairobi CBD in terms of the war metaphor.

To begin with, Steuter and Wills (2008) point out ‘the false clarity’ that the war metaphor gives to conceptualising complex issues and, in the process, obscures the multifaceted dimensions, uncertainties and ambiguities around an issue. War metaphors necessarily set up an adversarial ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy and provide a militaristic solution to a socio-political and economic issue as the only viable option. The war metaphor thrusts socio-political and economic issues into the theatre of war, which presupposes that these issues be addressed by a unidimensional military strategy of attack and annihilate (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002). In the context of hawking and hawkers in the Nairobi CBD, this justifies the ‘formation of special force[s]’, their ‘deployment’ to undertake ‘crackdowns’ and ‘operations’ as the only option to ‘clear’ and ‘contain’ hawkers. Furthermore, the war metaphor projects the ‘enemy’ as ‘completely separate and distinct from our society’, thereby precluding the said enemy from being seen as a symptom or creation of the socio-political and economic system in which the enemy operates (*ibid*:428).

In our data, this conceptualisation allows for the media and the City authorities to refer to the presence of the hawkers in terms of ‘invading’, ‘flooding’ and ‘swarming’ the CBD and to preclude us from interrogating

issues such as the socio-political, economic and historical contexts and conditions in both Nairobi and Kenya, as well as the role of the authorities in creating and aggravating hawking in the CBD into becoming the social problem it is. Steuter and Wills (2008) warn that the creation of an enemy without a context in the society in which he or she operates allows for authorities to subvert the culprit–victim roles of the authorities and the enemy. In our data, the authorities’ depiction of the hawker as the enemy to be militarily annihilated by the hero-authorities necessarily absolves the authorities from having contributed to the precipitation of what is now a ‘menace’. It underplays the authorities’ role in poor or inadequate planning, discriminatory urban policies that do not recognise the informal economy’s contribution to the overall country’s economy, and a disconnect between policies that in theory recognise hawking as part of the urban economy and a legal framework that in practice is intolerant to hawking (Linehan 2007; Morange 2015a; Racaud, Kago & Owuor 2018).

The second danger of war metaphors is that they can magnify the perception of the threat posed by an issue (Flushberg et al 2018). As literature discussing the US-led war on terror shows, magnified fear can be used to stigmatise, dehumanise and other those thought to represent the threat (Hodges & Nilep 2007; Steuter & Wills 2008, 2009). Othering can be achieved through projecting the enemy as non-human (as abhorrent objects or animals) or as an undifferentiated, indistinguishable mass or aggregate, and thus set up the enemy for elimination with little or no compunction.

In the data, hawkers are depicted as an undifferentiated and dangerous mass who are an indeterminate malevolent force ('menace'), a dangerous force of nature ('flood'), an indistinguishable mass of insects that can be dangerous and/or destructive ('swarm') and a chaotic mass of humanity ('sea of humanity'). As such, the dehumanised and threateningly depicted enemy (the hawker) is set up for annihilation. At this point, the 'ever-present risk of moving from the metaphorical to the literal' inherent in the war metaphor in situations when the enemy is dehumanised may just become the material reality (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002). This movement from the metaphorical to the literal is a common feature in Nairobi's CBD streets, which are regularly characterised by acts of latent, mild and brutal violence, police–hawker clashes and killings.

A third danger of the war metaphor is its great capacity to foreclose debate and engender undemocratic culture by expanding the powers of government and squeezing the life out of alternative models of dealing with a social issue (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002; Lakoff & Frisch 2006; Steuter & Wills 2008). This is made possible because the war metaphor simplifies large

complex issues into a combative duality of ‘us’ versus ‘the enemy’. It forces the public into either supporting the authorities’ position or siding with the enemy by engendering a false dilemma, implying that ‘you’ are either with ‘us’ or the ‘enemy’. As Hartmann-Mahmud (2002:430) posits, in a time of war, citizens are positioned not to make ‘the philosophical, ethical, and political critique’, they are positioned only to ask questions surrounding strategy, the best weapon to be used and whether the war is being won. An overt use of this form of silencing is discernable in the Nairobi City County’s 2007 hawkers bylaw No. 12, which states that ‘any person who solicits, bargains, induces or negotiates with any hawker with a view to buy, purchase or sell any good in a non-designated area shall be guilty of an offence’. A less overt form of silencing is the suppression of the voices that call for the integration of hawkers into city planning and policies, as seen in the continued non-implementation of master plans, from 1973 to date, that aim to progressively integrate hawkers in the Nairobi CBD. Such silencing was best indicated by the Director of Urban Planning who, during our interviews, expressed frustration at the non-implementation of master plans which had been painstakingly developed.

A fourth danger is that the war metaphor presupposes a clear victory that brings an end to the war. As Hartmann-Mahmud (2002) has argued, whereas traditional wars with concrete targets may have a clear defeat of enemies, wars against social issues or concepts can never achieve such victories. Social issues seem amenable to be managed only, and not annihilated. Hartmann-Mahmud (2002:429) avers that, war metaphors directed at a social issue only ‘prolong the inevitable confrontation with its complexity’ or prevent effective alternatives from being considered (Flusberg et al 2018). Our data shows that there are hawkers who have been in the business for over twenty years, and some do not envisage leaving the trade. In addition, given that all the hawkers we interviewed indicated that their greatest motivation to joining the trade was the need to earn a livelihood, what alternative means of livelihood would be provided when the enemy hawker/hawking is eliminated? The persistence of the hawking ‘problem’ in the Nairobi CBD – spanning over a century – indicates that it has not been eliminated in the past and may not be eliminated in the near future. This may be an indicator of the failure of the war metaphor as the defining conceptualisation of dealing with hawking in the Nairobi CBD.

The persistence of hawking where it was supposed to have been eliminated has spawned another dominant metaphor, the ‘cat-and-mouse game’ by hawkers and the media to counter the war metaphor as discussed below.

## Countering the War Metaphor: The Cat-and-Mouse Metaphor

From our interviews and FGDs with hawkers in Nairobi CBD streets, a dominant metaphor they employed to capture their precarious life amidst the onslaught from the City authorities was ‘a cat-and-mouse game’. The same metaphor often popped up in newspaper reports that describe the life-world of the hawkers in the Nairobi CBD. For instance, *The Standard* (6/11/2014) reported: ‘Spirited attempts by the city *askari* to rid the country’s capital of street hawkers have translated into a cat and mouse game for years.’ *People Daily* (13/3/2008) wrote, ‘The security issue is mostly felt when the city council and the hawkers engage in their usual cat and mouse chase.’ Likewise, the recurring motif presented earlier, of how hawking in Nairobi CBD streets is depicted in the newspapers, denotes an underlying conceptual metaphor of a ‘cat-and-mouse game’ in which the City authorities and hawkers are locked into perpetual, endless and vicious, shifting power relations that involve a ‘constant pursuit, near-captures and repeated escapes’ (Wikipedia dictionary).

The cat-and-mouse metaphor is one of many animal metaphors that are pervasive in human language. In these metaphors, animal names are widely employed to designate human characteristics and conversely animals are attributed human characters. Animal metaphors can be understood using Lakoff and Turner’s (1989) cultural model of the Great Chain of Being (GCB) hierarchy, which the authors point out allows us to contextually map out human character traits as non-human attributes and vice versa.

The characteristics of the cat, depending on the context and culture, include being powerful, strong, fierce/cruel/dangerous, opportunistic, greedy, selfish, pampered, entitled, proud, untrustworthy, pretentious and cunning (Muhammad & Rashid 2014; Turner 2014). The characteristics of the mouse on the other hand include being loathsome, destructive, disease- and plague-causing, sly/cunning, vulnerable, powerless, deadly as a mass, timid, weak, dirty, filthy (Steuter & Wills 2008; De Angelis 2005).

The cat-and-mouse game is seen within the context of a predator-prey dichotomy, which, according to the *Oxford Dictionary*, implies to play a cruel game with somebody in your power by changing your behaviour very often, so that your victim becomes nervous and does not know what to expect. The metaphor brings together the conceptual domains of animal and sport into a single human experience. This metaphor is derived from the observation that the cat as an opportunistic hunter readily stalks and kills prey, even when not hungry (Turner 2014), ostensibly as a trophy, which is a way of asserting its higher place in the food chain (Wills & Steuter 2009).

In order to see how the cat-and-mouse metaphor plays out in our data, we firstly highlight how the actions of the City authorities and the reactions of the hawkers can be conceptualised as locked in a cruel game in the Nairobi CBD streets. We then critique the implication of this conceptualisation with regard to the hawkers' claim to the right to the city.

### ***The cat-and-mouse metaphor in interviews and newspaper data***

Our data depicts the City authorities as being powerful, like a cat. This quality is manifested in their enforcement of the no-hawking-in-the-CBD policy in a manner perceived to be ruthless, cruel, fierce and dangerous. For instance, *People Daily* (27/10/2014) writes, '[c]ity county *askaris* on the spot over brutality'. In addition, the *Daily Nation* (2/11/2015) writes, '[r]ogue city county *askaris* leave trail of death, injuries'. In addition, all the hawkers we interviewed decried the brutality of the City *askaris*. However, the City authorities consider their actions natural and just. For instance, *The Standard* (6/11/2014) quotes a senior officer in Nairobi County's Trade Regulation and Licensing Sector saying, 'they say harassment but it is not harassment. We are just trying to enforce the law and bring order to the city streets'.

Aware of their vulnerable and precarious position in the CBD in the face of the more powerful City *askaris*, hawkers project the slyness of the mice in order to survive in the dangerous CBD streets. Mice are said to be sly because of their ability to penetrate and navigate places where other animals, including cats, cannot reach (Steuter & Wills 2008). As an illustration, the hawkers said they scout for the City authorities from the rooftops of high buildings within the CBD and use agreed-upon signals, like whistling, whistle-blowing or coded mobile phone communications, which alert other hawkers to hurriedly close business, clear the streets or scuttle for safety. In several instances during our non-participant observation, our hawker informants pointed out such scouts on the rooftops of various strategic buildings. Our informants also told us that they have identified other scouts who keep close surveillance on the City *askaris* as they leave City Hall (the City County Headquarters), follow their movements and notify the hawkers of the specific streets that the *askaris* are headed to, so that the hawkers can hurriedly pack their wares, duck into hiding or camouflage their presence by blending with the pedestrians in the streets. These informants told us that they have an organised and agreed-upon method of remunerating these scouts. In addition, hawkers said they carry only a small amount of stock into the streets so that they can easily scamper should the City *askaris* appear unnoticed or, if their

goods are confiscated, they incur minimal loss. One hawker told us, ‘*Mtu anawekelea kidogo ndio ikipotea isipotee mingi*’ (You operate with a small stock at a time so that if confiscated, you don’t lose much).

Further, our data suggests that the City authorities manning the streets are opportunistic and greedy. Just like the cat is said to be an opportunistic hunter who waits in front of burrows for hours, to pounce on prey (Turner 2014:68), the City *askaris* take advantage of the hawkers’ presence in the CBD streets to routinely extort money from them. In our interviews, hawkers said that the City *askaris* see them as ‘their bank’ from which to ‘withdraw’ money at will in order not to face arrest, or, when arrested, to secure their release and that of their confiscated goods before reaching the City courts. The *People Daily* (28/07/2008) confirms this with a quote from a trader: ‘If you don’t pay the Kshs 50 “daily fee”, the *askaris* confiscate your goods after which you either have to part with a hefty bribe or be taken to court where you get charged of illegal dumping.’ The City *askaris*’ extortionist behaviour projects the cat’s desire for pampering and petting through stroking by human owners (Brown & Bradshaw 2014).

In return, hawkers understand their vulnerability at the hands of the opportunistic and greedy City authorities and they act slyly, as mice do, by readily offering bribes either as individuals or groups to avoid arrest. From our interviews, hawkers told us that in certain streets they had established elaborate mechanisms of pooling together bribes – called *pesa ya wakubwa* (money for the bosses) – that would get to seniors at City Hall through illegal networks. This allowed the contributors unfettered access to street spaces. Fruit vendors in one street had paid for such street spaces, which they referred to as *mashamba* – Kiswahili for ‘farms’, which is a highly valued factor of production and emotional attachment in Kenya. By informally privatising and commoditising public spaces, a hierarchy of exploitation emerges, in which those who have not made a contribution routinely face arrest during crackdowns as *askaris* turn a blind eye to the paid-up hawkers. This creates a situation that Dragsted-Mutengwa (2018) describes as an exchange practice, whereby hawkers and City officials are mutually engaged in a transaction without necessarily sharing mutual interests. Thus, even in their vulnerable position, hawkers act with the accumulative ruthlessness and selfishness associated with the rodent.

Our data also depict the City authorities as having the treachery of a cat. Nineteen of the twenty-four hawkers interviewed attested to having been arrested while hawking, and arraigned in court. They described the numerous and largely false charges the City authorities preferred against them. This treachery was captured by one hawker, who protested:

*Saa ingine maybe uko shughuli zako lakini kwasababu anakujua wewe ni hawker, na wameitishwa watu kupeleka kortini, anakushika tu anaenda anakwandikia kuuza kwa street, kufunga barabara, kuitana na kuzuia askari wa kanjo kufanya kazi. Unashindwa, hii maneno yote ni mtu mmoja amefanya? (Sometimes you may be attending to your other personal matters but because they know you as a hawker, and are required to take a certain number of people to court, they will arrest you and charge you with selling on the streets, blocking pathways, calling out for buyers and obstructing *askaris* from doing their work. Then you wonder, have all these been done by one person?)*

The treachery by the City authorities was also revealed to us by an officer in the Security, Compliance and Disaster Management department, when he explained the catch in the numerous charges. He told us that the first charge for an arrested hawker would be hawking without a licence, to which all the other charges are tied. This charge creates a cul-de-sac situation in which the hawker is unable to produce a licence, since hawking in the CBD is banned. Because of this the hawker is unable to challenge the other charges, resulting in heavy fines being imposed. Hawkers complained that these charges and resulting fines were very punitive and were meant to ground them financially and to force them out of the streets.

In turn, the hawkers – like mice – employ cunning in the face of the punitive cul-de-sac situation, by accepting all the charges preferred regardless of their truthfulness in order to shorten the court process and secure their freedom to return to the streets. In addition, hawkers regularly fall back on their social networks to get loans to pay the punitive fines and to replenish their stock. As one hawker said, '*Unakubali tu unapigwa faini, na faini nilazima nilipe kwa sababu sitoki Nairobi na siwachi kuwa hawker hapa Nairobi CBD*' (You just accept [the charges] and you are fined, which I just pay because I am not leaving Nairobi and I am not abandoning hawking in the CBD).

Another cunning strategy the hawkers use to remain in the CBD street space includes forming and fostering symbiotic relations with other seemingly antagonistic actors in Nairobi CBD, such as *matatu* operators and licensed traders, who at face value may seem to be hostile to hawkers by virtue of competing for the same space and customers respectively. Seventeen out of the twenty-four hawkers we interviewed considered *matatu* operators as sharing an identity with them in having a precarious status in the CBD, by virtue of being in the informal industry, which is prone to harassment from City authorities. They therefore foster mutually beneficial relations. One hawker reported: '*Watu wa matatu na sisi ni kitu moja, wao ni mahustlers kama sisi hawkers na hakuna tofauti. Tofauti ni ile tu anaenda na gari na time ye ye anaharassiwa pia sisi tunaharrassiwa na City Council, so we are equal*

(The *matatu* crew and hawkers are one, we are hustlers. The only difference is that they operate vehicles, but when they are being harassed by the City County officials, we are being harassed as well. So our fate is similar). In this regard, they pointed out that, firstly, they share the same customers – city residents who buy from the hawkers and use *matatus* to commute to and from the city. Secondly, that *matatu* operators also buy from the hawkers while the hawkers in turn use *matatus* in transporting their wares to the streets. To cement their shared identity, *matatu* operators alert hawkers of impending crackdowns and help hide hawkers' wares in their vehicles.

Besides *matatus*, hawkers said that they also form and nurture symbiotic relationships with licensed traders. Firstly, they told us that some licensed traders entrust stock to hawkers to sell on the streets at a profit or to move dead stock as well as help move seasonal stock, such as umbrellas, well wishes cards and memorabilia, because the mobility of hawkers enables them to get to more buyers than traders in shops can. In addition, some licensed traders store hawkers' wares in their shops overnight, and, in return, the hawkers ensure that the frontage of the shops where they display their wares is left clean. Others told us that their continued interactions with shop owners enable them to get short-term loans from licensed traders, which engendered trust and symbiotic relations.

### ***A critique of the cat-and-mouse metaphor in the Nairobi CBD streets***

The study finds that the conceptualisation of the hawkers–City-authorities' relations in the Nairobi CBD streets as a cat-and-mouse game has implications for the hawkers' claims to the right to the city.

To begin with, just like the villain–hero dichotomy in the war metaphor, the predator–prey dyad in the cat-and-mouse metaphor seemingly gives sharp and dramatic clarity to the complex social relations between City authorities and hawkers in Nairobi by using well-known animal attributes to describe this relationship. However, this clarity, just as in the war metaphor, can be a 'false clarity' in that it simplifies a complex social phenomenon that has a deep socio-political and economic history of exclusion and inclusion.

The predator–prey dyad reduces the City-authorities–hawkers' relationship to an 'us vs them' dichotomy, which obscures an in-depth analysis of the issue and results in a simplistic view that suggests that hunting down the hawker is the only practical solution. In addition, the cat-and-mouse metaphor treats the prey/hawkers as non-persons and invaders in the city's ecology as opposed to seeing them, as discussed in the critique of the war metaphor, as a construct of the historical exclusionary socio-political and economic practices of the City authorities.

The second limitation is that the media's use of phrases such as 'city council and the hawkers engage in their usual cat and mouse chase' seems to suggest a perpetual and persistent reality that makes the predatory-prey relationship the inevitable and natural reality of the world of the two actors. This may be detrimental to the hawkers by delegitimising and disqualifying their claim to the right to the city. This is because it may serve to naturalise the constructed moral-legal and governance configuration that the hawkers in the CBD are to be hunted and eliminated, while it is the City authorities' right to eliminate them following the natural instinctive order of the animal kingdom. That the hawkers use this conceptualisation may mean a resigned acceptance of their fate as the hunted and the media's naturalisation of the same. Just as was discussed in the analysis of the war metaphor, the animal metaphor depicted in the stark terms of hunter-hunted dichotomy presents the ever-present risk of moving from a metaphorical conceptualisation into the acceptance, naturalisation and justification of literal acts of latent, mild and brutal violence that City authorities regularly mete out to hawkers.

The third limitation of the cat-and-mouse metaphor is that its conceptualisation of the hawker-City-authorities' relationship as a form of sport in the animal world potentially trivialises the hawkers' struggle to eke a living in the CBD. The metaphor does so when it seems to portray the capture and annihilation of the hawker as a trophy object in a hunting expedition as the way things are in the world. As shown in the previous subsection, it may trivialise and dehumanise hawkers' suffering when their arrests are treated as merely meeting set targets of arraigning a certain number of hawkers in court. In this event, hawkers become trophies to be displayed in court after the successful hunting expedition of the City *askaris*.

The fourth limitation of the cat-and-mouse metaphor is that it narrows solutions in a unidirectional manner. As Steuter and Wills (2008:73) posit:

The hunter seems to possess the autonomy and control in the hunt, but in many ways the actions open to the hunter are limited: the hunter may stalk, chase, track, snare, wound, kill, or bag, but cannot, by his nature and that of his prey, negotiate, confer, settle, or otherwise alter the circumstances.

Thus, this metaphor overly emphasises perpetual hostility and escapes from danger as the natural order, and precludes, for instance, envisaging hawking as a productive economic activity that ought to be creatively integrated into the CBD economy. It precludes progressive and inclusive strategies and policy alternatives, while justifying repressive 'hunting' ones.

When hawkers uncritically adopt the cat-and-mouse game as the defining conceptualisation of their place in the city vis-à-vis the City authorities, they endorse rather than repudiate this conceptualisation. This limits the hawkers'

claims to the right to the city to individual self-help ‘micro-level strategies’ at the expense of ‘macro-level strategies’ that might involve organised groups of hawkers engaging with state authorities (Forkuor, Akuoko & Yeboah 2017:8). In this regard, hawker strategies seem to conform to Scott’s (1985) everyday forms of passive peasant resistance in what he calls ‘the weapons of the weak’, such as bribery, strategic collusion with their adversaries, deception, cunning engagement with adversaries and going through the motions of court justice without believing in it. Whereas these strategies may work in the long run by nibbling away the confidence of the oppressive system, they may just prolong the century-old quest for hawkers’ right to the city.

## Conclusion

Using conceptual metaphors as fundamental discursive tools that structure how we frame the world and its ultimate impact on our material realities, this study sought to analyse how hawking in Nairobi’s CBD produces discursive political spaces that activate various identities, specific socio-political, economic and governance practices. The analysis has enabled us to investigate underlying patterns of framing the contestation of urban citizenship, governance and spatial policies in a postcolonial African city and how these frames inform policy and practical steps to manage hawking in the CBD.

The study has shown that the Nairobi City authorities, with the tacit approval of the media on the one hand, have fixed on the war metaphor, while the hawkers – again with the tacit approval of the media – locked onto the cat-and-mouse metaphor, and that these are the two defining metaphors that conceptualise hawking in Nairobi’s CBD. As Jayne Docherty and Frank Blechman, quoted by Steuter and Wills (2008:8), observe:

Every metaphor is a way of seeing the world and every metaphor is also a way of not seeing the world. If we lock onto a single description of the problem and the appropriate response too early, we may not discover the most effective long-term responses to a crisis.

Drawing from this quote, it seems that the conception of hawking through the war and cat-and-mouse metaphors in Nairobi began at very formative stages of the city, close to a century ago and persists to the present time. The two metaphors seem to be mutually reinforcing across discursive spaces: in the media, in statements by the City authorities and in common discourse among hawkers. They both presuppose a dichotomy of ‘humanity and inhumanity, superiority and inferiority, triumph and capitulation’ (Wills & Steuter 2014:284), good and evil, hero and villain, us and them, as well as hunter-prey dyads. These dichotomies overly emphasise conflict, hostility,

the distinctiveness of social actors as well as fundamental and intractable differences, and give a false clarity to complex socio-political issues with an entrenched history. These dichotomous presuppositions and their reinforcement across discursive spaces call to mind what Steuter and Wills (2010:154) have observed of the racist war metaphor applied in response to terrorism by a wide range of powerful actors, as 'creat[ing] a dangerous discursive world characterised by fundamental, insoluble divisions'.

Of particular note is the role of the media in Kenya, which adopts and echoes the war and cat-and-mouse metaphorical frames. As a powerful voice that is the ubiquitous means through which society today understands the world, the media, in uncritically adopting these metaphors, may not only reinforce a sense of fatalism (Steuter & Wills 2010:165) but may also reinforce the oppression and the suppression of those sectors conceived as 'enemy/prey' and disenfranchise them of urban citizenship.

The two metaphors are also fundamentally based on a deadly antagonistic conception with a false sense of being able to vanquish the antagonist/hawker or at least keep the antagonist out of the city. This has spectacularly failed, which suggests the need to 'change the metaphors in order to change the conversation' (Wills & Steuter 2014:285) about how hawking in the Nairobi CBD should be conceived. Such a possibility is suggested in our interviews with the director of Urban Planning whose department has produced master plans that have long sought to integrate hawking into the Nairobi CBD but which have never been fully embraced or implemented by the City authorities.

## Notes

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