Revue Africaine de Sociologie, 10, (2), 2006, pp. 1-17.

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Psittacisme et Plébiscite au Gabon: Le Trope d'une réélection présidentielle dans une post-colonie tranquille

L'élection présidentielle au Gabon des 25 et 27 novembre 2005 se déroule dans un contexte économique et social difficile. En dépit de la trêve sociale signée entre le gouvernement et les syndicats des travailleurs, les observateurs, les agents, les praticiens révèlent un ralentissement de l'activité économique avec de nombreux licenciements dans les entreprises et un climat social délétère avec la grève des étudiants à l'université Omar Bongo (UOB), à l'Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS), et la fermeture des établissements d'enseignement du premier et du second degré de Libreville.

Sur le plan politique, l'opposition marquera son refus de participer à la célébration par le pouvoir du 10ème anniversaire des Accords de Paris.[1] Par la même occasion, elle dénoncera une manœuvre de plus d'une classe dirigeante qui n'a pas voulu préserver les minces acquis 'démocratiques' de la Conférence Nationale de 1990 et dont l'action de dévoiement systématique du débat politique l'amènera à arrêter en septembre 2005 certains responsables de l'opposition.[2] Après avoir jaugé la capacité réactive de l'opposition timorée depuis l'amorce du processus de retour au monopartisme de fait, le pouvoir va contraindre d'autres opposants à constituer avec lui, une majorité de consensus dite 'majorité présidentielle'.[3] Enfin, pour tenter d'affaiblir les autres candidats, plusieurs démissions sont suscitées dans leurs partis: c'est le cas pour l'Union du Peuple Gabonais (UPG) de Pierre Mamboundou, de l'Union Gabonaise pour la Démocratie et le Développement (UGDD) de Zacharie Myboto. Ces différents stratagèmes n'ont en aucune façon entamé la perspicacité des acteurs et observateurs avertis de la vie politique gabonaise pour qui cette élection présidentielle 'n'a rien de spécial, le résultat étant déjà connu avant que l'on ait voté', ou encore 'c'est une démocratie de façade, on connaît déjà le gagnant' ou enfin 'les résultats sont déjà connus, les urnes sont bourrées, c'est juste un changement de mandat'. D'ailleurs, l'insistance avec laquelle les partis politiques ont invité les électeurs à s'inscrire sur les listes électorales après les opérations de révision des mois de janvier et février, après la campagne radio-télévisée en direction des jeunes avec le slogan 'Bouge ton vote', instruit sur le sens que les Gabonais donnent désormais au suffrage universel: trafic des listes électorales, achat d'électeurs, corruption des présidents des commissions électorales et des bureaux de vote, falsification et substitution des procès verbaux, transfert et bourrage d'urnes, fraudes

massives, etc. Et comme ces pratiques ne semblent pas suffisantes, l'originalité de cette élection tient à la création de deux corps électoraux: celui des forces de sécurité et de défense (police, armée, gendarmerie, garde républicaine) et celui des civils, soit 560,000 électeurs selon les chiffres du ministère de l'intérieur qui voteront séparément, le premier, le 25 novembre, le second, deux jours après, le 27 novembre. L'institution de ces deux corps électoraux est une parade à l'abstention que redoute le pouvoir, abstention qu'il pourrait conjurer par la présence des forces de sécurité comme électorat acquis à sa cause, dans la mesure où la situation électorale au Gabon se caractérise de plus en plus par le refus de voter, voire l'indifférence. Les différents avis pré-électoraux l'attestent largement:

> 'Les gabonais en ont plus qu'assez de ne pas pouvoir faire valoir leur droit. Le vote ne sert à rien au Gabon'.
>
> 'Ma voix pourrait compter s'il existait réellement la transparence'.
>
> 'Le vote a sa valeur dans un pays démocratique mais pas chez nous'.
>
> 'Je n'irai pas voter tant que le système sera le même, tant que le président actuel qui a plus de 30 ans au pouvoir se présentera'.

La visée de cet article est triple. D'abord, indiquer qu'au terme de trois scrutins présidentiels (1993,1998, 2005), il s'est joué 'autre chose que des victoires et des défaites dans la longue succession des scrutins nationaux et locaux'.[4] Aussi convient-il de considérer l'élection, processus par lequel les citoyens choisissent leurs dirigeants, leurs représentants comme 'objet d'analyse', comme 'fait politique total' (pour reprendre l'expression de Marcel Mauss), car elle devient le révélateur de l'ensemble du système politique gabonais. Ensuite, montrer comment la campagne électorale du candidat sortant, axée sur la désarticulation de la perspective de l'alternance politique, soumet l'électorat à l'orthodoxie d'un discours unique, dit légitime, et dont la caractéristique est le psittacisme, c'est-à-dire la répétition mécanique de mots (unité, insécurité, paix...) et priorités déjà énoncées (santé, habitat, route) pour créer une représentation qui lui assurera une mobilisation efficace. Relayé par les médias d'Etat et privés, ce discours va disposer la société à reconnaître non pas simplement la longévité du régime, mais son identification à un homme et surtout la transformation de la longévité du système de pouvoir de Bongo en éternitarisme d'un homme. Ainsi, le candidat devient 'naturel' et éternel comme le confirment ces deux slogans déclamés en fang: 'Bongo mbè mbè' ou 'Bongo est éternel', 'Bongo nza mfe' ou 'Qui d'autre si ce n'est Bongo'.[5] Enfin, indiquer que l'élection présidentielle au Gabon s'inscrit qu'on le veuille ou non, dans la trame des continuités et régularités historiques anciennes que le statut de post-colonie ne parvient pas encore à infléchir. Aussi, le caractère plébiscitaire de cette élection ainsi que l'impossibilité de l'alternance politique découlent-ils directement de l'efficace de ces continuités et régularités

évoquées précédemment et surtout de la manière dont celles-ci vont interférer dans le choix des factions en lutte pour le contrôle de l'appareil d'Etat.

Palinodie et théatralisation de la candidature d'Omar Bongo

'Et si Bongo n'était pas candidat en 2005?', titrait le 9 mai, en première page, *L'Espoir*, un bimensuel indépendant.[6] La réponse que l'on découvre à la troisième page est la suivante:

> Mais si Bongo aujourd'hui renonçait à ses fonctions de chef de l'Etat, que se passerait-il pour toi? Tu répondras peut-être: Bongo ne peut pas renoncer, il adore tellement le pouvoir, et il fera tout ce qui est (...) pour trouver un compromis qui lui permette de rester au pouvoir. Quel que soit le prix à payer, il n'est pas question que le pouvoir nous échappe.[7]

Cette interrogation au sujet de l'avenir politique du chef d'Etat gabonais est un acte de mémoire, elle rappelle bien l'importante déclaration qu'il a faite en 1998 et qui ne laisse planer aucun doute sur ses intentions:

> Dans sept ans, à la fin de mon mandat, si je suis réélu, j'aurai 70 ans. C'est beaucoup. Il faut savoir partir, jouer avec ses petits enfants, parcourir le monde, dispenser des conseils à qui vient vous voir plutôt que de marcher à quatre pattes, de devenir acariâtre et de disjoncter sans s'en rendre compte. Je pense que je m'en irai, après avoir formé des femmes et des hommes capables de me succéder. Moi-même, j'ai fait mes classes auprès d'un vieux, le président Léon Mba, qui m'a beaucoup appris. Le peuple choisira entre eux. Le pouvoir est-il une drogue? C'est possible. Mais je sais comment me désintoxiquer.[8]

Jusqu'au mois de juillet, l'incertitude subsiste, seul un passage dans son discours à l'occasion de la fête de l'indépendance au mois d'août, indique qu'il présidera les prochaines festivités du 17 août 2006 à Libreville. Plus qu'une indication, il s'agit d'une annonce pour les élections présidentielles. C'est assurément à ce moment qu'il faut situer l'amorce de la palinodie que les sollicitations des militants de son parti, les étudiants d'Allemagne, de Belgique, des Etats-Unis et du Maroc avaient suscitées depuis 2004. En 2005, ce sont les maires et les députés qui l'invitent à nouveau, lors de la tournée qu'il effectue à travers le Gabon, à briguer les suffrages des gabonais. En l'espace de deux mois, de septembre à octobre, les appels à la candidature se succèdent: les cadres et originaires de chaque province, les églises de réveil, le réseau des femmes ministres et parlementaires gabonaises, les ressortissants de sa province natale (Haut-ogooué), notamment les jeunes qui lui remettront, le 30 septembre, la caution de 5,500,000 francs CFA exigée pour le dépôt du dossier de candidature. Pour rompre le silence qui commençait à inquiéter les militants de son parti, il se prononcera enfin, officiellement, le 1er octobre, devant la dernière sollicitation, celle des jeunes de la majorité présidentielle. Aucune voix discordante n'a relevé le fait que cette annonce de candidature constituait un changement brusque d'opinion. Et lui-même, porté par les femmes, les jeunes, les cadres de son parti, semble avoir oublié la teneur de sa déclaration.

S'agit-il d'une absence totale de mémoire ou d'un excès d'ambition? En réalité, l'oubli n'est que partiel. La déclaration de 1998 abordait deux points: la renonciation à un nouveau mandat et le règlement de sa succession. Le septennat 1998-2005 devait par conséquent résoudre ces deux questions. Cette volte-face conforte plutôt la conjecture de l'excès d'ambition qui conduit à saisir le pouvoir, dont le souci est de préparer quelques femmes et hommes à la gestion de l'appareil d'Etat, comme un pouvoir monarchique. Le silence de la classe politique sur ce revirement montre au fond que l'essentiel pour un homme politique n'est pas forcément dans ce qu'il a déclaré, mais dans ce qu'il va faire. En tout cas, le Parti démocratique gabonais, complice de la palinodie de son fondateur, réunira ses instances (Bureau politique et Conseil national) non pas pour revenir sur la procédure utilisée pour l'annonce de sa candidature, mais pour se préparer à le soutenir sans réserve face à P. Mamboundou, leader de l'Union du peuple gabonais (UPG)[9] et à Z. Myboto, dissident du PDG et fondateur de l'Union Gabonaise pour la Démocratie et le développement (UGDD).[10]

Pour contrer l'opposition, le P.D.G. monopolisera l'ensemble des médias publics et privés. Pendant les mois d'octobre et novembre, ces appareils idéologiques vont montrer quotidiennement des hommes et des femmes dissidents de l'UPG et de l'UGDD qui expliquent comment ils ont été trompés, manipulés et pourquoi ils reviennent dans la majorité présidentielle. Certains repentis n'avaient aucune attache avec ces formations politiques indexées, mais il fallait absolument décrédibiliser l'hétérodoxie de ces deux candidatures qui tranchaient avec l'orthodoxie d'une certaine opposition raisonnable, davantage encline à la compromission. Après les désertions orchestrées, ce sont les soutiens des hommes et des femmes cadres et universitaires, des femmes de la majorité, des familles, des associations, des chômeurs, des commerçantes, des syndicalistes, des étudiants, des élèves et des enseignants déterminés qui prennent le relais pour lui assurer une victoire 'cash'. Dans la même optique, des documentaires retraçant les années de règne du candidat sortant, mettent l'accent sur ses grandes réalisations économiques (le chemin de fer trans-gabonais, la cimenterie d'Owendo, Agrogabon, SEEG, OPT, Hévégab aujourd'hui privatisées), politiques (la création du parti unique comme creuset de l'unité nationale, la démocratie avec le multipartisme, la paix...), sociales (universités, hôpitaux, écoles...) Sur le plan international, on magnifie ses qualités d'homme de dialogue et de paix qui ont énormément contribué à la solution des conflits en Afrique (Angola, Congo Brazzaville, Tchad, Centrafrique...) La retransmission exclusive, souvent en direct, des faits et actes de sa campagne, couronne la stratégie de monopolisation des médias envisagée pour réduire l'incidence des autres prétendants à la fonction présidentielle. Cette médiatisation outrancière de la campagne gouvernementale est un précédent qui a créé les conditions d'inégalité de

traitement des candidats; elle a, de fait, prédisposé à la confirmation des résultats du scrutin en faveur du candidat sortant.

La palinodie apparaît comme une pratique récurrente du chef de l'Etat. On peut signaler qu'en 1990, il affirmait de manière péremptoire qu'il n'y aurait jamais de multipartisme au Gabon tant qu'il sera au pouvoir. De même qu'il récusera l'idée d'organiser la Conférence nationale. Quelques semaines ont suffit pour que le Mouvement de redressement national (MORENA) et d'autres associations politiques de l'opposition orientent les débats de la Conférence nationale vers l'adoption du multipartisme intégral, obligeant le pouvoir d'Omar Bongo à retirer sa proposition d'apprentissage de la démocratie par étapes au sein d'une structure dénommée Rassemblement social démocrate gabonais.

La théâtralisation exceptionnelle de sa candidature répond au souci de convaincre l'électorat, les opérateurs économiques, les missions diplomatiques ainsi que les représentants de l'ancienne tutelle qu' il n'y a que lui comme seule alternative.

Psittacisme et production d'une victoire annoncée

Peu avant l'ouverture de la campagne, Bongo déclare:

> Si je suis élu, je mettrai en œuvre de grands projets 'tels les ports de Santa clara et de Mayumba, le nouvel aéroport de Libreville, le chemin de fer Booué-Bélinga, le barrage de Poubara III, la construction des routes et ponts à travers tout le pays; l'exploitation minière, notamment les mines de Bélinga pour le fer, de Franceville, d'Okondja et de Ndjolé pour le manganèse, et de Lambaréné pour le niobium'.[11]

A l'ouverture de la campagne, le 13 novembre, il réaffirme devant une foule de 30,000 partisans dans un stade omnisports éponyme:

> Si je suis élu, je compte engager fermement notre pays dans une nouvelle étape de son développement, afin d'apporter des réponses plus rassurantes aux attentes et aux préoccupations légitimes de chacun de mes compatriotes.[12]

Ces deux citations donnent une idée assez précise des intentions de l'auteur; elles contiennent en filigrane son projet qui se ramène à trois mots: 'la route', 'la santé', 'l'habitat'. Pour séduire l'électorat, l'essentiel de la campagne se résume à un matraquage par l'image dans les rues, les entreprises et les médias: 170 mille affiches de tailles diverses en quadrichromie seront visibles sur tous les murs, espaces et panneaux publicitaires de Libreville; dirigeable qui va survoler l'espace aérien de la capitale pendant qu'il s'adresse simultanément aux populations dans différents quartiers et arrondissements; hommes, femmes, jeunes scolaires et universitaires, chômeurs arborent tee-shirts, casquettes et toute une panoplie de gadgets allant du sac plastique à la montre Rolex, au téléphone portable, boîte de sardines et au string à son effigie. Si le décor de la rue appartient aux passants, ce sont les médias audio-visuels[13] qui vont assurer par la retransmission en direct et en différé de tous les

déplacements en province et à Libreville, tous les discours prononcés lors des meeting, une plus large audience auprès de ceux des électeurs qui n'avaient pas la possibilité de savoir ce que les autres candidats faisaient. En admettant que 'les médias audio-visuels exercent des effets latents de "cadrage" des perceptions et d'imprégnation des représentations politiques des citoyens',[14] on peut dire que le flux d'images percutantes des soutiens radio-télévisés ont décuplé la mobilisation physique des partisans de la majorité sur le terrain, même si certains affirment n'avoir jamais douté un seul instant des qualités d'homme d'Etat de leur candidat. Par opposition cependant à ce flux électronique de représentations imagées bruyantes et euphoriques de la télévision, les affiches silencieuses de la rue déroulent malicieusement le contenu du message lénifiant de Bongo, à savoir, 'mon projet, des actes' dont voici quelques traductions exemplaires qui, dans leur formulation déclinent, pour ainsi dire, l'échec de quatre décennies de politique économique et sociale:

'Pour que la femme soit un acteur majeur du développement';

Pour que la jeunesse soit au centre du développement';

'Pour que l'habitat social soit une mission essentielle'.

Pourquoi les femmes et les jeunes ont-ils été marginalisés? Quelle est la nature de la question du logement? Absence de parcelles? Difficultés de financement?

'Pour que l'éducation forme la jeunesse';

'Pour que la diversification crée des emplois'.

La mission de l'éducation ne semble pas avoir répondu aux attentes du régime. Quelles en sont les raisons? De même, l'économie en dépit des nombreuses potentialités du sol et du sous-sol, n'a pas été en mesure d'assurer le plein emploi pour une population totale estimée à près de 1,00,000 habitants avec un PNB d'environ 6700$ US.

'Pour que la culture préserve l'identité'; 'Pour que la paix préserve l'unité gabonaise nationale'.

Ces deux référents, identité gabonaise et unité nationale sont avec les femmes et les jeunes, les quatre invariants de la politique depuis 1967, et c'est autour d'eux que le pouvoir structure et renouvelle sans bilan conséquent, sa vision de la société à construire.

Pendant 14 jours, du 13 au 24 novembre, période de campagne, la rue deviendra le sanctuaire de ces messages visuels, apparemment muets mais persuasifs parce que l'association du portrait du candidat et du texte imprimé créent une représentation vivante et colorée de la politique qui, si elle ne ménageait pas une compréhension véritable (réservée à la classe dirigeante), devait assurer lors des meeting, une mobilisation consensuelle, efficace des partis[15], des associations[16], des femmes, des jeunes à l'occasion de ces journées festives où argent, alcool, musique, tee-shirts, casquettes, voitures de luxe, hélicoptères, jets ont constitué les éléments d'un spectacle programmé pour

réaffirmer la profonde détermination à soutenir sans réserve le candidat naturel, exhorter toutes les militantes, militants et sympathisants à conjuguer leurs efforts et traduire leur engagement par un vote massif et utile, c'est-à-dire 'cash' et 'sans bavure', selon l'expression consacrée. Cette maîtrise de l'espace électoral rendra d'ailleurs le candidat peu loquace: en quinze minutes il dira l'essentiel de son message politique par cette adresse: 'je vous demande de mettre un seul bulletin dans l'urne, celui d'Omar Bongo Ondimba' en ajoutant 'je vous demande de voter pour moi à 100%'. La pauvreté du message est évidente. Aussi, chacune de ses interventions sera-t-elle précédée par celles de ses nombreux coordinateurs de campagne qui relançaient le débat politique par le recours à des syntagmes figés comme 'Bongo est un homme d'expérience et de confiance, un homme capable de compréhension et de tolérance, un homme de rigueur et d'efficacité' ou encore 'Bongo incarne aujourd'hui les valeurs du compromis politique et du rassemblement et de la paix'[18], ou encore 'stabilité + paix + unité nationale = je vote Bongo'.[19] De la rue à la télévision et de la télévision à la rue, l'aspect répétitif des mêmes mots (expérience, tolérance, dialogue, paix, unité nationale), des mêmes syntagmes 'les femmes veulent la paix et votent Omar Bongo', 'Tout jeune responsable vote Bongo' reste la caractéristique de la campagne menée par le pouvoir contre une opposition à peine visible dans les médias qui s'attachaient à peaufiner l'image d'un homme inaltérable par le temps et dont on laissait entendre que le peuple ne voulait pas se séparer maintenant. Au-delà des images télévisuelles, il faut revenir aux thèmes majeurs que sont 'la route', 'la santé', et 'l'habitat'. En centrant cette fois encore la campagne sur ces trois secteurs, on peut penser d'abord qu'il s'agit des secteurs qui n'ont pas bénéficié de budgets conséquents au cours des septennats antérieurs, ensuite que ces questions font l'objet d'une demande expresse des populations que l'Etat voudrait inscrire comme les priorités à venir. Il n'en est rien. En effet, l'examen de la politique économique de ces quarante dernières années montre que la route a été inscrite dans six programmations budgétaires (1970, 1982, 1989, 1992, 1995, 1996), la santé figure dans onze programmations (1970, 1974, 1976, 1977, 1983, 1986, 1988, 1992, 1999, 2001, 2003). Sur ces deux premiers secteurs, les perspectives gouvernementales semblent concluantes comme le traduisent ces quelques énoncés:

> L'année 1970 a été l'année de la santé... Le gouvernement a mis à la disposition de ce secteur primordial, les moyens de travail adéquats (...), plus de 20% de son budget, c'est sur le réseau routier qu'on a enregistré les progrès les plus spectaculaires, grâce à des investissements de plus de 2 milliards de francs CFA, donc de nombreux autres travaux de construction de nouvelles routes et de ponts ainsi que d'entretien ont été effectués dans les régions de l'intérieur, et cet effort va se poursuivre dans les années à venir,[20].

En 1982, 'l'Etat a dépensé 11 milliards pour les routes (...), nous poursuivons (...) la réalisation d'une dizaine de projets routiers pour un montant global de 42 milliards de francs CFA'.

En 1983, 'les dotations d'investissements allouées aux infrastructures sanitaires s'élèvent à 5 milliards de francs CFA'.

En 1992, l'Etat parle du 'démarrage de l'important programme routier conclu avec l'aide de nos partenaires (...) de la poursuite de l'effort afin de réhabiliter et de construire (...) dispensaires (...)

Quant à l'habitat, il n'a fait l'objet que de cinq programmations (1972, 1980, 1986, 1992, 2004). Pour l'année 1980, décrétée 'année de l'habitat social', 'une impulsion décisive a été donnée et sera soutenue pour résoudre le problème prioritaire de l'habitat social'. En 2004, l'intérêt pour ce secteur sera réaffirmé sans indications budgétaires précises.

On peut retenir qu'il ne s'agit pas de l'insuffisance de moyens financiers pour conduire une politique efficiente dans ces différents secteurs; c'est plutôt le bilan peu reluisant, susceptible de faire l'objet des critiques acerbes de l'opposition, qui pousse à l'inscription de ces secteurs dans le programme de campagne de la majorité parce qu'il faut priver l'opposition des éléments qui alimenteraient sa campagne et lui permettraient d'indiquer un autre mode de gestion de ces questions. Par conséquent, ces trois axes (route, santé, habitat) ne préfigurent en aucune façon les prochains centres d'intérêt de la politique gouvernementale; ils représentent des repères pour l'électorat à séduire; ressassés par les médias, ils n'ont pas pour vocation de convaincre, mais de rendre impossible, voire disqualifier tout autre discours sur ces matières. Ainsi, 'la fonction du mensonge de l'Etat n'est pas ici de parvenir à une fin par la ruse ou de dissimuler une faute ou un scandale, mais de proclamer que la vérité émane du parti seul qui manifeste sa toute puissance en imposant comme vrai ce que chacun sait être faux.'[21]

En statuant sur l'ensemble de la campagne audio-visuelle de la majorité présidentielle qui a confisqué tout l'appareil idéologique de la presse, on peut conclure en reprenant Philippe Bénéton que 'le monologue du pouvoir a un effet d'intimidation, il manifeste partout la puissance du parti-Etat. Le pouvoir est maître de ce qui se dit, il ne cesse de le faire savoir, de contraindre les hommes à le confirmer'.[22] Pour la marraine du Forum des femmes de la majorité, par exemple, 'il est indéniable qu'au regard de l'expérience qu'il a capitalisée et de sa stature exceptionnelle de grand homme d'Etat, le président Bongo Ondimba reste le seul à pouvoir garantir et améliorer les résultats obtenus jusque-là, dans la lutte pour le développement'.[23] Selon le président de l'ADERE, 'ace aux incertitudes de l'avenir ce n'est pas d'un saut dans l'inconnu dont le pays a besoin, mais plutôt de continuité dans la paix et de la stabilité que seul le chef de l'Etat sortant peut garantir mieux que quiconque à ce jour dans la classe politique nationale... ne faut donc pas céder aux candidats qui vendent l'illusion,'[24] 'il faut barrer la route aux prestidigitateurs'.[25] Sur la même veine, le président du RPG justifie ainsi le choix du congrès de son parti: Bongo est 'un homme d'expérience et de confiance, un homme capable de compréhension et de tolérance, un homme de rigueur et d'efficacité',[26] des

propos que l'on retrouve, relativement nuancés, dans la déclaration du congrès du P.G.C.I. que reprend son président: 'Bongo incarne aujourd'hui les valeurs du compromis politique et du rassemblement et de la paix'.[27]

Les déclarations de ces différents acteurs de la majorité ont un rôle d'intimidation de l'opinion, dans la mesure où ce sont eux les détenteurs de l'appareil d'Etat qui s'appuient en la circonstance sur 'tout l'appareil de contrainte et de contrôle'[28] que sont l'armée, la police, la gendarmerie, la sécurité publique et la garde républicaine pour dissuader de prendre fait et cause pour l'opposition. Trois exemples dont le premier définit la mission de garant de l'ordre:

> 'J'ai (...) écouté attentivement (...) tous les candidats de l'opposition (...) J'ai relevé en particulier les menaces et les appels ouverts et voilés de certains d'entre eux à la violence au cas où le processus électoral tournerait en leur défaveur. L'occasion m'est ainsi donnée d'appeler l'attention de l'opinion nationale et internationale sur le danger que de telles dérives représentent pour notre jeune démocratie. Je tiens (...) à rassurer le peuple (...) que quiconque, qu'il s'appelle X ou Y qui essayera de mettre en cause la paix du Gabon me trouvera d'abord avant de faire quoi que ce soit.'[29]

Le second texte rappelle le principe de la sanction:

> 'L'expression démocratique ne doit point servir de prétexte pour troubler la paix et la cohésion sociale de notre pays (...) tous propos de nature à favoriser l'incivisme, l'insurrection, la rébellion ou toute forme d'incitation à la violence, exposera son ou ses auteurs aux sanctions prévues par la loi...'[30]

Le troisième propos éclaire sur le risque d'hypothéquer l'avenir:

> 'Depuis quelque temps, certains candidats à la magistrature suprême font dans la surenchère en prêchant la violence. Autant de propos qui sont des menaces, des appels à la violence. Autant de comportements dont la conséquence est, en fait, de freiner le développement de notre pays, de le plonger dans le chaos et d'entraîner les Gabonaises et les Gabonais dans le lot de souffrance que vivent hélas les populations de certains pays.'[31]

Ces discours et avertissements intimident par 'le jeu des répétitions et aussi parce que ces affirmations répétées sont exprimées de manière pesante et autoritaire'[32] dans et par les médias. Au-delà de ces rappels à l'ordre, c'est bien le principe de non-discontinuité qui est rappelé, c'est-à-dire, cet 'impératif de ce qui est interdit d'advenir: il ne faut surtout pas que les autres prennent le pouvoir (...). C'est sur la base de ce principe que se négocie le marché de l'alternance politique garantissant 'la stabilité' du pays'.[33] Or, sur ce marché de l'alternance, il y a un non-dit: l'exclusivisme.

La victoire annoncée reposait sur cet exclusivisme bien ancré, mais que le registre de l'expérience du candidat sortant occulte à chaque élection présidentielle. En effet, on a l'impression qu'en évoquant l'inexpérience politique des autres leaders, aucun autre homme politique ne peut légitimement accéder au pouvoir au Gabon. Même dans le cadre du multipartisme avec le mécanisme de l'élection concurrentielle et la possibilité de l'alternance, les militants de la 'majorité présidentielle', semblent assurés que leur candidat sera

élu 'cash' le soir du 27 novembre. Cela parce que l'éviction d'Omar Bongo est devenue un impensé; seules les supputations sur les éventuels chefs de gouvernement ou autres fonctions ministérielles alimentent les discussions au sein du PDG et suscitent des alliances avec d'autres hommes ou partis disposés à l'ouverture et non à l'alternance. En tablant sur l'expérience accumulée par Bongo comme argumentaire, et sous-estimant la capacité de mobilisation autour des projets de société des candidats de l'opposition,, le discours officiel sur l'inexpérience gouvernementale se caractérise par 'la corruption idéologique du sens mais aussi par une structure particulière, fruit d'une codification rigide, dont l'effet est de diminuer le domaine de la pensée',[34] car après plus de trois décennies de règne sans partage, il est devenu mutilant et abrutissant; il est devenu 'à la fois très pauvre et très prolixe, il se développe en un monologue interminable et répétitif qui, à défaut de convaincre, comprime et fatigue la pensée et à la limite la vide'.[35] C'est ce qui explique pourquoi, en travaillant à l'affaiblissement de l'opposition, la majorité a plus ou moins oublié ses contradictions internes, notamment la démission de Myboto et l'annonce de sa candidature à l'élection présidentielle, deux faits politiques de taille, qui vont ébranler fortement la sérénité de la 'majorité présidentielle' dont une partie de l' électorat traditionnel, représenté par 'l'ethnie' nzébi, se retrouvera dans l'opposition. En attribuant à Bongo 80% des suffrages exprimés, on constate que ces chiffres résultent de la somme des scores cumulés de Bongo et de Mba Abessole en 1998 et que Mamboundou n'améliore pas son score précédent qui était de 16 points. La victoire s'analyse alors comme le report mécanique sur le candidat sortant de l'électorat de son allié Mba Abessole, ce qui atteste donc de l'inefficacité des slogans 'Bongo va gagner' ou 'assurons une victoire cash, sans bavure' ou enfin 'assurons une victoire à 100%', slogans qui, banalisant l'opposition et surestimant l'expérience accumulée, se fondaient sur une stratégie arithmétique d'évaluation des forces en présence qui créditait la majorité de 40 partis politiques et 4000 associations face à une dizaine de partis de l'opposition. Pour le chef de la majorité, c'est cela la politique aujourd'hui: 'elle se réduit à des stratégies d'états – majors et que les débats autour des élections n'ont pratiquement plus rien à faire avec l'action collective',[36] il suffit que quelques observateurs impénitents accordent leurs violons pour se conformer ensuite aux conclusions sur la régularité du scrutin que le pouvoir a laborieusement préfigurées et qui doivent paraître indiscutables pour la communauté internationale. En commentant les résultas du scrutin, un anonyme du pouvoir reconnaît dans le journal *L'Union* que la campagne de la majorité a manifestement mal tourné puisque le président a été élu avec 64% de son électorat traditionnel (PDG) et 15% des partis alliés de la majorité. Aucune contribution des associations,[37] et surtout l'appareil de la démocratie consensuelle (40 partis) a peu fonctionné. Si le score de 79,21% obtenu par Bongo en 2005 est supérieur à celui qu'il avait réalisé en 1998 avec 66,88% des

suffrages, on peut le considérer comme inférieur à celui qui était attendu: 100% exigé par le candidat naturel à chaque meeting; c'est donc indiscutablement un échec du pouvoir. Par rapport au candidat principal de l'opposition, P. Mamboundou, on note une inflexion de trois points, 16% en 1998 contre 13% en 2005. La comparaison des résultats des deux dernières élections présidentielles (1998, 2005) laisse supposer quelques manipulations des chiffres qui rendent frauduleuse la victoire annoncée.

Plebiscite et eternitarisme politique

Pour Jean Luc Parodi, cité par Quermonne, 'tout mode de scrutin (...) constitue un élément fondamental du processus global de fabrication d'un pouvoir majoritaire. Il a nécessairement des conséquences sur le nombre des acteurs politiques, sur leur autonomie et leur latitude d'action (...), sur le principe légitimant de l'ensemble du système politique et sur la perception générale de celui-ci'.[38] Dans ce sens, la participation politique peut se définir comme 'l'ensemble des activités des citoyens qui visent plus ou moins directement à influencer la sélection du personnel gouvernemental et/ou des actions qu'il entreprend'.[39] Dès la conférence nationale de mars-avril 1990, les citoyens mobilisés en vue de l'alternance ont décidé d'exercer un contrôle plus grand sur leurs gouvernants et de peser ainsi, chaque fois que les circonstances le permettent (élections) sur les décisions et orientations prises par le pouvoir d'Etat. Alors, si comme s'interrogent Patrick Chabal et Jean-Pascal Daloz, 'la soif d'alternance, longtemps endiguée, est telle, comment expliquer (...) l'extraordinaire longévité dont parviennent à faire preuve tant de ténors politiques africains, par leur capacité à rebondir d'un régime à l'autre, à se maintenir à la tête de leur pays moyennant parfois les plus déconcertantes palinodies'.[40]

Sur un plan plus général, les auteurs retiennent la malhonnêteté et l'incapacité des dirigeants, la nature autoritaire des systèmes politiques, la concentration du pouvoir entre les mains d'un homme, l'accumulation prébendière par rapport aux autres candidats. Si ces différents éléments correspondent parfaitement au contexte gabonais, nous insisterons par contre sur deux données: le plébiscite et l'éternitarisme. Le plébiscite est le mode d'élection qui a assuré une longévité au principal détenteur de l'appareil d'Etat.

Sous la première république (1960-1967), le pourcentage maximum obtenu par le candidat à l'élection présidentielle est de 99,90%, tandis que sous la seconde république (1968-2005), il atteint 99,97%.

Sur une période de trente ans, le Gabon a organisé 5 élections présidentielles pour deux candidats présentés (L. Mba et O. Bongo) au cours de ce long processus de construction nationale. Les résultats de ces cinq scrutins se situent tous au-dessus de 99%, ce qui pourrait traduire ici une forte cohésion sociale et une adhésion presque totale des citoyens à la politique de la classe dirigeante

alors qu'il s'agit beaucoup plus de l'intense pression exercée sur les citoyens, caractéristique des régimes à parti unique (B.D.G. sous L. Mba, P.D.G. sous O. Bongo) où n'apparaît aucune faille dans l'allégeance au pouvoir et où l'élection est davantage le plébiscite d'un homme providentiel (père de la patrie, père de la nation); d'un mandat à un autre, l'électorat apparaît comme pétri dans un unanimisme architectural moulé une fois pour toutes.

Avant, pendant et après le parti unique, les élections ont toujours pris la tournure des plébiscites parce que, ceux qui les organisent, les présentent comme un enjeu personnel. Aussi la combinaison du pouvoir personnel (de Mba ou Bongo) et de l'exaltation des masses permet-elle de désigner le régime politique gabonais comme un régime 'bonapartiste' dans la mesure où 'il revêt une dimension plébiscitaire qui s'accompagne d'une dénonciation des divisions suscitées par les partis'.[41] La référence aux partis est ici double et renvoie au multipartisme des années 1960 avec l'U.D.S.G., le B.D.G. et le PUNGA, puis au multipartisme issu de la conférence nationale de 1990 dans la mesure où 'il désigne une sensibilité politique (...) attachée à la prééminence de l'exécutif sur le législatif et hostile au 'règne des partis'.[42] Chantre de la stabilité, le chef d'Etat gabonais ne cesse d'évoquer les dangers inouïs de la voie de 1990, c'est-à-dire l'alternance. Et pourtant, il sait bien, ce prétendu 'apôtre' de la paix, que 'continuité ne veut pas dire immobilisme. Car la vertu de la stabilité démocratique est de reposer précisément sur un équilibre dynamique, dont l'alternance au pouvoir est aujourd'hui le type idéal'.[43] Or les pressions exercées sur les électeurs sont tellement fortes que le vote n'est plus, au Gabon, un acte secret. Comme autrefois, 'sous la Monarchie parlementaire des Bourbons restaurés et de Louis Philippe, où le droit de suffrage était réservé à quelques centaines de millions d'électeurs censitaires, l'électeur était d'autant plus facile à corrompre que son vote était connu des autorités. L'Europe autoritaire se servit de la loi de sûreté pour écarter les 'mauvaises têtes' des urnes. Qu'il s'agisse de corruption ou de répression les autorités attachaient le plus grand prix à connaître le vote de l'électeur, pour l'acheter ou l'intimider'.[44] Si la France n'est pas le Gabon, la similitude de la pratique utilisée montre qu'un régime peu crédible s'accommode aisément de tels procédés pour éviter de perdre le pouvoir. C'est par le mode de scrutin, le plébiscite, que le régime acquiert la légitimité: 'on le voit ici, la trajectoire du régime se donne à lire dans l'histoire de sa scène électorale, non comme une succession de scrutins banals, d'évènements purement contingents, mais comme l'un des lieux permanents de la régulation politique de l'autoritarisme'.[45] Mais pour comprendre la longévité de ce pouvoir, il faut combiner l'hégémonie du parti dominant et l'absence de tout projet politique, économique, social, culturel résumé dans la formule 'ni à gauche, ni à droite, toujours de l'avant', formule qui repose sur deux a priori complémentaires: le refus de voir l'opposition accéder au pouvoir, et la volonté de réaliser la conjonction des leaders modérés. Ce parangon, on le voit, associe deux

mécanismes: l'inflexion spontanée de la politique gouvernementale au rythme des indications données tantôt par les électeurs, tantôt par les mouvements sociaux et l'ouverture aux partis adverses en fonction des résultats électoraux et aussi des concessions faites par l'opposition.

La deuxième idée qui sied à ce régime est l'éternitarisme parce qu'il qualifie d'abord le principe de non-discontinuité, ensuite parce qu'il éclaire aussi la solidité des rapports entre l'Etat et l'ancienne puissance de tutelle, rapports qui vont induire chez les populations un imaginaire puissant sur les qualités exceptionnelles du principal détenteur de la souveraineté qui 'jouit d'une aura sur le plan continental, voire au-delà, a réussi à maintenir la stabilité, la cohésion et la paix sociale au pays'[46] et dont le pouvoir est éternel. Les slogans 'Bongo nza mfe' et 'Bongo mbè mbè' situent bien l'enjeu de cette élection présidentielle dans la mesure où l'auteur de ce slogan et tous les membres de la majorité présidentielle se persuadent qu'il n'y a qu'un seul homme sur la scène politique. Slogans de fermeture, de refus d'identification d'autres hommes dans la classe politique, ils sont à la fois un appel solennel à la candidature d'Omar Bongo, homme providentiel, et dissuasion solennelle d'imaginer d'autres candidatures: l'appel comme acte d'investiture se transforme en appel comme acte répressif. Puisqu'il émane de l'appareil d'Etat P.D.G., l'interpellation touche l'ensemble de la classe politique susceptible de prendre part aux élections afin qu'elle comprenne qu'elle ne peut rien face à un homme expérimenté dont les potentialités physiques et intellectuelles n'ont pas été entamées par 38 ans de règne. Si le plébiscite et l'éternitarisme, données internes du fonctionnement du régime sont les éléments visibles du processus électoral, il faut surtout considérer que la permanence au pouvoir du chef du P.D.G. 'en tant qu'alternative à l'alternance'[47] assure la longévité et la pérennité d'un ordre social où l'influence extérieure,[48] intervenant en amont, pèse toujours aussi lourdement sur le devenir politique de la formation sociale. Cette conjecture éclaire la manière dont cette influence extérieure redoute l'émergence de nouvelles élites peu accoutumées à la 'langue de bois', à 'la prédilection pour des relations personnalisées sur le mode paternaliste'[49] et continue de sauver un pouvoir honnis par le peuple.

Si l'élection reste 'une procédure par laquelle les membres d'un groupe (...) seraient en mesure de désigner leurs dirigeants et d'effectuer des choix collectifs quant à la conduite de leurs affaires communes',[50] celle-ci peut éclairer sur la configuration du régime et des intérêts en jeu au Gabon d'une part, sur l'intensité du ressentiment des masses et de l'opposition d'autre part. En effet, le Gabon est considéré dans l'espace francophone comme un havre de paix et comme un exemple de stabilité. De 1960 à 1967, L. Mba, premier chef d'Etat et père de la patrie, a été considéré par la France comme le meilleur garant des intérêts de la métropole: il sera, à la suite du putsch du 17 février 1964, rétabli au pouvoir par l'armée française. Son successeur, O. Bongo, devient le père de la nation et assume, bon an mal an, la pérennité du même

ordre social néo-colonial. C'est donc une constante, la personnalité qui se hisse au sommet de l'appareil d'Etat semble assuré d'y demeurer autant qu'il le voudra. Au moment où la France perd pied en Afrique et où le magistère présidentiel peut changer de cap, le plébiscite qui reconduit le candidat sortant, définit à la fois la nature de l'homme qui exerce le pouvoir et le mode de l'élection où 'la participation démocratique a ainsi une fonction instrumentale d'implication des gouvernés dans le processus de pouvoir'[51] car le résultat du scrutin est déjà acquis. En effet, les électeurs ont été appelés à voter à propos d'un homme: ils devaient choisir entre un homme qui incarne explicitement l'expérience et l'ordre et l'anarchie que représente implicitement l'opposition. Par le plébiscite, 'les électeurs donnent leur confiance, mais ne participent pas à la direction des affaires publiques'.[52] C'est par ce mode de scrutin qui est le signe typique du césarisme que les institutions gabonaises se reproduisent depuis 1967. Même si l'opposition gabonaise depuis la conférence Nationale de 1990 n'a pas encore acquis la capacité de gouverner, il n'y a pas eu de reflux de l'ancrage de l'électorat dans l'opposition; au contraire, en dépit des volte-faces de certains leaders, l'alternance n'a pas été piégée, l'électorat de l'opposition est demeurée stable et a bien résisté aux variations récentes (désertions de membres de certains partis de l'opposition) de l'environnement politique créées par le pouvoir.

Pour conclure, on peut interpréter les élections présidentielles des 25 et 27 novembre 2005 en fonction de deux éléments, le pouvoir d'un côté, si l'on envisage son exercice et, de l'autre, la durée avec l'accès au pouvoir et la reproduction de celui-ci. D'abord l'exercice, ce pouvoir, de tendance 'bonapartiste', combine 'l'antiparlementarisme, le goût de l'ordre, de l'autorité, des plébiscites et le nationalisme'[53] et fonctionne principalement à la répression (refus de l'alternance, intimidation des membres de l'opposition), secondairement à l'idéologie avec les compromis et faux-semblants (dialogue, tolérance, paix). En second lieu, la reproduction du pouvoir, attachée au problème de la durée, montre comment les mécanismes électifs ont partialement fonctionné. Les élections se sont déroulées comme les responsables de la commission nationale électorale l'avaient prévu: matériel électoral non distribué dans les délais et dans tous les bureaux de vote, transhumance des électeurs, absence de bulletins de certains candidats de l'opposition, falsification des procès verbaux... La réélection de Bongo permet de retenir, dans le rapport entre durée et pouvoir, la question de l'éternitarisme posée à travers la notion d'homme providentiel traduite par les deux expressions récurrentes de la campagne, 'Bongo nza mfe' et 'Bongo mbè mbè'. Ainsi l'élection n'a pas simplement consisté à désigner un mandataire du peuple, un détenteur de la souveraineté, elle a surtout contribué à montrer que pour les partisans de la majorité présidentielle qui ressassent leur slogan 'demain sera meilleur qu'aujourd'hui', les conditions d'existence et les relations politiques dans lesquelles ils sont engagés leur apparaissent immédiatement comme des

conditions naturelles, éternelles, faisant partie de l'ordre des choses. Cette conscience immédiate, fausse d'une partie de l'électorat en butte avec l'objectivité des processus sociaux, est en contradiction avec l'impératif de l'alternance que la situation électorale a résolument établi dans les bureaux de vote. A l'optimisme des partisans du pouvoir s'oppose le scepticisme politique de la dernière affiche de campagne de Bongo: 'Pour préparer l'avenir, je mets le Gabon entre les mains de Dieu'.

Notes

1. Au lendemain des élections présidentielles de 1993 gagnées par le président Bongo et contestées par l'opposition, les partis de la coalition gouvernementale, Parti Démocratique Gabonais (P.D.G.), Union Socialiste Gabonaise (U.S.G.), Parti Social Démocrate (P.S.D.), Alliance Pour le Socialisme au Gabon (A.P.S.G.) et ceux de l'opposition, le Mouvement de Redressement national (Morena), le Parti Gabonais du Progrès (P.G.P.), le Rassemblement National des Bûcherons (R.N.B.) se réunirent à Paris pour discuter du contentieux électoral. Le consensus obtenu sur ce contentieux fut marqué par un accord dénommé les Accords de Paris.
2. Il s'agit du responsable du Congrès pour la Démocratie et la Justice (C.D.J.), Marc Saturnin Nan Guema et de l'Abbé Noël Ngwa Nguema arrêtés sous le fallacieux prétexte de détention d'armes de guerre.
3. Il s'agit de Paul Mba Abessole, chef du Rassemblement du Peuple Gabonais (R.P.G.), de Pierre Claver Maganga Moussavou, Président du Parti Social Démocrate (P.S.D.).
4. (A. Garrigou: Le vote et la vertu: comment les français sont devenus électeurs, Paris, Fondation nationale de Science politique, 1992, p. 8).
5. Le fang est une des nombreuses langues nationales du Gabon. L'initiateur de ce slogan a été nommé Premier ministre le vendredi 20 janvier 2006.
6. L'Espoir, bimensuel indépendant d'information, de formation et de loisirs, 2ème année n° 25 du lundi 9 mai 2005, p. 1.
7. L'Espoir, op cit. p. 3. Au cours de l'année 1998, le journal La Griffe n° 396 du vendredi 8 juillet, p. 1, reprenait les hésitations des milieux français à propos de la candidature de Bongo dans les termes suivants: 'n renoncement de Bongo arrangerait tout le monde'.
8. Journal la Démocratie, bimensuel d'information, 3ème année, n° 12 du mercredi 7 décembre 2005, p. 1.
9. Pierre Mamboundou, ingénieur en communication, Président de l'Union du Peuple Gabonais (U.P.G.), ancien candidat à l'élection présidentielle de 1998, se présente à nouveau au nom de l'opposition.
10. Ancien Secrétaire Général Adjoint du Parti Démocratique Gabonais (P.D.G.), ancien ministre et député du P.D.G., Zacharie Myboto a annoncé le 30 avril 2005, au cours d'une conférence de presse, la création de sa propre formation politique, l'Union Gabonaise pour la Démocratie et le Développement (U.G.D.D.), et, en conséquence, quitte le P.D.G.

11. Union n° 8941, jeudi 13 octobre 2005, p. 3.
12. Union n° 8966 du lundi 14 novembre 2005, p. 3.
13. Les médias audio visuel sont la Radio Télévision Gabonaise chaîne 1 et 2, TV+, Télé Afroca et le Quotidien d'informations générales l'Union.
14. B.Denni – P.Lecomte: Sociologie du politique, T 1, Grenoble, PUG, 3ème édition, 1999, p. 147.
15. P.D.G., R.P.G., P.S.D., C.L.R., P.U.P., ADHERE.
16. Les principales associations sont le Mouvement des amis de Bongo (MABO), le Mouvement des enfants de BONGO (MEBO), le Mouvement des amies d'Edith Lucie Bongo (MAELBO), L'alliance nationale pour le soutien d'Omar Bongo (ANSOB), Bongo doit rester (B.D.R.), Forum pour la réélection d'Omar Bongo (FOROBO).
17. Union n° 8938 du lundi 10 octobre 2005, p. 1, RPG.
18. Union n° 8938 lundi 10 octobre 2005, p.2, PGCI.
19. Union n° 8966 du lundi 14 novembre 2005, p. 3.
20. Discours à la nation, 17 août 1970.
21. Dominique Colas: Sociologie politique, Paris, PUF, 1994, p. 357.
22. P. Bénéton: Introduction à la politique moderne, Paris, Hachette, 1987, p. 394.
23. La marraine du Forum des femmes de la majorité est aussi l'épouse du chef de l'Etat. Union n° 8943 du samedi et dimanche 15 et 16octobre 2005, p. 3.
24. Union n° 8946 du mercredi 19 octobre 2005, p.4.
25. Union n° 8947, jeudi 20 octobre 2005, p.4.
26. Union n° 8938 du lundi 10 octobre 2005, p. 1.
27. Union n° 8938 du lundi 10 octobre 2005, p. 2.
28. Bénéton: Introduction à la politique moderne, op. p. 394.
29. Declaration du chef de l'Etat, Union n° 8941du lundi 10 octobre 2005, p. 3.
30. Communiqué conjoint des ministres de la Défense nationale et de la Sécurité publique à l'endroit de tous les candidats à la présidence de la république, Union n° du mardi 14 octobre 2005, p. 4.
31. Allocution du chef de l'Etat, Union n° 8966 du lundi 14 novembre 2005, p. 2.
32. P. Bénéton, op. cit. p. 399.
33. P. Yengo: 'La diligence de la stagnation', Rupture-Solidarité, n° 6, 2005, Karthala, p.186-190.
34. P. Bénéton: Introduction à la politique moderne, op cit. pp. 396-397.
35. P. Bénéton op cit. p. 400.
36. Jean Daniel Reynaud: Les règles du jeu – L'action collective et la régulation sociale, Paris, A. Colin, 3è édition, 1997, p. 194.
37. Union n° 8996 du lundi 19 décembre 2005, p. 4.
38. J. L. Quermonne: Les régimes politiques occidentaux, op cit. p. 175-176.

39. B. Denni – P. Lecomte: Sociologie du politique, t. II, op cit. pp. 13-14.
40. P. Chabal – J. P. Daloz: L'Afrique est partie! Du désordre comme instrument politique, Paris, Economica, 1999, p. 46.
41. G. Hermet, B. Badie et ali: Dictionnaire de la science politique et des institution politiques, 4è édition, Paris, A. Colin, 'Cursus Science politique', 2000, p. 34.
42. G. Hermet, op cit. p. 35.
43. J. L. Quermonne: Les régimes politiques occidentaux, Paris, Seuil, 2è édition, 1986, p. 63.
44. R. Boudon, F. Bourricaud: Dictionnaire critique de la sociologie, Paris, P.U.F., 3è édition, 1990, p.221.
45. D. Compagnon: Pour une analyse multidimensionnelle du processus électoral africain-historicité, comparaison et institutionnalisation, P. Quantin (sous la dir.): Voter en Afrique – comparaisons et différenciations, Paris, L'Harmattan, 'Logiques sociales', 2004, p. 53.
46. Union n° 8947 du jeudi 20 octobre 2005, p. 4.
47. J. L. Quermonne: Les régimes politiques, op cit. p. 78.
48. Lire à ce sujet le numéro spécial de Politique africaine II, 5, février 1982.
49. P. Chabal, J. P. Daloz: L'Afrique est partie! op cit. p. 24.
50. R. Boudon, F. Bourricaud: 'Elections', Dictionnaire critique de la sociologie, op cit. p. 218.
51. B. Denni, P. Lecomte: Sociologie du politique, Grenoble, P.U.G., Tome2, 3è édition, 1999, p. 13.
52. G.Burdeau, F. Hamon-M. Troper: Manuel de Droit constitutionnel, Paris, Librairie générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence (L.G.D.J.), 1995, p. 309.
53. M. Grawitz: Lexique des sciences sociales, Paris, Dalloz, 7è édition, 2000, p. 44.

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African Sociological Review, 10, (2), 2006, pp. 18-42.

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Between Ethnic Essentialism and Environmental Racism: Oil and the 'Glocalisation' of Environmental Justice Discourse in Nigeria[1]

Abstract

This paper examines the 'state' of environmental justice discourse in Nigeria, focussing on the ways in which the concept of environmental racism has been deployed to explain corporate and state conduct in the upstream petroleum sector. The paper shows how, in trying to make environmental racism relevant to the debates on socio-ecological abuses, and attendant grassroots resistance in Nigeria, some analysts have inserted it into ethnic discourse. Thus, what might have been a problematic concept in the Nigerian context now sits within a 'familiar', albeit not wholly appropriate framework – an ethnic model, which typically portrays grassroots struggles in sub-Saharan Africa as driven by invidious primordial concerns. Based on a recent ethnographic study conducted in some of Nigeria's better known oil-producing communities, and on relevant secondary data, the paper shows how the application of environmental racism at once illuminates and distorts the social character of petroleum-related grassroots struggles in Nigeria. Importantly, it shows how decades of naked greed, failed 'background institutions' and disastrous political governance in Nigeria have, paradoxically, not sufficiently instigated in the scholarly community a fundamental rethink of the sociology of dispossession in Nigeria.

1. Introduction

In analysing grassroots struggles and social conflict in multi-ethnic societies, the challenge is often that of isolating the driving forces behind such struggles. The difficulty is in understanding how entrenched power asymmetries among different segments of the society impact on – and are in turn impacted by – grassroots struggles, and what such struggles could mean for the broader developmental and democratisation aspirations of the society in question. For instance, though often acknowledging the existence of diverse and cross-cutting associative phenomena, many analysts tend to treat petroleum-related social conflict in Nigeria, Africa's largest oil and gas producer, as

stemming from and fundamentally revolving around the fact of the country's multi-ethnic make-up (Cesarz et al., 2003; Ikelegbe, 2001). The way petroleum exploitation impacts on the multi-ethnic society is often portrayed as inextricable from immanent ethnic wranglings. Relatedly, there is sometimes the suggestion that because of their intrinsic 'ethnic character', grassroots struggles associated with these issues are incompatible with authentic, citizen mobilisation aimed at wider societal 'emancipation'.

Yet, despite its wide appeal, the ethnic analytical treatment has its weaknesses. For one thing, it makes it difficult for grassroots struggles (and the developmental and governance predicaments of which they are emblematic) to be seen from the perspective of ordinary people. As Apter (2005: 267) has suggested, without 'look[ing] past the limits of ethnic politics' and the essentialist discourse in which much social commentary about Africa is embedded, it is impossible to grasp the deeper significance of the grassroots struggles occurring in different parts of the continent.

Petroleum-related grassroots struggles and social conflict in Nigeria date back to the early years of petroleum production in the 1950s, and have evolved and become more complex as Nigeria's hydrocarbon status has become better revealed. In recent years, the struggles have developed features that many believe militate against the prospect of Nigeria becoming a more united and sustainable society. This makes it imperative to interrogate the environmental justice narrative – and in particular the concept of environment racism – as it is used in Nigeria to explain the Niger Delta conflict. The rationale here is that environmental justice is fast gaining prominence as a critical resource for making sense of this type of conflict.

Drawing on ethnographic data obtained in the Niger Delta in 2003,[2] and on relevant secondary data, this paper addresses two interrelated questions. First, what are the main tenets of the environmental justice debate and how has this discourse become 'Nigerianised'? Second, what does this 'Nigerianisation' tell us about the social character of petroleum-related grassroots struggles in Nigeria? Even so, an empirically-based understanding of how environmental justice and environmental racism are used to explain petroleum-related social conflict in Nigeria could give further indication of the diverse discursive challenges – and even abuses – facing these analytical constructs in different societal settings.

2. Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism in Perspective

A useful entry point into the environmental justice and environmental racism discourse is an acknowledgement of the role these constructs, and the social activism built around them, have played in 'humanising' the broader environmental movement. Principally, they helped to debunk notions of the environment as the 'non-human' abode of birds, earthworms and fishes, and of

environmental engagement as being about 'the protection of natural systems and species' and the 'rights of nature' (Hargrove, 2001: ix). Environmental justice and environmental racism highlighted the fact that the environment is 'a set of linked places 'where we live, work, learn and play' (Turner and Wu, 2002) – a thinking which echoes a common belief in the indigenous forest regions of Southern Nigeria that the 'earth, our mother', is where we derive our individual and collective identities (Mitee, 2002; Uchendu, 1979). According to Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2004), the humanising (and debunking) of the discourse of the 'deep ecologists' could mark the end of mainstream environmentalism as we know it.

From the understanding that the environment is where we 'live, work, learn and play', environmental justice came to be officially defined, by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in particular, as fair treatment of people of diverse racial, national, ethnic and income backgrounds with regard to their participation in the 'development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, programs and policies' (Dorzback, 2001). This definition also implies that no community should be unfairly exposed to negative environmental consequences of private or public industrial decisions, policies and projects that fundamentally benefit another group. In the United States, these contemporary propositions are widely regarded as the fruits of decades of environmental activism and research. They are widely traced to the 1960s American civil rights struggles, although there are suggestions that the environmental justice movement in North America goes back to the last decade of the fifteenth century (Turner and Wu, 2002). While environmental justice activism in the United States is historically associated with 'people of colour', especially following the ground-breaking protests in 1982 by African-Americans against moves to locate a polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) landfill in Warren County, North Carolina, the movement has since the 1990s broken racial, gender, age and class boundaries (Bullard, 2000: xiii).

Environmental racism, one of the most conspicuous contributions of the environmental justice movement to the global environmental discourse, is defined as 'any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color' (Bullard, 2000: 98). Its proponents maintain that the very environmental practices that have brought gains to particular segments of society, often achieve that goal by making victims of specific groups and communities in the same society, with racial and ethnic minorities being the most adversely affected (Bullard, 1994).

According to Austin and Schill (1994), there is a discernible pattern to the environmental problems of America's 'black, brown, red, and poisoned' communities. As socioeconomic conditions improve for white jobholders, they relocate from residential areas neighbouring the hazardous industrial plants in which they work, vacating homes which low-income people of colour are only

too willing to move into. Even so, polluting industrial estates are sources of cheap residential land, and poor African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asians, migrants and other minorities typically regard them as 'prime' housing sites. Furthermore, for polluters such as operators of incinerating plants, there is every economic sense in setting up operations close to where the hugest supply of waste is guaranteed (Austin and Schill, 1994: 53-54). For Bullard (2000: 3), it all boils down to the fact that polluters regard poor communities as the 'path of least resistance'. Environmental justice and environmental racism are thus narratives which attempt to shed light on the 'abuse' of the ecological rights of the 'powerless', and on community struggles to uphold those rights.

The perspective has been used to illuminate the struggles of grassroots groups in India, Colombia, Venezuela, Nigeria and virtually everywhere else. In India, for example, the struggles of the group Chipko Andolan (literally 'hug a tree') movement not only signify what Obi (2005: 1) calls 'revolutionary pressures from below'; they also reinforce the view highlighted earlier that rural people in many societies regard the natural environment as an extension of community identity and a space over which they must exercise their rights. The Chipko movement, which started in the 1970s, consists mainly of women who view commercial logging as a threat to the sustainability of the Himalayan ecology and an erosion of their right to determining what constitutes sustainable use of forest resources. In the Garhwal Himalaya in particular, where hillside forests regulate water runoff to the valleys and provide local communities with fuel wood and fodder, villagers blame commercial logging as a major cause of landslides and floods and a factor in local impoverishment.

Chipko activism consists of such singular steps as village women scampering into the forest upon sighting the loggers, and each woman hugging a tree such that to cut it down, an operator would literally have to place his chainsaw on the back of a protester (Weber, 1988).

Also from an environmental justice perspective, oil-related protests in the oil-rich U'wa community of Colombia's Norte de Santander province (in the northeast of the country) are viewed as struggles to ensure that resource exploitation policies and corporate practices reflect community sensibilities about the environment. The U'wa regard oil exploration as an activity that drains 'mother earth' of its 'blood'. For them, oil production is 'genocidal'. Apparently not lured by the economic promise of petroleum, their campaign has traditionally consisted of the threat of mass suicide should oil operations be undertaken in their territory without their endorsement. Thus, when in 1992, Shell and Occidental Oil (Oxy) were given the rights to explore for oil in the U'wa homeland (found at the time to hold an estimated 1.5 billion barrels of untapped crude), the companies and the Colombian state came up against heavy protests (van Haren, 2000).

The strong opposition among the nomadic Warao Indians (in Venezuela's Delta Amacuro State) to petroleum exploration in the Orinoco River Delta has similarly been documented (Gutierrez, 1997; Bassey, 1997: 36).

The environmental justice discourse and, in particular, the concept of environmental racism, highlights an important social justice dimension of the power asymmetries between social groups. Such asymmetries are believed to characterise the relations between big industrial corporations (often acting with the state's backing) and ordinary citizens. Apparently because of its emphasis on social justice, the environmental justice perspective continues to enjoy prominence, providing an analytical bridge between the 'environmental' and the 'social'.

Not surprisingly, environmental justice has become a vital resource in the sustainability debate. For development to meet the needs of the present generation without making it impossible for posterity to meet its own needs – as the United Nation's World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987) defined sustainable development – it is imperative that local communities, regardless of colour, race and income, become involved in the design and implementation of industrial policies. The utilisation of environmental resources (be it petroleum, gold, forests or rivers) must also be done within an institutional and legal framework that ensures that the benefits (and costs) are equitably distributed across the population.

It is in the light of the foregoing that the deployment of the environmental justice discourse in the Niger Delta context must be examined. First, however, it is important to outline how petroleum exploitation has affected, and continues to affect the oil-producing region. This serves as a background for understanding the attitude of the Nigerian government towards ordinary people and that vital space where people 'live, work, learn [,] play' and pray. It also serves to show why, in deploying the concepts of environmental justice and environmental racism, one must not over-extend their deductive potential by, for instance, forcing them into discourses whose utility is questionable in certain contexts – discourses such as ethnic essentialism.

3. Impacts and Panics: Oil exploitation and the Niger Delta Neighbourhood

The nine states of the Niger Delta region (Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers) are the main theatre of petroleum exploitation in Nigeria. The leading oil-producing states are Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Delta. The primary data on which some of the discussion in this and other sections of this article is based were obtained in Nigeria's first commercial oil well community of Oloibiri (Bayelsa state); Ebubu, another of the early oil communities (Rivers state), and Iko (Akwa Ibom state). Nigeria's first commercial oil well was drilled in Oloibiri in June 1956, while the country

commenced crude oil export in 1958. The author has detailed elsewhere (Akpan, 2006, 2005) some relevant socioeconomic and political attributes of these communities, as well as the history of and fiscal regimes governing the country's upstream petroleum industry. The sketches and analyses provided in these earlier articles, together with the impacts discussed in this section, constitute, for some analysts, the principal basis for regarding the developmental challenges in the Niger Delta as a classical case of environmental injustice.

The impacts of petroleum operations are many and varied. For a country that has for the greater part of its post-colonial history (the country attained political independence in 1960) depended heavily on petroleum for its foreign exchange earnings and state budget revenues, Nigeria owes its socioeconomic well-being to this resource. Table 1 gives an indication of the level of Nigeria's dependence on petroleum.

Table 1: Nigeria's Petroleum and Total Export Earnings

Year	Total Export Earnings (Million US$)	Crude Oil Export Earnings (Million US$)	Oil Export Earnings as % of Total Export Earnings	Year	Total Export Earnings (Million US$)	Crude Oil Export Earnings (Million US$)	Oil Export Earnings as % of Total Export Earnings
1969	891	422	47	1987	7560	7024	93
1970	1249	718	57	1988	6877	6267	91
1971	1889	1375	73	1989	7844	7470	95
1972	2184	1803	83	1990	13673	13265	97
1973	3601	3049	85	1991	2264	11792	96
1974	9684	8997	93	1992	11886	11642	98
1975	8305	7744	93	1993	11590	10859	93
1976	10117	9444	93	1994	11319	11040	98
1977	12367	11561	93	1995	12248	11512	94
1978	10445	9452	90	1996	16142	14888	92
1979	16733	15624	93	1997	16525	14391	87
1980	25934	24931	96	1998	11346	8754	77
1981	17837	17291	97	1999	13227	12453	94

1982	12176	11883	98	2000	26449	20040	76
1983	10363	9941	96	2001	17688	17188	97
1984	11849	11534	97	2002	18573	17083	92
1985	13111	12568	96	2003	24047	22184	92
1986	5083	4770	94	2004	35050	32337	92
Average rate of dependence on crude oil export earnings: 90%							

Source: Constructed with data from OPEC (2005).

While there is hardly any sector of the Nigerian economy that has not benefited from petroleum revenues, there have been numerous reports about how the oil sector has suppressed the development of the productive and other sectors of the domestic economy (failed forward integration), and how there has been insufficient development of other sectors to support the local oil industry (failed backward integration) (Igwe and Edozien, 1986; Watts, 1987a, b). On the other hand, some analysts have focussed on the deleterious macro-level impacts of oil on politics, modes of accumulation, socio-political relations among various groups and social classes in the country, as well as on state-society relations (Frynas, 2000; Obi, 1997; Watts, 1987; Berry, 1987; Turner, 1980). Questions have also been raised about the role of crude oil exploitation in reinforcing the image of a country long regarded, along with many other Third World countries, as an enclave of cheap primary commodities serving the needs of Western industrial economies. On this score, interest has been on how oil has helped to define Nigeria's present station in the global capitalist system (Igwe and Edozien, 1986; Turner, 1980).

For the purposes of the present discussion, the focus will be on the impact of petroleum operations on social existence and social relations in the Niger Delta, where the Nigerian petroleum industry is geographically concentrated, and on the province's natural environment. One important finding along this line is that despite the fact that the Niger Delta makes the largest contribution to the Nigerian economy, the coefficient of the relationship between oil and positive changes in such social services as education, health, housing, power, roads and water in the province was statistically 'insignificant' when compared to similar changes nationally (Ikein 1990: 165). The study further noted that the region's 'poor conditions' were actually 'exacerbated by the activities of the oil industry' (Ikein 1990: 164), a situation that has remained substantially unchanged (HRW, 2002) and, as elaborated later, made some analysts to regard the region as a case of 'selective' ethnic victimisation.

One of the oil production-related processes by which (to use Ikein's phrase) 'poor conditions' in the oil province are 'exacerbated' is the poor compensations paid to local land-owning families and village communities by oil operators and the state for land taken for pipeline laying, road and helipad

construction, industrial and residential housing, hydrocarbon waste disposal, and other uses (Akpan 2005). Indeed, despite claims by the major transnational operators (like Shell and ChevronTexaco) that they maintain a policy of minimal landholding in the oil province (SPDC 2001), evidence abounds that the corporate and state practices – and the laws within which these practices are allegedly legitimised – are fundamentally in conflict with local socio-cultural and ecological sensibilities, and are therefore fundamentally impoverishing. For instance, in a region where the average landholding per rural family is two hectares, and where subsistence agriculture is the dominant occupation, the author learnt during his fieldwork that a hectare of indigenous 'economic' crops like maize, cassava, pepper and sweet potato destroyed through an oil spill or in the course of normal petroleum operations attracted only US$59, $136, $76, $50 respectively in 2003. Besides, in making a distinction between 'economic' and 'food' crops, and attaching an even lower monetary value to the latter, crops that might have high socio-cultural (but lower economic) value among ordinary people in the oil-producing communities remain virtually 'invisible' in the compensation system (Akpan 2005).

Against the background of very low average landholding per farming family, the incidence of land abandonment by local people as a result of petroleum industry landholding, and the resultant occupational dislocation in the oil communities, unsustainable people-environment relationships (as exemplified by over-cultivation of marginal land, over-fishing, the denuding of forests, and land disputes) become unavoidable. Rural occupational dislocation worsens the problem of rural-urban migration and gives frustrated rural youths an excuse to vandalise oil pipelines, and indulge in hostage-taking and ransom-seeking, just as a way of accessing crude oil and financial 'fortune'.

Until the enactment of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Decree (No. 86 of December 1992), oil companies and others involved in environmentally threatening operations were not legally required to carry out impact assessments or consult communities before taking any environmental decision. Land acquisition and the setting up of oil infrastructure proceeded without, for example, botanical and heritage studies aimed at preserving or reconstructing local cultural and socio-ecological histories that could be adversely impacted. Thus, 'like the grass on which the dancer trod' (to use Joe Mutiga's poetic imagery), the Niger Delta may have had important parts of its cultural history dug up and thrown away just to make way for oil wells, pipelines and industrial and residential facilities. This is not implying that oil operations have become more locally sensitive post-1992, or that the oil-producing communities (and the wider Nigerian public) have become an integral part of whatever impact assessment systems there now are. Studies have shown that 'there is little improvement in the way in which some companies inform [local residents] about projects', hence there is a strong perception in the region that local inputs into EIA processes count for very little (Adomokai and Sheate, 2004: 508).

As in most oil-producing provinces elsewhere, inward migration is a major issue in the Niger Delta, where a number of associated factors pose threats to social existence, especially among ordinary people. That the city of Port Harcourt, for example, is regarded as Nigeria's 'oil capital' has ramifications beyond simply the appellation. During his fieldwork in 2003 the author encountered wide-ranging narratives and urban legends about social life in Port Harcourt and other Nigerian 'oil cities'. One of these was that the price of 'everything' (rental apartments, for instance) in these cities had escalated beyond the reach of ordinary people. There were ubiquitous descriptions of landlords as 'greedy' and 'heartless'. School teachers and certain other categories of civil servants were particularly unlucky as far as taking up a lease on rental apartments was concerned, as most landlords showed little patience with the 'low' and 'precarious' incomes of these categories of salary earners. The island town of Bonny, which hosts a Shell-operated crude oil export terminal (one of Nigeria's six) as well as the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) plant, was commonly referred to by local residents as a gathering point for 'prostitutes', who flocked there from all over the country (Semenitari, 1998; Olukoya, 2003). Incidentally, the town had a high incidence of single mothers and 'fatherless' children – that is, children of migrant oil workers, oil contractors and other 'fortune-seekers' who might have simply left the town.

Another important oil impact is what the author has termed the over-monetisation of everything. Field observations and conversations with residents in the study communities revealed that this phenomenon had exerted tremendous strain not on only broad social relations in the Niger Delta, but more specifically on the ability of indigenous authority structures to function properly. For instance, maintaining some liaison with the transnational oil companies or the various oil-related public institutions was, for many local residents, a sure way to influence community governance. Ironically, despite the swindles that tended to characterise such liaisons, it all formed part of what the oil companies regarded as 'stakeholder engagement' or 'building social partnerships' in the oil communities (Akpan, 2006: 232). The local social milieu was characterised by constant jostling for the material opportunities (real or imagined) the oil industry and associated institutions offered – this more so, since existing oil-related laws make no clear stipulations about how companies should build social partnerships in the communities. The author learnt in one of the three study communities of how an 'ungrateful' oil company declined a traditional ruler's request for funds to 'complete' the building of his residence and of how the company 'dishonestly' complained of 'financial constraints'.

The author found that in the quest for perceived material promises of the oil industry, merely being a 'chief' or an 'elder' in a community no longer conferred sufficient status, due to a breakdown of trust between different segments of the community – notably the 'youth' and the 'elders'. Money

seemed to be a crucial determinant of status. Many youths spoken to were highly suspicious of the 'elders', who felt the latter used their authority to stifle, rather than enhance, whatever material benefits could accrue to them directly. With increasing delegitimation of indigenous authority, local authority-bearers seemed unable to effectively enforce local norms or mediate in disputes involving local youths and the oil companies.

The fieldwork data indicated that the quest for 'oil money' (the local slang for any sudden, substantial material accumulation) did affect the region in a physical way as well. For instance, the Delta's contemporary urbanscape was characterised by busy shanty and roadside markets, streets perennially congested by hustlers and tricksters, and squalid residential neighbourhoods. The urbanscape also had the unmistakable hallmarks of opulent Nigeria-palatial mansions (many in neighbourhoods with no health facilities, public power, water, sanitation, fixed-line telephony, motorable roads or recreational facilities), elegant corporate premises, expensive cars, and thousands of 'under-construction' upmarket residential and office buildings.

Research and anecdotal evidence has shown that oil operations have blighted the Niger Delta (and by extension, Nigeria) in several ways, making the region very panicky and unstable. Widespread social tension and grassroots discontent are compounded by environmental and public health hazards associated with different aspects of the petroleum business. For example, scientific analyses of untreated produced water (the water by-product of extracted crude oil) in the Niger Delta have established that the water, a million barrels of which is released daily (Ekoriko, 1997) into open pits, and directly into the region's fresh water bodies (TED, 1997), contains a high prevalence of corrosion-causing and other polluting organisms. The reckless discharge of untreated and poorly treated produced water from the sites of oil operations is one of the ways in which rivers, streams and aquifers in the Niger Delta are made unsafe for humans and wildlife (Benka-Coker et al., 1996).

The flaring and venting of associated gas (the natural gas that spews from an oil well alongside water when crude oil is pumped) has remained a perennial source of conflict between ordinary people in the Niger Delta and the oil operators, and between local groups and the Nigerian government. The author has reported elsewhere his observations in Ebubu, where rows of residential houses had badly charred and corroded corrugated-iron roofs, with residents attributing the damage (which allegedly could occur within 24 months of roofing a house) to 'acid rain' associated with the perpetual gas flaring taking place in the immediate vicinity (Akpan, 2006).

Nigeria has estimated ultimate gas reserves of about 8,500 billion cubic metres, and proven reserves of about 4,250 billion, and currently produces about 21 billion cubic metres. Until recently, the fraction of total gas production flared in Nigeria has been as high as 86 percent (Oguejiofor, 2004), and associated gas 95 percent (HRW, 1999). While there are at present no hard

scientific data on how the flaring and venting of associated gas 'exacerbates' the 'poor conditions' in the Niger Delta (to again borrow Ikein's usage), anecdotal evidence suggesting that kind of relationship abounds. Atmospheric heat, a sooty overhang, and burning sensations when inhaling air, are common problems in the Niger Delta. A white flag hoisted anywhere in the Delta goes black with soot within a few months. On one occasion during the fieldwork, when the author visited the recreation club of a large oil company in Port Harcourt, a lifeguard at the swimming pool (a non-Nigerian) drew his attention to such a 'white' flag waving in the wind at the poolside. Considering that the recreation facility was located in an otherwise idyllic, 'first world-like' residential estate, the blackness of the 'white' flag was a striking commentary on the air quality in the Niger Delta. Nigeria is widely considered the world's leading gas-flaring country.

Gas flaring would probably not have been a very problematic issue in the Niger Delta, since the region's oil is widely reputed to be low in the noxious oxides which when burnt constitute a public health hazard. The key issues with gas flaring in the region include: (a) the sheer volume of gas being flared, (b) the persistence and impunity of the practice, and (c) the outdated flaring technology, which results in poor combustion efficiency (Sonibare and Akeredolu, 2004; Oguejiofor, 2004). While the minimum permissible flare stack height – even for low-sulphur (or 'sweet') gas – is 12 metres in Alberta, Canada (Ishisone, 2004), the author identified during his fieldwork flare points in the Niger Delta that resembled bush-burning scenes: the flare stacks were savagely close to the ground and to people's homes and farms. On the road between Yenegoa and Oloibiri (one of the fieldwork communities), a minibus taxi passenger would feel the flaming heat.

Ishisone (2004) has noted that on average, gas flaring in the Niger Delta is incomplete combustion, which is why the process typically releases 'methane, propane, and hazardous air [pollutants] such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and soot'. By comparison 95 per cent flare efficiency has generally been achieved in the oil-producing Alberta province of Canada (Environment Canada, 2001). While fines have from time to time been stipulated by the Nigerian government as a way of curbing excessive gas flaring, such initiatives have been ineffective, partly because 'they provided exemptions to the rules [and] the fines imposed were never set at levels that would be a real deterrent' (Davies 2001: 219).

There is also the endemic and enduring problem of oil spills, which occur often due to factors such as the natural moistness, salinity and corrosiveness of the Niger Delta environment, reckless disposal of untreated hydrocarbon wastes, low pipeline integrity (itself an aspect of the fact that the country's petroleum pipelines, much of it laid since the 1950s, are poorly maintained), fires, explosions, oil equipment malfunction, tanker leakages, and vandalism. Contrary to the global norm, whereby the worst oil spills have been associated

more directly with crude oil transport – that is, with tanker loading/discharging, tanker collisions, groundings, hull failures and related incidents – and less directly with the oil industry (ITOPF, 2004), oil pollution in the Niger Delta seems to be 'primarily' a function of corporate recklessness resulting from, among other factors, compromised regulatory performance (UNEP-WCMC, 2002). While large-scale spills occur from time to time in the province, scientists have warned that the Nigerian society should be just as concerned about the small, frequently occurring spillages which, though apparently less serious 'when considered individually', 'lead to chronic pollution' (Snowden and Ekweozor, 1987: 599).

Against the background of unreliable data, estimates of the number of spill occurrences, and of the volumes of oil spilled, in the Niger Delta vary widely among sources. According to the Nigerian Environmental Study/Action Team (NEST, 1991: 44) only one spill (involving about 150 barrels of oil) was reported in 1970, a figure which rose to 1,581 occurrences by 1982 (involving several hundred thousands of barrels of oil). The Nigerian oil industry regulator, Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), puts the number of incidents at 4,835 for the period 1976-1996, involving a total of 2.45 million barrels of oil. Still another estimate, based primarily on oil company figures, put the figure at 1.07 million barrels for the period between 1960 and 1997 (HRW, 1999:59). Figures from the Ministry of Environment show that 2,796 spills occurred between 1976 and 1990, involving 2.105 million barrels of oil (Davies, 2001:217). According to the World Bank, at least 3,000 oil spills occurred in the Niger Delta between 1990 and 1995 in which about 1.5 million barrels of oil were discharged into the environment (*ThisDay – The Sunday Newspaper*, 1998). In 2003, the author found evidence of oil spills in all three fieldwork communities (Oloibiri, Ebubu, and Iko). In Ebubu, the unrestored site of a 30-odd-year old spill was still soggy, desolate and barren. On the different occasions when the author canoed with local youths through the oily and smelly Delta creeks, which looked like dead seas, he was repeatedly told that fishing was now a 'dead' occupation and that 'floating oil' had 'killed all the fish'.

It is hardly necessary to attempt, in a treatise of this scope, to enumerate the full range of impacts associated with petroleum exploitation in the Niger Delta. The above profile serves to provide a glimpse of how the socio-ecological health of the Niger Delta neighbourhood has been affected, or stands to be affected, by upstream petroleum business. As shown later, analysts who have deployed the environmental justice and environmental racism narrative to explain the Niger Delta crisis have based their analysis on these impacts, and on the lackadaisical attitude with which the Nigerian state and the oil companies have tried to deal with the hazardous effects of petroleum exploitation.

It is interesting to note how the legal/institutional arrangements governing the upstream petroleum industry seem to have bolstered the impunity with

which certain negative aspects of the petroleum business have gone on. For example, in terms of the laws defining petroleum ownership and control in Nigeria (in particular Petroleum Act No. 51 of 1969) the oil-producing communities – and the Niger Delta province as a whole – are outsiders in the contracts that: (a) make the Nigerian government owners of the petroleum and other minerals existing anywhere in Nigeria, and (b) bind the transnational oil companies to the Nigerian government for the purposes of exploiting such resources. Thus effective grassroots participation in the petroleum business (what is sometimes termed the 'social license to operate') is lacking. The Petroleum Act also requires operators to 'adopt all practicable precautions' to prevent land and water pollution and must be guided by 'good oilfield practice' in containing the effects of oil pollution should any occur (see Gao, 2003). The Act pronounces no stiff consequences should operators fail to comply.

Auxiliary legislation such as the 1978 Land Use Act makes the Nigerian government the owner of land everywhere in Nigeria. Thus, while the Petroleum Act had anticipated the payment of 'just' compensation for land acquired from villagers for petroleum operations, in the Land Use Act the government became the landlord in the first place. Even if crude oil is struck underneath a farmer's bedroom, the farmer is entitled to very meagre compensation for the demolition of his hut, the excavation of his deceased father's tombstone and the destruction of his crops. In the 1960s, the oil companies might have paid a token amount for 'leasing' of the land, but since the coming into to force of the Land Use Act in 1978, the farmer has effectively been a 'tenant at will on state land... whose proprietary interest in his land… are restricted to improvements he made on land' (Uchendu 1978: 69-70). He must vacate the land to make way for petroleum operations (Akpan, 2005, HRW, 1997).

In the light of the foregoing it is then appropriate to see how analysts have deployed the environmental justice narrative in the Nigerian context.

4. Environmental Racism: the 'Nigerianisation' of a Discourse

What we have seen so far is that the environmental justice discourse has been deployed in different societal contexts to explain not only 'unjust' environmental processes but also specific dynamics of power and certain kinds of resistance. However, because Nigeria is an 'all-black' African country, where allegations of racism (environmental or otherwise) might ordinarily seem out of place, what some analysts have done is to create a racial scenario, with 'white' (transnational) oil corporations on the one hand and Nigeria (the 'black belt') on the other. Grassroots resistance in the Niger Delta is explained from the point of view of local rejection of a racially discriminatory corporate ethos whereby Shell, for example, perpetrates and supports in the host society violence and environmental abuses that it would not contemplate doing in its

home country, The Netherlands. Conveying this point, Ekoriko (1997) has made the following observations:

> Given the care they [oil companies] take to protect the environment in their home countries, the devastation of the Niger Delta is a conscious policy on their part for several reasons. One, there is a colonial mentality that a third world environment does not deserve good care. This attitude means that the oil companies do not have any sense of responsibility towards Nigeria or any other third world country for that matter. All they care is to exploit the resources.

Of course, Ekoriko could not be entirely correct in asserting that the 'responsible' behaviour of the oil companies in 'their home countries' was borne out of love of one's country. In Norway, The Netherlands, Canada and other industrialised oil-producing countries, oil operations are governed by strict laws with stiff violation consequences, and oil operators know there are laws and regulatory structures that are hard to circumvent.

Gbadegesin (2001: 195) writes that the 'chemical pollution and destruction of farmland and fishing creeks' by transnational oil corporations in Nigeria go beyond the usual 'recklessness' of capitalist industrial organisations and the 'economics of oil exploration'. At the heart of such 'recklessness' is racism.

For Gbadegesin (2001: 190), environmental racism goes beyond transnational companies making themselves 'parallel governments' and side-stepping all norms of environmental best practice in their host countries. It includes what he calls 'toxic terrorism' – the practice whereby Western companies deliberately dump in Third World communities toxic wastes generated in the course of normal business operations in their home countries. Bassey (1997) has also remarked on hazardous waste dumping as a signifier of the power asymmetry between Western transnational corporations and Third World communities. He identifies this asymmetry as one of the reasons that 'oil wealth spells oil doom to the powerless people' (Bassey, 1997: 91).

Turner (2001a) has similarly questioned the conduct of Western transnationals in their foreign (mainly Third World) operational settings. In an article written shortly after her visit to an oil spill-impacted community in the Niger Delta, Turner highlighted the 'unprincipled'practice whereby transnational oil companies not only failed to provide life support to oil spill victims, but also treated with disdain issues relating to long-term compensation, 'adequate reparation' to affected communities, and 'fundamental rehabilitation'. According to her, the companies would hardly entertain discussions around 'long-term' compensation-related issues unless local chiefs acceded to 'substandard terms' of settlement. Referring to this as 'corporate economic and environmental racism', she maintained that it was impossible for transnational petroleum companies to uphold such a business ethos in their home countries or in the Northern hemisphere as a whole. Besides, Western oil companies used deceptive public relations strategies to blind their home governments and

societies to their peculiar practices in the Niger Delta (see also Turner, 2001; Olukoya, 2001).

Turcotte (2002) has documented the contribution of women to the Niger Delta struggles, especially during the mid-1980s. She identifies women's protests against the activities of Pan Ocean, Shell Petroleum and the state-owned petroleum company, NNPC, as representing 'a strategic political shift of women's activism against [a] patriarchal state'. More specifically, Turcotte writes, the struggles should be seen in the light of transnational oil companies' 'discriminatory practices that had been destroying and debilitating the Delta since oil exploration began in 1907'.

Some years earlier, Abe and Ayodele (1986: 95) had drawn attention to the conduct of transnational corporations in the Nigerian upstream petroleum industry. The authors blamed Nigeria's petroleum production-induced environmental problems on the fact that the industry was effectively in the hands of foreigners. 'As long as aliens control the technology of oil production', they argued, 'so shall our environmental problems arising therefrom remain with us'.

The solution to Nigeria's oil-induced environmental problems, according to Abe and Ayodele, was in the transfer of oil production technology to Nigerians. This point should be noted, because as shown presently, the environmental behaviour of business corporations is far more nuanced: social and environmental 'recklessness' cannot always be explained from the standpoint of which nationals control the technology of extractive capitalism or of commodity production as a whole. This perspective cannot effectively explain a situation where companies owned and managed by Nigerian citizens consciously operate in ways that pose a threat to the Nigerian environment. To illustrate how business corporations could act even in their home countries to further their financial interests, especially if they feel there is a fair chance of that behaviour escaping the attention of the authorities, Bakan (2004) has drawn attention to a particularly hazardous scheme of one American car company in the 1970s. Bakan points out that the company failed to alter the design of a particular component of its vehicle brand despite knowing that the component was responsible for fuel-fed fatalities in many car-crash situations involving its brand. The reason for the scheme was that 'each fuel-fed fatality cost the company $2.40 per automobile [in court fines]' while the cost to the company in 'ensuring that fuel tanks did not explode in crashes' came to $8.59 per automobile'. If the company allowed people to die in 'fuel-fed fires rather than alter the design of vehicles to avoid such fires, it saved $6.19'; so the company chose to continue producing cars with hazardous fuel tanks (Bakan, 2004: 62-63).

Perhaps a more compelling reason to go beyond the 'racism discourse' in trying to understand (and find solutions to) Nigeria's environmental problems is that it is unlikely that Nigeria will wrest 'control' of this technology from the

'aliens' any time soon, let alone embark on (new) oil exploration activities with the aim of taking control of oil production technology.

The application of the environmental justice/racism narrative to the Niger Delta crisis has not only been in the creation of a 'white-black' scenario in Nigeria's upstream petroleum industry. The ethnic discourse has also cast its long shadow over it, as some analysts regard the unmitigated socio-ecological impacts discussed earlier as indicative of ethnic discrimination. For instance, Agbola and Alabi (2003) locate the problem of 'environmental injustice in Nigeria' within the broader, more enduring, problem of 'selective victimization' of the Niger Delta region by the majority ethnic nationalities (the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo). Tracing the rise of environmental injustice in Nigeria to the discovery of oil in 1956 (the reader need not focus on the validity or otherwise of this time-line), the authors try to demonstrate how 'the vulnerable ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta region' not only create most of the country's (oil-based) wealth, but also 'bear the heaviest burdens' arising from the wealth-creation process. While the burdens are economic and socio-cultural, it is the interplay between the socio-cultural and the environmental that the authors find worrying. As they put it, 'it is this sociocultural context of selective exposure to hazardous and degraded environmental settings that constitutes a form of human rights abuse' (Agbola and Alabi, 2003: 281). The ethnicisation of the discourse relates to the alleged role of the major nationalities in the social and environmental subjugation of the oil region:

> With selective victimization, the Niger Delta region is losing critical resources as well as a healthy environment, thereby exposing residents to hazardous environmental conditions, *while the non-oil producing regions which receive the lion's share of the oil revenue are free to live in a healthy setting* (Agbola and Alabi, 2003: 270 – emphasis added).

Agbola and Alabi have attempted to document the social and environmental problems in the Niger Delta. They also point out that these problems are 'linked directly to the unsustainable mode of petroleum resources extraction in Nigeria' and to state 'policies and actions'. However, they do not accord explanatory status to 'mode of resources extraction', or indeed, to governance ethos, to which allusion is made in their work. Their discussion centres on how the major ethnic groups have made the Niger Delta an environmentally 'peripheral region' (Agbola and Alabi, 2003: 281). This argument overlaps with Agiobenebo and Aribaolanari's (2001: 455) analysis, which sees Nigeria's oil region as a little more than the majority ethnic groups' private estate, used according to the estate owners' interests.

When applied to the Niger Delta struggle, the 'Nigerianised' discourse essentially seeks to underline that: (a) Nigeria's oil-rich communities do not enjoy socioeconomic and cultural gains commensurate with their resource endowment and the environmental hazards of petroleum operations, (b) Nigeria's mainly non oil-producing majority ethnic nationalities (backed by a

state that cares mainly about their interests) benefit from oil resources at the expense of the minorities, (c) while the socio-environmental crisis in the Niger Delta can be explained racially (since the ethical conduct of Western transnational corporations are implicated), the crisis also stems from selective ethnic victimisation, given the 'majority/minority' imbalances in the country. This 'glocalised' discourse will now be examined more closely.

5. Tribalism or Failed 'Background Institutions'?

Contrary to the suggestion that the Niger Delta region is a victim of ethnic victimisation (Agbola and Alabi, 2003), the narratives of discontent encountered by this author in Oloibiri, Ebubu and Iko indicated that ordinary people viewed the crisis differently. In the three communities local residents defined the 'enemy' in class, rather than ethnic, terms. Their anger was directed towards an 'anti-people' character of governance rather than towards the non oil-producing nationalities. The following comment by a youth leader in Ebubu summarised the sentiments at the grassroots:

> Ours is not a struggle that antagonises other regions or that seeks benefit only for ourselves, nor do we feel antagonised by other ethnic groups. What we are doing is essentially to let government understand that you must put tangible benefits back into wherever you extract resources from. We are trying to demonstrate our belief that government and our so-called political leaders cannot go on exploiting communities. If we succeed in forcing government to do us good, it follows that wherever they extract resources – be it crude oil or coal – they'll know they owe that community a gift of development. Ultimately that's how you build a nation. But clearly the Nigerian government and the political elite have other ideas.

Such sentiments are supported by evidence of environmental 'recklessness' in all parts of Nigeria, and the fact that ordinary people everywhere in the country (and not just the 'ethnic minorities') have had their rights eroded by what Ake (2001: 128) refers to as a predatory and 'privatised state', as well as by the manipulative operational ethos of business corporations (Akpan, 2006). Indeed, going by Ake's assertion, Nigeria is better described as a 'privatised' state than as an ethnicised one. This is why one cannot find entire geo-ethnic regions in Nigeria (even those that have held political power for the greater part of the country's post-colonial history) that have witnessed broad-based socio-economic development as a result of being the beneficiary of a so-called 'lion's share' of petroleum resources.

For instance, there is as yet no demonstrated strategy to redeem the image of Lagos (Nigeria's industrial and commercial capital) as one of the world's dirtiest cities. Abuja, Nigeria's only 'planned' city, has for many years remained trapped in the contradictions of its status as Nigeria's seat of government. Media reports abound of serious distortions to its master plan arising from opportunistic scrambles for building and business sites – and of contentions arising from the new democratic government's plans to enforce the

master plan. In the scramble, some government offices were reportedly built on drainage routes, plots originally meant for parks were allocated for private housing development, and many indigenous residents displaced in the wake of the city's development were yet to be properly resettled (Bassey, 2004).

In the far-northern sector, where desertification and deforestation are the major natural and man-made environmental threats, response by the authorities has traditionally been in the form of a once-a-year tree-planting campaign by government officials, essentially meant to inspire citizens to plant trees and avoid indiscriminate tree-felling. However, the lack of a sustained programme, coupled with the local population's over-reliance on fuel wood for their everyday energy needs, has meant that annual tree-planting exercises cannot keep pace with tree loss. It has been reported that for every new tree planted, ten are cut for fuel (Raufu, 2004). According to Raufu (2004), about 50 percent of Yobe state (on Nigeria's northeastern border) has already gone under the sands of the Sahara desert.

It is also well known that despite producing most of Nigeria's heads of state since independence in 1960 and being Nigeria's most politically influential region, the north (a supposed beneficiary of the 'lion's share' of the country's petroleum resources) has remained Nigeria's poorest region. While girl-child school enrolment is 83 percent on average in the south, the north has only attained 23 percent (*Thisday*, 2005). At more than 206 deaths per 1000 live births, infant mortality in the north is more than twice as high as in other regions of the country. Nigeria's relatively high overall mortality rate of about 217 per thousand is blamed on the disproportionately high mortality levels in the north. Immunisation coverage in the region is also the worst in the country, at about 3.7 percent. On 8 August 2005, President Obasanjo was quoted as lamenting the fact that the north had 'the highest under-five mortality, the lowest immunisation and the poorest women literacy levels' in Nigeria (quoted in *Thisday*, 2005). This is against the backdrop of recent disclosures that one former head of state who hails from that region made away with several billion dollars from the Nigerian treasury (*Frontline World*, 2003). Development and governance predicaments such as these become distorted within an ethnic-essentialist frame of analysis. Such predicaments demonstrate one thing: political leaders (and the economic elite linked to them) do not necessarily appropriate 'the lion's share' of resources from 'other' regions for the benefit of ordinary people in their ethnic regions.

In the southwestern Nigerian city of Ibadan, residents of three communities in the New Gbagi industrial area have been reported as going tipsy after drinking water from wells contaminated underground by untreated brewery effluents. One scientific study of random water samples from the communities showed that the water had specific polluting elements 'with values higher than the WHO, EU and USA standards tolerant levels' (Adediran et al., 2004: 211).

The study also found that stream and well water was contaminated and posed health risks to humans.

In the central Nigerian states of Niger, Kogi, Kwara and Kebbi, the host communities of the Kainji, Jebba and Shiroro dams are frequently flooded due to dam failures. Recently, there has been a Niger Delta-like movement in the area, demanding among other things the establishment of a Hydroelectric Power Producing Areas Development Commission (HYPPADEC). Considering that Nigeria's electricity is generated in the region, the dam communities' demand for electricity (as well as roads, schools and bridges) comes across as a paradox (RAPNet, 2004). For the purposes of this article, however, such demands serve to illustrate ordinary people's sense of 'injustice' and social exploitation, and the analytical difficulties that arise when a failure of 'background institutions' is viewed through an essentialist prism.

The United Nation's Environmental Programme (UNEP, 2003) puts the deplorable state of environmental management in Nigeria in perspective when it states that:

> Industrial pollution from over 5,000 industrial facilities and perhaps another 10,000 small-scale industries, some operating illegally within residential premises, is a growing problem in Nigeria. In places like Kano, Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Warri and Lagos, colored, hot and heavy metal effluent, especially that from the textile, tannery, petrochemicals and paint industries, is discharged directly into open drainages and channels, constituting severe dangers to water users and downstream. Also disturbing is the practice where some industrial facilities bury their expired chemicals and hazardous wastes in their backyards, threatening the water quality of innocent neighbours who rely on their dug-out wells for drinking water.

This has been in spite of persistent protests by affected communities and the existence of numerous environmental laws and a federal agency (FEPA) charged with environmental monitoring. Given the spread of environmental abuses in Nigeria, therefore, one must proceed with caution when analysing environmental abuses and the resultant grassroots struggles against them. For instance, Agbola and Alabi's (2003:2 70) assertion that the Niger Delta struggle is driven by feelings of 'selective' ethnic victimisation, and the 'fact' that the majority ethnic nationalities are enjoying both a 'lion's share' of Nigeria's petroleum revenues and a healthy environmental setting, could not be an accurate depiction of the issues in the Niger Delta crisis. It is an ethnic-essentialist interpretation that largely distorts the real issues.

While environmental problems (and social exploitation) in the Niger Delta might overshadow those in other parts of Nigeria, it is better to view differences in perceived environmental abuses as a matter of scale rather than of pattern. Social exploitation and environmental 'recklessness' are not exactly region-selective, as the governance failures and 'predatory' socio-political processes that create conditions for social justice deficits cast their impacts on ordinary people regardless of residence or ethnic origin.

6. Conclusion

At the heart of the discourse around socially and environmentally 'reckless' (or even 'racist') corporate practice in the Nigerian upstream petroleum industry is an attempt to bring to light factors that more fundamentally sustain or promote 'environmental injustice'. However, the 'glocalised' version of the discourse seems to suggest that only minorities are victims of environmental injustice in Nigeria – an injustice that is presumably perpetrated by transnational corporations with the active support of a state that cares only for the majority ethnic nationalities.

The point that this article makes is that environmental injustice in the Nigerian petroleum industry is rooted in an anti-people governance ethos, which creates conditions for gross regulatory ineffectiveness. The logic of ethnicity is therefore not a convincing explanation for environmental abuses in the Niger Delta case. Governance ethos may be viewed as part of 'background institutions', which, according to Rawls (1971: 11), are fundamental to the achievement of 'fairness' and the alleviation suffering. By 'background institutions' Rawls meant the character of the constitution and the political process; in the Nigerian context, they would include the character of governance and institutional/regulatory framework governing how resources in natural resources are exploited and utilised. Through greed, corruption and reckless opportunism, 'background institutions' can be compromised, and made to work against the interests and well-being of ordinary people.

Not surprisingly, failed community development, environmental neglect, and social exploitation in the Niger Delta have counterparts in other regions of the country. In all corners of Nigeria, social and environmental abuses are perpetrated by local and foreign as well as private and public corporations. Consequently, grassroots struggles over the quality of socio-political and environmental governance in Nigeria are not unique to the oil-producing region, which then would have probably justified notions of social and environmental injustice as 'ethnic victimisation' or fundamentally a case of transnational 'corporate racism'. As the author learnt from ordinary people in the oil-producing towns of Oloibiri, Ebubu and Iko, the whole sense of local struggles is to make governance in the country respond to the yearnings and needs of ordinary people. The application of a global discourse to local conditions in the Niger Delta (and Nigeria as a whole) requires that analysts cut through the complex web of public governance-related issues, rather than simply insert the discourse into a conventional narrative.

Notes

1. This is a revised and updated version of a paper presented to RC 24 (Society and Environment), Session 4 (Environmental Justice for Sustainable Development), ISA XVI World Congress of Sociology, Durban, South Africa, 23-29July 2006.

2. This was a four-month study conducted by the author in three of the better known oil-producing towns in the Niger Delta towns, namely Oloibiri (Bayelsa State), Ebubu (Rivers State) and Iko (Akwa Ibom State). The socioeconomic and political profiles of the three towns, and the rationale for their choice, are detailed in Akpan (2006). Besides participant observation, in-depth interview, FGDs and visual sociology were the main techniques of data collection.

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African Sociological Review, 10, (2), 2006, pp. 43-71.

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Modernisation and Migration: The Transformation of Labour Relations in the Global Automobile Industry

Abstract

The need to develop and sustain competitive advantage drives businesses to constant modernisation strategies. These have a powerful influence on the shaping of labour relations systems not only in enterprises and industries, but their nations of origin. New technology and systems of work organisation oblige change in labour relations arrangements. Imperatives for growth and profitability evoke searches for new markets, and the migration of production pushing businesses into political, economic and cultural realities quite different to those of their nations of origin. In this article a brief history of the automobile manufacturing industry is presented to illustrate how forces for modernisation, market factors and migratory production strategies shape, and are shaped, by labour relations in a particular industry across nations through time. The rise of China as an automobile producing nation is likely to have profound implications for labour relations systems everywhere.

1. Introduction

As the product of interactive strategic choices made by business, labour and governments, labour relations systems assume many forms across nations (Anstey 1997; Kochan et al., 1986; Poole 1986). For the most part studies have concentrated on the development of systems within nations or, in the case of comparative analyses, to evaluate commonalities, differences and larger trends amongst national systems. However the manner in which systems are shaped is changing. Where governments and labour, for the most part, are national entities, capital is increasingly international and globally mobile. Foreign direct investment quadrupled between 1993 and 1999 to $827bn, and the number of transnational companies rose from 7000 in 1970 to 60000 in 2000 with huge economic influence, accounting for a third of the world's private sector output. In short owners of capital increasingly interact with *many* governments and workforces across nations, shaping and being shaped by politics and cultures far beyond those of their nations of origin.

Labour relations systems in western economies have taken the form of 'national bargains' struck between governments, owners of capital and trade

unions. The social 'glue' was their recognition of interdependence. Each realised the best way to secure its own interests was through accommodation of the interests of others, and collective bargaining became the vehicle through which this was achieved. Despite the emphasis on collective bargaining in labour relations studies, it has been limited to a few developed market economies, and absent or severely constrained in communist or state corporatist arrangements of many developing nations where different realities shaped labour relations systems (Anstey 1997; Shadur 1994; Henley 1989; Siddique 1989; Kochan et al., 1986; Poole 1986; Bean 1985; Goldthorpe 1984; Wylczynski 1983). Collective bargaining then is but one option for structuring labour relations (Harrod 1988). Despite its values driven nature (it is the democratic choice), it is really the product of power realities in economies characterised by strong private sectors and powerful labour movements. These conditions are not evident in most developing nations where often the state is the biggest employer and the most powerful actor in the labour relations arena (Anstey 2004; Shadur 1994; Henley 1989; Siddique 1989). The centrality of the state however is nuanced by the choices of Transnational Corporations (TNCs).

Businesses are in a constant search for competitive advantage to sustain growth and profits. New technology, work methods, and systems of organisational design along with international mobility have reduced their dependence on nationally based workforces (Friedman 2005). As national businesses have mutated into trans-nationals they have the choice of many partners across nations, and indeed develop and sustain multiple partnerships as they seek to protect and develop their interests. This reality has profound implications for labour relations systems in both developed and developing economies.

Many new democracies are economically fragile. TNC's have significant leverage in a world in which half the world's population lives on less than $2 a day and about 190m are unemployed (ILO 2005) and there is competition amongst nations to attract investors for growth, job creation and tax revenue purposes. Hertz (2001) argues that TNCs erode democracies with governments paying greater attention to the interests of TNCs than those who elected them, investor interests superseding social concerns in a profit driven social order. This might apply to small failed states, but can it be applied to China or India whose economic growth and populations offer huge market potential? These are not wilting nations but ones able to increasingly dictate terms to cross national investors. As Stiglitz (2004) points out in his own powerful critique of the institutions governing globalisation, while millions have been marginalised from the global economy (largely in Africa) millions of others have benefited from its opportunities (largely in Asia). Grieder (1997) for instance shows how China used its purchasing leverage to oblige Boeing into transferring technologies and production facilities and jobs from the USA as part of a sales deal.

The purpose of this article is not simply to compare the labour relations systems of selected nations. Instead the analytic focus is on the development of a particular industry – the auto industry – and how it has shaped and been shaped by labour relations systems within and across nations through time. In the first instance it evaluates how labour relations arrangements have changed in the context of new work methods and technology (modernisation). Secondly it analyses the labour relations implications of the increasing migration of production to developing nations, and specifically China. The implications for labour relations arrangements in both traditional auto manufacturing nations and developing countries are evaluated.

2. The Automobile Manufacturing Industry

Peter Drucker (1946) called auto manufacturing the 'industry of industries'; Womack and his colleagues (1990) identified the motor car as the 'machine that changed the world'. The significance of the industry lies in its own immense size but also its linkages with many other industries (Dicken 2003). Automobiles account for almost half the world's oil consumption and rubber output each year, 25 percent of its glass and 15 percent of its steel. The industry contributes an estimated 10 percent of GDP in developed nations (Carson 2004) and accounts for 20 million jobs globally – over three million directly, and indirectly ten million in the materials and components supply chain, and seven million in sales and servicing (Dicken 2003). Driven by relentless competition auto manufacturers have been innovators in mass, lean and networked production systems, in the design of modern management systems, and pioneered the formation and management of transnational operations. For all these reasons the industry has been on the cutting edge in the development of labour relations systems internationally. For over a century car manufacturers have modernised, mutated and migrated to remain competitive – with significant implications for employment across nations; for the nature and location of work; for labour movements; for the shape of employment contracts and collective bargaining across nations; and for social development.

3. Modernisation: a century of technological and production innovation

In the pre-mass production beginnings of the auto manufacturing industry at the turn of the last century annual volumes were low (1000 or less), and entirely reliant on the capacity and skills of craft workers to take on work. Each vehicle was a unique product. Production was decentralised through small machine shops and coordinated into final assembly by an entrepreneur auto manufacturer. A scarcity of qualified journeymen gave craft workers control over production and pricing of goods. Several hundred auto companies emerged in North America and Western Europe to compete for market share (Womack et

al., 1990). The low volume, high cost / high price craft period however was short-lived.

3.1. The shift from craft to mass production

Two major innovations enabled Ford's mass production system – technology (machine tools capable of working on pre-hardened steel) for the consistent production of standardised interchangeable parts, and the moving assembly line (Womack et al., 1990, p. 27). His designs were simple and easy to assemble, work on and repair, reducing dependence on the fitters who formed the bulk of a car assembler's workforce. For example he replaced a system of bolting together four individually cast cylinders with a single engine block. Even before the moving assembly line Ford reduced an assembler's task cycle from 514 minutes in 1908 to 2,3 minutes, through delivery of parts to workers at workstations so they did not have to fetch them; and through interchangeability of parts allowing them to be simply fitted rather than filed into shape. The moving assembly line in 1913 further reduced task cycle times to 1,19 minutes. Assembly time for a complete vehicle dropped from 750 to 93 minutes – an 88 percent reduction in effort. High volumes facilitated new economies of scale, dramatically reducing unit costs of production. A capacity to produce two million vehicles per year by the 1920s allowed Ford to cut prices by two thirds even as he doubled workers' wages to $5 a day (Bluestone and Bluestone 1992; Womack et al., 1990). Ford's vision was that mass production – high volumes in standardised form – would reduce the cost of products, generate jobs, and enable pricing of products within reach of the masses for a general economic upliftment.

To control supply costs, quality and delivery Ford bought suppliers in a process of vertical integration (Reich 1992; Womack et al., 1990). Single function replaced multi-purpose machines to reduce set-up times and skills and training required for their operation. The focus was on simplification of the production process and uninterrupted workflow. All nine models of the Model T rode on the same chassis. Inspections were minimal in a producer-push manufacturing environment in which the consumer bought with little concern for finishes or variation. Ford once commented the customer could have any colour Model T desired, 'provided it was black'.

Alfred Sloan of General Motors (GM) designed management systems for huge corporations with multiple facilities, in the form of hierarchical bureaucracies in tightly managed profit centres based on financial performance. He limited model ranges to cover different market needs, developed systems of stable funding with banks and introduced marketing professionals to complement the contribution of the engineers (Womack et al., 1990).

3.2. Labour relations in the mass production environment

The impact of mass production systems on the nature of work was profound. Piore and Sabel (1984) suggest that the worker who once used machinery as a tool now became controlled by it, and was defined by rather than defining the product (p. 23). Womack et al., (1990) observe pithily that the inter-changeable part was accompanied by the 'inter-changeable worker'. Where a craft worker had performed all the tasks of fetching parts, obtaining tools, repair, fitting, assembly and checking before sending the complete vehicle to shipping, labour was now divided to a single task. Faults were identified at the end of the assembly process where a team of skilled 're-workers' did the necessary adjustments. Work was dictated by the pace of the line. Indirect workers in the form of checkers, repairmen, and re-workers replaced the skilled assemblers. Engineers – product, manufacturing, industrial, electrical and others – assumed control of the production process, becoming the first 'knowledge' workers who seldom touched a car but designed it and its manufacture. Their job was to design products and processes to enable minimally trained workers to perform limited tasks on the line. Piore and Sabel (1984) conclude that in this way the new industrial worker was 'de-skilled' in a process in which tasks were sub-divided to their smallest component activities, sequenced, and allocated to workers specialised in small aspects of manufacture. Efficiencies were raised through a focus on narrow task ranges in a 'dedicated' production process.

The new mass production factories created thousands of jobs contributing to rapid urbanisation. The proportion of manufacturing workers in the USA grew from eight percent to 33 percent between 1870 and 1910; where only 20 percent lived in cities in 1870, by 1910 50 percent did so. Sixty percent of the huge number of immigrants who entered the USA at the time became manufacturing workers. As Reich (1992) notes people began to see their economic well-being as closely tied to the economic success of the nation, which in turn was dependent on the success of the new factories. However the cyclical nature of the industry translated into periodic mass hiring and layoffs with low levels of job security. Working conditions were tough and work repetitive and dispiriting. Rapid industrialisation saw twelve to fourteen hour workdays, six days a week; unremitting repetitive work controlled by the pace of production lines; low wages; poor factory conditions without regulatory controls over health and safety; with rapid urbanisation generating poor housing and sanitary conditions in overcrowded cities. In 1910 workers worked an average of 3000 hours per year (Drucker 1993). Workers now seldom work much more than 1800 hours a year in developed economies.

In response, across industrialising nations workers organised themselves into trade unions, using the strike weapon to mobilise workers and oppose employers. The engineering and automobile industries were central to labour mobilisation (Sisson 1987). Initially unions were met with stiff resistance from employers and governments. In Europe powerful centralised unions arose,

often driven by socialist ideology. Employers which had formed employer organisations in an effort to coordinate business interests in volatile economies – through cartels, price fixing, joint warehousing and bulk buys and other means of managing suppliers and controlling markets – extended these to respond to the union threat. Multi-employer bargaining emerged. In the USA a different dynamic prevailed. Trade unions were disparate, independently minded and more interested in a larger share of the fruits of capitalism than destroying it. The early American Federation of Labor (AFL) could only build a federation along lines of union autonomy. Concurrently employers, prevented from European style collaboration by anti-trust laws, needed alternative mechanisms to smooth markets – mergers and buy-outs, and systems of vertical integration. These gave rise to the 'huge corporation' and a single employer system of collective bargaining preferred (Anstey 2001, Reich 1992, Sisson 1987, Heckscher 1988, Kochan et al., 1986, Dulles and Dubofksy 1984, Estey 1981).

In 1936-1937 the militant Committee of Industrial Organisations (CIO), disillusioned with the AFL, took on GM in Flint, Michigan. Using a 'sit-down strike' they demanded recognition, seniority and job rights to lay the base for the system of 'job unionism' which became core to the US labour dispensation. The mass production system fragmented and deskilled work into limited repetitive task cycles, making workers easily replaceable. The particular form of organisation designed to optimise mass production systems was the hierarchical bureaucracy with a multi-tiered chain of command reflecting devolving levels of responsibility with limited spans of control. To find fit with these systems unions bargained rigidly defined work rules demarcating jobs along task and authority lines and attaching a wage to each job. Seniority (length of service) rather than skills or performance became the central criterion for promotion and job security. As mass production methods saw craft workers lose control over work processes, so industrial unions clawed some back through the power of the collective and strategies of 'job control' unionism. The 'interchangeable worker' was less vulnerable within a system which defined parameters around wages and work rules, and in which the threat of collective action (an injury to one is an injury to all) cautioned employers in their treatment of individuals (Brecher 1997; Heckscher 1988; Dulles and Dubofsky 1984; Estey 1981).

This arrangement underpinned the 'national bargains' bargained formally and informally across developed economies (Anstey 2001; Reich 1992). Although labour relations systems within the USA and countries in Western Europe assumed different forms they were founded on a common set of principles in which employers recognised the legitimacy of trade unions and their right to represent and bargain collectively on behalf of their members over wages and conditions of service, and trade unions accepted the legitimacy of the market system and committed to peace clauses, restricting use of the strike

to periodic rounds of collective bargaining regulated by procedural agreements with clear dispute resolution mechanisms. Conflict was regulated through a system of rules constraining managerial unilateralism but minimising disruption of production lines. In various ways governments assisted in the smoothing of markets and offered security to those who became casualties of periodic organisational restructuring (Anstey 2001; Reich 1992). Usually at the centre of national bargains were national corporations – the identities, location and workforces of auto manufacturers were then clearly nationally defined (Reich 1992). Kochan et al., (1986) termed the arrangements of the time the 'New Deal Industrial Relations System' underpinned in the USA by the passage of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) in 1935 which entrenched a system of collective bargaining as the means best suited to accommodate the interests of all stakeholders involved in the labour relations system. In the absence of centralised arrangements a system of pattern bargaining emerged to standardise wages, taking them out of the competitive equation in the industry. Ford, GM and Chrysler led the way, 'taking the heat' in turns in multi-year rounds of collective bargaining – once the benchmark had been set in one company, the others followed. Within the system the roles and responsibilities of management and trade unions were sharply defined, with the scope for union representation limited to distributive matters and management carrying rights and responsibilities as regards strategic planning. Unions curbed managerial unilateralism through 'job control' systems which limited managerial capacity to use workers outside tightly defined job categories with related wage levels, or to promote or layoff workers using criteria other than seniority (length of service). In this context US trade unions strengthened to a peak density of 35 percent in the early 1950s with 70 percent of manufacturing workers organised. Wages rose by an average of three percent per annum right up to 1973 as the economy grew and standards of living improved uninterrupted for decades. Collective bargaining was stabilised through pattern bargaining systems in which the automobile industry led the way. It seemed the magic formula for general social upliftment had been discovered.

Another group of auto giants – VW, BMW and Daimler Benz – took off in Germany where employees are offered far greater influence over strategic and operational aspects of enterprises through a system of co-determination and consultation than enjoyed by their US counterparts. However Germany's highly institutionalised system of dual representation, largely restricts collective bargaining and the right to strike to trade unions, and essentially to distributive matters (wages and conditions of employment). Unlike in the USA, it generally occurs at a regional sectoral level rather than the level of the firm (VWAG is an exception with an enterprise collective bargaining agreement). Through the Co-determination Acts (1951 and 1976) and Works Constitution Acts (1952 and 1972) German workers enjoy considerable advantage over their US counterparts in their access to information and influence over enterprise

matters from strategic to shop-floor matters. Employee representation on Supervisory Boards is significant but never outweighs the voting power of shareholders, and is limited to matters of strategy rather than operational control. In-company works councils complement board level participation and enjoy extensive rights of co-determination (empowering them to block managerial proposals, make proposals of their own, and refer disagreements to binding arbitration), and participation (rights to advance information and managerial motivations for planning and consultation with rights of referral to non-binding arbitration on managerial decision-making and binding arbitration on social consequences of such decisions) on defined matters. In these areas employees can influence and slow shareholder and managerial decisions in a manner not open to US workers, without removing final decision-making authority – but the use of the strike weapon is prohibited at the level of enterprise relations, and like the US system is restricted essentially to distributive matters (Anstey 1997; Weiss 1989).

Although the giant car producing countries, Germany and the USA, developed quite different labour relations dispensations reflecting diverse histories, cultures and moments of compromise then, both reflect tight restrictions on the use of disruptive industrial action. The Germans developed a more extensive system of employee participation than the Americans but both systems preserved extensive rights of managerial prerogative, both reflected deeply institutionalised systems of work rules and procedures in conformance with the mass production era, and both were shaken by new Japanese lean production methods.

4. The 'Toyota Production System': the shift from mass to lean production

By 1989 American dominance of the global automobile industry was under threat. Japanese car manufacturers had expanded their share of world production from one percent in 1955 to 28 percent, and driven US producers' share of their domestic market from 98 percent to under 70 percent (Dicken 2003; Womack et al., 1990). GM's share of the US market fell from 52 percent in 1960 to 35 percent in 1992. Its US vehicle sales dropped from 5,4 million in 1978 to 2,9 million in 1992, and employment from 612,000 to 368,000. In 1991 GM recorded a corporate loss of $7,1 billion in the USA (Greenwald 1992). European producers also felt the bite of Japanese competition during the early 1990s, with drops in demand and the elimination of hundreds of thousands of jobs. No Asian firms ranked in the top 15 producers globally in 1960, but by 2000 six companies had achieved this – Toyota, Honda, Nissan, Mitsubishi, and Mazda of Japan, along with South Korea's Hyundai (Dicken 2003).

To compete with US plants in which about 20 percent of cost lay in rework Toyota developed a 'lean' production process, based on a zero defect

philosophy. The essential elements of the Toyota Production System were the reduction of costs through quality, quantity controls and 'humanisation' (Monden 1983). Quantity control facilitates rapid adjustment to fluctuations in demand in terms of quantity and supply through eliminating inventories, buffers, stores and warehouses and by replacing central planning with control at the point of production. Methods include the kanban system, production smoothing, shortened set-up times and standardisation. Quality control eliminates costs associated with rework and waste. Methods include total quality management systems, 5S housekeeping, andon systems, Statistical Process Control (SPC), automation. Humanisation implies respect for humanity and includes efforts to motivate employees, tap their creativity, and raise morale. Methods include use of teams, training in problem-solving skills, quality and technical skills, flexible use of people through multi-skilling, job rotation, quality circles and suggestion schemes. In addition the system also gave rise to a flattening of organisational authority and grading structures as employees assumed greater control over and accountability for their work environments. As producers fought to achieve competitive edge they have supplemented lean production methods with outsourcing, use of new technology, customisation and use of e-facilities to eliminate costs and improve efficiencies in delivery. The Japanese then shifted competitive advantage to product development, Toyota and Honda bringing out new models in 42 months against the 65 months of US and European producers. Despite suggestions that there may be 'limits to lean' with Japan suffering from increased traffic due to JIT deliveries, a shortage of blue collar workers, too many costly product variations, stressed suppliers, and shortages of monies for new product development (Cusunamo 1994), its systems have been adopted by all major modern producers.

4.1. Labour relations in Japan's lean production system

The Japanese labour relations system took quite different form to those of the USA (despite its post-World War Two influence) and Western Europe, and supported lean production systems. Interestingly two Americans, Deming and Juran are credited with developing lean production in Japan after US producers ignored their ideas. Trade unions organise at the level of the enterprise. The number of unions rose from 29144 with 5,7m members in 1950 (46 percent density) to 72202 with 12,3m members (25 percent density) in 1990 (Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training 2004). While this suggests a dispersion of union energies, the system is in fact a tightly coordinated one. Unions affiliate to a major central - Rengo. Collective bargaining occurs through a very ordered process expressed through an annual *Shunto* (Spring Wage Offensive) each year. After meeting with the government and the central employer body (Nikkerein) to discuss the economy, Rengo unions outline their demands each December, with an understanding that these will reflect needs and realities of the national economy. In January employers coordinate their stances; in

February unions confirm their demands; in April settlements are reached in iron and steel, shipping, electrical and automobile industries; in May deals are struck in textiles, food and petroleum; in June settlements are achieved in small and medium-sized enterprises; in the second half of the year wage deals are struck for the public sector. Centralised bargaining occurs in the textiles and transport sectors but is conducted at enterprise level in the remainder of the private sector. In this way wage bargaining is nationally coordinated but remains optimally responsive to the realities of individual firms (Japanese Institute of Labour 1996; Nakamura 1989). At the level of the firm the central features of the system are wide job descriptions, flexible use of workers, a lack of rigid work rules, bonus systems and long-term merit rating systems for managers and workers alike. Unlike the power-driven representative systems of influence preferred by Western workers, Japanese workers channel their participative energies through direct forms of participation in quality circles to improve quality and efficiencies in work processes under the leadership of supervisors (Imai 1991; Dale and Boaden 1990). These do not change power relations in traditional, hierarchically structured firms (Lawler 1989). By 1991 there were at least 170,000 quality circles involving over three million workers in Japanese industry, using kaizen techniques in their endeavours to lower production costs and raise productivity and quality as part of the lean production system. Employee suggestion schemes in Japan were garnering an average of 19 suggestions per employee, up from about five in the 1950s (Imai 1991). A cornerstone of Japanese stability is the 'lifetime employment system' in which a limited number of new graduates are hired each year for what is intended to be a full career within the company to retirement. The firm continuously trains and develops such employees, benefiting from their long-term experience and intimate knowledge and understanding of the firm. About 20 percent of employees are hired on this basis. This core of highly trained and committed employees provides the firm the necessary stability and flexibility to manage change through time. In addition Japanese workers show a lower propensity to strike action than many Western workers (Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training 2004).

4.2. The search for competitive alternatives in the West – labour relations systems lose fit

To remain viable western mass production companies had to implement lean production systems. At the same time there was a search for alternatives. Swedish producers, Saab and Volvo, targeting high price low volume niche markets tried to improve efficiencies through extensive multi-skilling and employee participation in production. Semi-autonomous socio-technical teams operating in cells rather than an assembly line configuration, regulated their own activities as regards pacing, coordination, sequencing, and quality

control of work, and assumed responsibility for their own housekeeping, maintenance and administration.

Very flat structures saw only 16 managers in a plant of 1000 workers at the Uddevala plant. Unlike Japanese quality circles socio-technical teams gave rise to a drastic reduction in the horizontal division of labour; functionally coherent rather than fragmented repetitive jobs; a stationary production process (cells) rather than a moving assembly line; long rather than short task cycles; reductions in vertical division of labour with team systems replacing hierarchies; a transformation of first line management's role from controlling to coordinating, planning and resourcing; strong trade union commitment to the process; higher levels of skill development, job variety and responsibility for individual employees; with the idea that these reduce stress levels amongst workers and permit greater flexibility and quality in production for competitive purposes (Appelbaum and Batt 1994; Berggren 1993). Despite their successes in raising efficiencies (build hours per car reduced from 120 hours to 32 hours in 1992) these plants were closed with a return to more traditional modes of production. A fall in sales was critical to the decision, but in addition there was a wider retreat from Sweden's 'social bargain' by employers and government underway at the time, with unions losing influence at all levels of relations (Kjellberg 1994).

In the USA, GM experimented with a participative approach in its Saturn plant opened in 1982 following extensive consultations with the UAW. Unlike traditional lines Saturn introduced a moving platform system which keeps pace with the line. All training programmes and hiring decisions are participative. In the labour contract management rights clauses are replaced by a consensus driven decision-making process devolved to appropriate levels in the organisation in which either party can block proposals of the other, provided it can offer a better solution using criteria of the Saturn philosophy and mission. Union representatives serve on every level of management from basic work units through business units, through to a Manufacturing Action Council and a Strategic Action Council. Workers have used the system to influence the design of the vehicle, the choice of suppliers, dealer selection, marketing strategies, and even pricing. Despite its successes the Saturn project remains an isolated one and appears from a GM perspective to have limited wider application in an increasingly competitive environment. (Anstey 1997; Bluestone and Bluestone 1992).

In another experiment in 1984 GM reopened the Fremont plant it had closed previously after bitter relations with the UAW, in a joint venture with Toyota. Toyota was responsible for the design, equipping and operation of the plant; GM for marketing and distribution of products. The workforce was drawn from laid off UAW workers and an innovative labour contract was signed. By 1993 NUMMI employed 4200 people who produced 240,000 vehicles a year (at the time seven producers in South Africa employing about 37,500 people built a

total of 298051 vehicles) at a rate of 850 a day over two shifts. Apart from creating jobs the new plant saw a dramatic drop in absenteeism, grievances and disputes with over 90 percent of workers reporting satisfaction in their jobs. Uptime on the line rose from 60 percent in 1982 to over 90 percent in 1993. Participation in the suggestion programme rose from 26 percent in 1982 to 92 percent in 1991. Of the 10,000 suggestions submitted in 1990, 80 percent were implemented. The number of defects per vehicle, and rework requirements fell dramatically. Extensive use is made of teams, job rotation, multi-skilling, problem-solving, kaizen techniques, and andon systems. The 30 job classifications which characterised the old GM system gave way to four (three for artisans and one production workers); workers run their own time and motion studies in what Adler (1993) calls 'democratic Taylorism'; there are far fewer industrial engineers and managers in evidence; and a strong participatory process is in place (Adler 1993; Vasilash 1992; Forbes 1987; Niland 1989). The NUMMI experiment confirmed the superiority of lean production systems.

As the old mass producers transformed into lean manufacturers however labour relations arrangements lost fit. Flattened hierarchies reduced the number of grades in organisations giving rise to fewer job categories and a redistribution of competency requirements and responsibilities. Multi-skilling, flexible work systems and job rotation cut across the tight job categories and rigid work rules negotiated under job unionism; skills based and performance based pay systems undermined seniority (length of service) as the core principle of labour regimes. Outsourcing eroded and fragmented union membership, cornering unions into defensive tactics in successive workforce reductions. Employment contracts were transformed into service contracts with individual incomes often no longer based on hours of work but delivery to tight schedules, and the loss of service benefits. Opponents of lean production diagnosed its negative impact on individuals and unions but failed to offer viable alternatives for competitiveness and employment in the industry (Parker and Slaughter 1993; Robertson et al., 1992; Totsuka 1993).

As companies and unions struggled through the lean production transformation however, more profound changes were already underway. Traditional national automobile firms were mutating into transnational corporations operating across countries, cross-investing and migrating production to nations offering new markets and significantly lower labour costs.

5. Cross investment and the rise of Transnational Corporations

In the USA after the Second World War the health of the three car giants – GM, Ford and Chrysler – became synonymous with national welfare. Under threat in the 1980s, these firms looked not only to modernise production methods but also to spread their risk, and to access and develop new markets. They mutated from national to trans-national companies expanding operations and sourcing

arrangements across nations. Cross investment facilitated access to new markets, new designs and production technologies and more efficient delivery to markets. If they couldn't beat new competitors they would own them.

Table 1 reflects the top ten auto companies in 2003. Many of these companies are not 'stand alones'. Buy-outs and cross investment mean they represent stables of brands, and their production is globally dispersed rather than nationally centred. GM has bought either totally or in part Saab, Opel, Vauxhall, Isuzu, Subaru, Suzuki, Daewoo and Holden. Ford has bought or cross-invested in Mazda, Jaguar, Land Rover, Aston Martin, and Volvo. Volkswagen is cross-invested with Audi, Lamborghini, Rolls Royce and Bentley, SEAT, Skoda and Scania. Daimler has merged with Chrysler but is also cross invested with Mitsubishi and Hyundai. Nissan is cross invested with Renault which also has relations with Samsung and Volvo.

Table 1: Top Ten Auto producers in 2003

	Sales	Units	% global market	
1.	GM	185,5	8,59	15
2.	Toyota	153,1	6,78	11
3.	Ford	164,2	6,54	11
4.	Volkswagen	98,4	5,02	8
5.	Daimler Chrysler	171	4,36	7
6.	PSA/Peugeot Citroen	61,2	3,29	57
7.	Hyundai	38,9	3,05	5
8.	Nissan	65,8	2,97	5
9.	Honda	77,2	2,91	5
10.	Renault	42,4	2,39	4

The new TNC's have assumed massive influence in the global economy. Auto manufacturers rank amongst the world's biggest companies. At the end of 2003 GM was ranked fifth; Ford sixth; Daimler Chrysler seventh; Toyota eighth; Volkswagen fifteenth; and Honda twenty-fifth (*The Economist* 2005). Inter-company deals have included mergers and acquisitions, and a variety of collaborative arrangements and alliances in the form of transnational sourcing arrangements for components. Not all these have been happy marriages as the recent collapse of the GM-Fiat arrangement indicates.

6. Migration: the relocation of automobile manufacturing

Production in the early years of the auto industry was concentrated in the USA but other centres of mass production rapidly emerged in Western Europe between the 1940s and 1960s, and from there became increasingly globally dispersed. Japan's manufacturing took off in the 1970s and 1980s. As costs rose

and markets slowed in developed economies western manufacturers sought new markets in less developed ones.

Increasing investment and production occurred in South Korea, Brazil and Mexico and more recently in India and China, and South Africa. By 2000 GM and Ford were building over 60 percent of their vehicles abroad; Daimler-Chrysler and Honda over 50 percent; Volvo, Nissan and Fiat over a third of their production; and Toyota, Mitsubishi, Renault over a quarter (Dicken 2003). Between 1960 and 2000 US contribution to world automobile production dropped from over 50 percent to 14 percent and Great Britain's from ten percent to 4,5 percent. Spain from almost no production however grew to 5,6 percent in the same period and Japan from 1,3 percent to 20,5 percent. By 2000 the USA was a major importer of vehicles, accounting for 29,4 percent of imports internationally. Countries such as Canada, Mexico, Spain, South Korea, and more recently South Africa, increased their exports of automobiles quite rapidly. Germany and Japan maintained strong producer and exporter profiles (Dicken 2003).

Traditional markets have stalled in terms of growth or profitability. Profit margins declined from about 20 percent in the 1920s to about five percent in 2004, and the industry reflects a declining portion of stock market capitalisation in developed economies (Carson 2004). In 2005 Ford and GM experienced their worst US returns since 1992 as Asian and European producers invaded their profitable SUV markets. GM's employment level in the USA fell to 324,000 (from 612,000 in 1978) with another 25,000 jobs at risk. Ford has closed five plants in the last three years and is steadily cutting production. A major problem is the cost of health benefits negotiated by the UAW for current and past employees in the SUV profit bubble, estimated to add about $2000 to every unit produced. For every current employee GM now has 2,5 pensioners. High labour costs and saturated markets have prompted a major off-shore push for new markets by western producers.

6.1. The road to China

India produced 1,1 m vehicles in 2003 (Naamsa 2004), but the seismic shift has been to China whose auto production topped 5m in 2004, making it the third largest producer in the world behind the USA and Japan (*The Economist* 2005b; Naamsa 2004). It is projected to pass 10m by 2010, overtake Japan's output by 2015 and possibly exceed that of the USA to become the world's largest auto producing country by 2020 (PWC 2004 p. 20). With populations of over a billion and prolonged economic growth India and China offer massive opportunity. China has sustained an annual economic growth rate of ten percent over several decades. Despite rapid increases, car ownership at seven per 1000 people is very low compared to a global average of 120 and a figure of between 400 and 600 for most developed economies. Committed to developing its automobile industry, China has built 34,000 km of highway over the last 25

years and aiming to double this by 2020. It is second only to the USA in the extent of its motorways. (*The Economist* 2005b; *The Economist* 2004). The Chinese government continues to court foreign car-makers who want to invest $15bn to triple output to over seven million by 2008, but is looking for a global champion amongst its 120 small car-makers. Shanghai Automotive (SAIC) has moved to the fore listing shares overseas in 2005 and buying foreign technology (MG-Rover) to augment its partnership arrangements with both VW and GM.

International corporations have several developing concerns. One is intellectual copyright with Chinese companies accused of blatantly copying foreign models, although the new automotive policy threatens to prohibit those who violate such rights from market entry (PWC 2004). Another is that Chinese car-makers plan major capacity and export drives – they do not intend simply producing for domestic markets (*The Economist* 2005b and c; PWC 2004). Then there are rising pressures of competitiveness and profitability. Production dropped in 2004 as the government slowed its hot economy through restrictions on car-loans. A price war developed hitting profitability. In 2003 the Chinese market accounted for two-thirds of its global profits – they fell to half of this in 2004. It is predicted that vehicle prices will be the lowest in the world within five years – perhaps 40 to 50 percent lower than in developed markets. Ruthless low margin competition for domestic sales however may be offset for those using China as a production base for global markets. China's new policy for the automotive industry permits foreign investors more than 50 percent equity in joint ventures built in export processing zones and targeted at offshore markets (PWC 2004).

6.2. Labour relations in China

Over the last two decades China's reforms have been economic rather than political (Chang and Bain 2006). The nation is in an ideological and practical transition away from a command to a mixed economy increasingly influenced by market forces, accommodating private enterprises (domestic and foreign) and public-private partnerships alongside state and collectively owned enterprises. The 'transmission belt' role of unions was formalised in communist China from 1949 (Chang and Bain 2006) and as economic reform has rolled out there has inevitably been a degree of role ambiguity for all social actors, but official policy remains corporatist.

China as a 'single social interest' entity declared itself a 'non-active' member of the ILO in the 1970s. It re-initiated participation in 1983 although its government representative indicated it would not be applying some important ILO conventions and recommendations. Despite ILO censure, and blocking by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) following the crack-down on Workers Autonomous Federations calling for compliance with ILO standards in 1989 as part of the wider Democracy Movement, China has

increased its participation in the body. In 1993 it expressed interest in the standards and an attitude of positive cooperation, an approach strengthened in June 2000 by the Chinese labour minister's address to the International Labour Council (Chen 2002). The ILO recognises China's labour law is not devoid of rights and protections but is concerned over the 'controlled framework' within which unions must exercise them, and the lack of the protections for freedom of association key to free collective bargaining. China has ratified 23 of the ILO's 184 conventions and is looking to sign a further five (ILO 2005) but a critical gap remains in the area of freedom of association.

It is not properly protected in either the Trade Union Law (1992 and 2001) or the Labour Law (1994). Although the Trade Union Law defines unions as voluntary mass organisations of the working class open to all 'manual and mental workers', there is only one recognised union federation – the ACFTU. Currently about 590,000 union organisations exist with a membership of over 100 million. Article 4 of the Act ensures conformity with the direction of the ruling Party requiring unions to 'observe and safeguard the Constitution, take it as the fundamental criterion for their activities, take economic development as the central task, uphold the socialist road, the people's democratic dictatorship, leadership by the Communist Party of China, and Marxist-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory, persevere in reform and open policy, and conduct their work independently in accordance with the Constitution of trade unions', formulated by the National Congress of Trade Unions in compliance with the Constitution and all laws of the PRC.

In the tradition of single social interest systems unions are established at various levels according to 'principles of democratic centralism' but are subject also to leadership from trade union organisations at higher levels (Article 9). A tiered structure of union organisation and operation is outlined from basic (enterprises employing 25 or more) to national levels (Articles 10-18) with higher-level unions assisting basic ones in signing labour contracts, drafts of which must be submitted to their congresses for approval. Disputes over contractual breaches are referred to arbitration and may be brought before a People's Court if the union is unhappy with a determination (Article 20). The Trade Union Law suggests workers and staff in state-owned enterprises exercise a right of democratic management through a union committee (Article 35); and in collectively owned enterprises that committees must 'organise the participation of workers ... in democratic management and supervision, and defend their rights in electing and removing managerial personnel and deciding on major questions concerning operation and management' (Article 36). However enterprises are no longer simply state or collectively owned – foreign investment brought private shareholders and appointed managers. Article 37, somewhat vaguely, states that trade union committees of 'other' enterprises are to organise employee participation 'in a democratic management of the enterprises and institutions by ways appropriate to the

enterprises and institutions'. The ambiguity of roles and responsibilities in China's transitional society become clearly apparent.

The Trade Union Law reflects an odd collection of union obligations and rights somewhere between the administrative (transmission belt) functions of single social interest systems and more representative systems associated with developed market economies. They have rights to consultation with government over laws affecting worker interests, social and economic planning and policies affecting employment conditions and social insurance (Articles 32-34). Administrative departments for labour under people's governments at various levels must establish trilateral consultation with unions and enterprises to jointly analyse and settle major labour relations issues. On the other hand unions are required to organise and educate workers in order for them 'play to their role as masters of the country and participate in various ways and forms in the administration of state affairs, management of economic and cultural undertakings and handling of social affairs'; assist people's governments and 'safeguard the socialist state power under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on an alliance of workers and peasants' (Article 5).

Unions are to represent and safeguard legitimate rights and interests of workers within the 'overall interests of the Chinese people' (Article 6) but also mobilise them to fulfil their production and work tasks and educate them to build a well-educated, self disciplined workforce with 'loft ideals and moral integrity' (Article 7). They must assist in welfare services to workers and in 'properly' dealing with matters concerning wages, health and safety as well as social insurance; conduct training in conjunction with enterprises in the need for workers and staff members to do their work, to protect the property of enterprises and the state 'in the attitude of masters of the country'; and mobilise workers in activities 'to make rational proposals and technical innovations' as well as in 'recreational and sports activities' (Articles 30-31). They must 'do a good job' with departments of choosing, commending, cultivating and administering good role models and advanced producers.

Under the Trade Union Law unions enjoy a 'right to be heard', rather than to collective bargaining. Unions have rights inter alia to: prior notice if an enterprise intends dissolving a labour contract, to demand reconsideration if this violates a law or contract, to 'advance an opinion' to an employer seen to have improperly punished a worker, and to 'support' workers wishing to bring a matter to arbitration or a People's Court. They can 'demand rectification' where an enterprise infringes rights and interests of employees by embezzling part of their wages, fails to provide occupational health and safety conditions, arbitrarily extends working hours, infringes on special rights enjoyed by women or minor workers or other serious infringements. If the employer refuses to correct matters they can then apply to the local people's government for a decision.

Unions must 'see to it' that appropriate safe and healthy working conditions are built into projects, and enterprises must give their opinions serious consideration. Where conditions are life-threatening the union has the right to propose a withdrawal of workers, and the enterprise must respond promptly. Unions enjoy rights to investigate infringements of legitimate health and safety rights and interests of workers with enterprises assistance; and must participate in investigations into cases of job related accidents causing death or injury, make proposals for solutions, and can demand that persons in charge be investigated for their liabilities. On other matters unions are limited to a problem-solving rather than an activist role as regards work stoppages or slow-down strikes, being obliged to consult with the enterprise to present opinions and demands of workers, and put forward proposals for solutions. An enterprise must try to satisfy reasonable demands, and the union must assist the enterprise to restore normal order and production and other work as soon as possible. Trade unions must participate in the conciliation of disputes, and local labour dispute arbitration bodies must include representatives of trade unions at appropriate levels. Trade union federations at or above county level may supply legal assistance to affiliates.

Despite a positive surge of tripartism at all levels in China, confirming union participation in social and economic policy, Chang and Bain (2006) argue that power remains concentrated in the state. They suggest that the state has in effect permitted employer unilateralism to substitute for administrative rules, but monitors labour relations closely and is active in mediating conflicting interests. By the end of 2002 635000 collective agreements were in existence, covering 80 million employees. Curiously however wage negotiations occur in only about six percent of private firms (Chang and Bain 2006). Interestingly the ACFTU has recently taken on foreign firms which it believes are required by law to establish unions. The companies (which include Kodak, Dell, McDonalds, Wal-Mart and Samsung) counter the law requires that workers request the establishment of unions which they have not done.

7. Labour relations in the global automobile industry: from the great sit-down to the great shake-out

The search for competitive advantage, growth and profitability by automobile manufacturers has been expressed through modernisation, and a migration of production. These have shaped labour relations systems in the industry. Ford's mass production system disempowered crafts-workers. Line workers clawed back some control over their working lives through industrial unions, using collective action to oblige auto manufacturers to negotiate working conditions. Job unionism and collective bargaining became the cornerstones of labour relations in the USA as well as Europe where producers imported mass

production methods, but designed labour relations arrangements to 'fit' with their own histories and cultures.

Toyota's lean production system ('super-Fordism') took root in Japan and then revolutionised the industry globally. The labour relations systems designed around mass production lost fit. Unions found themselves in strategic retreat, but more was to come. As the 'limits of lean' for competitive advantage were reached employers sought growth and profitability through new means. To access and develop new markets manufacturers, control costs and source materials and people more efficiently they migrated production – with profound labour relations implications.

The labour consequences of producer competitiveness will no longer be largely played out within and between democratic nations. China is in no rush to democracy but its cost advantages in production and the size of its untapped markets are too attractive for producers to stay out of the race despite risks of product piracy and the political baggage associated with operating in low labour cost authoritarian nations. Investors naturally look for best returns on investment. Cooke (2001; 1997) has shown North American investors prefer business environments in which labour is compliant, and structural arrangements permit room for unilateral or consultative decision-making rather than through collective bargaining.

However supportive of democracy and labour rights as part of such a democracy international business may be, its primary interests of profitability ensure that it seeks environments which offer best potential for uninterrupted production leading to least risk and highest returns on investment. In this regard history suggests that business is as happy to invest in authoritarian as democratic nations. In some as in South Africa, TNCs have played a role in pressuring regime change (Anstey 2006). However the mix of factors in China is very different – large TNCs need China in a way they did not need South Africa.

7.1. International labour relations standards and practices

The United Nations tries to ensure workers do not bear the brunt of international competition. In 2003 it adopted Norms on the Responsibilities of TNCs and Other Business Enterprises with regard to Human Rights. Through its Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, the ILO promotes global labour agreements to govern the international practices of TNCs. By 2002, twenty such agreements existed covering over two million employees internationally. The deals signed by the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) with VWSA and Daimler Chrysler in 2002, along with bodies representing their global workforces cover more than 600,000 employees across nations. Agreements commit companies to core labour rights of freedom of association, non-discrimination, no use of forced labour or child labour, and adherence to at least minimum legal standards as regards compen-

sation and benefits, working hours and health and safety standards (Graham and Bibby 2002). Global labour agreement strictures are however largely procedural rather than substantive. Dualism in the global economy permits companies to seek competitive advantage through lower wage costs. Some developing nations see even the ILO's basic procedural protections as a form of disguised protectionism for developed economies. In the context of global unemployment TNC's can find governments and labour movements willing to ignore ILO standards at least in the short term. For instance, the government controlled All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) has been suspected of assisting local governments waive union rights to attract foreign firms in some areas (China Labour Watch 2004b). How big are the disparities?

7.2. Low wages and competitive advantage

Comparisons of wages across nations are fraught with complexity – issues of economic context, relative purchasing power, fluctuating currencies and accuracy of sources caution interpretations of the available data. Nevertheless there is still value in considering the implications to be drawn from them.

There is considerable variance amongst nations as regards average income levels. *The Economist* (2005) estimates the following per capita GDPs: USA $37,240; Japan $33,680; Germany $29,130; South Africa $3550; and China $1090.

Wage levels reflect this reality. It is estimated here that a production worker on an assembly line earns about $55,000 in the USA, $66,000 in Germany, $36,500 in Japan, $10,150 in South Africa and $7300 in China.

There is also considerable variance amongst these nations regarding minimum wage setting. Unlike the USA there is no national minimum in South Africa where industry minima are either set through collective bargaining or government regulation. In Japan minima are set by Minimum Wage Councils by area and sector. In Germany there is no minimum wage but a useful index is the welfare grant. In China minimum wages are set by city – Shanghai is 630 yuan; Guangdong is 684 yuan (about US$80) per month (China Labour Watch 2004a). Unions are not very active in wage negotiations. The yuan set at 8,28 to the US$ since 1995 has recently been 'floated' but under tight regulations. Information as to actual wage levels is a little sketchy. A survey of wages in 800 foreign firms in China in 2003 by Hewitt Associate Consulting Corporation indicated wage levels had risen by seven percent over the previous year. At the time a senior executive in a foreign firm earned about US$77,700 annually, a mid-level executive about US$35,780 and a factory worker about US$4340 (http://www.business-in-asia.com/china.wages.html.) Global consultant group, Grant Thornton compared 406 Chinese facilities with ISO9000 quality certification and 681 US manufacturers in 2005. Chinese firms paid much lower wages – $121 per month as opposed to $2160 per month in the USA. However competitive advantage was not simply about lower wage costs.

Chinese firms invested far more in training: 25 percent of Chinese firms trained more than 40 hours per employee a year as opposed to 11 percent of US firms; 53 percent of Chinese firms trained more than 20 hours per employee a year as opposed to 35 percent of US firms. Investment in capital equipment and commitment to total quality management were also higher in Chinese firms (http://www.grantthornton.com). One source in a transnational corporation informed the author that the total wage cost of a Chinese worker is set at 20 percent of the cost of a worker in a plant in a developed nation – in a Japanese plant for instance this would be US$7300 pa. A small car produced in a Chinese auto assembler is currently priced at about $4000 (the equivalent of 6,5 months of earnings), while foreign firm products cost about $9000 (the equivalent of 14,8 months of earnings) but are falling in the price war (Johnson 2005).

One useful indicator for comparative purposes is the number of months earnings of a production worker relative to a base price car estimated here to be between 2,4 and 3,3 months in the USA, Germany and Japan but 12 months in South Africa, and in China about 6,5 months for a domestic model and 14,8 months for a foreign make.

Large disparities exist in wage levels across nations in the auto industry. Autos produced in the West or Japan are affordable relative to earnings there, but markets are saturated. Western producers will not access mass markets of developing economies with western cost structures. When they relocate factories they tap developing markets in the context of wage structures of those markets. Auto TNC's pay well above the minima in a nation such as China and can still produce and price more cheaply than in the USA, Japan or Germany for instance. A time will come when they use their off-shore production facilities to export vehicles back into Western markets, or when Chinese producers with government backing, having caught up on quality standards, limit TNC production and start exporting their own makes. This has benefits for developing nations. South Africa for instance has almost doubled its production in the last few years, largely on the basis of exports.

7.3. TNC's, trade unions and labour relations arrangements

In the auto manufacturing industry owners of capital are in a crisis of competition, their traditional markets saturated and boundaries being reached as regards modernisation strategies. The migration strategy is a complicated one as regards the management of labour relations, but clearly capital is in the driving seat in both developed and developing nations. While products and work processes can be standardised across nations, labour relations systems cannot. On this front TNC's must find fit with global business strategy but also with different cultures, complex mixes of legislative controls over employment relations and practices, differing levels of workforce education and development, and differing levels of unionisation and workforce propensities to strike. Labour relations is usually therefore delegated to local level manage-

ments with head office oversight. While compliance with national laws, culture and practices tends to see a decentralisation of the function, head offices pay a keen interest in employee relations owing to their impact on production processes and corporate image internationally (Stonehouse et al., 2000).

Apart from access to new markets, western investors prefer nations offering lower labour costs, a docile labour force, and an absence of restrictive labour regulations (Cooke 1997; Sengenberger 1994; Sengenberger and Campbell 1994; Marginson and Sisson 1993). The capacity of companies to migrate fundamentally alters the equation of interdependence which underpinned nationally based labour relations systems in developed economies. For unions the evolution of the transnational presents problems of mobilisation, often dividing rather than uniting workers across nations. Unions have accused TNC's of simultaneously eroding the job security and earnings of employees in developed nations while exploiting those in developing nations. Those in developing nations often lack the rights and protections of their first world counterparts, meaning not only that they are poorly paid but that they lack the rights to organise effectively for purposes of bargaining with employers and the state. Apart from formidable financial powers, transnational corporations have the capacity to move production facilities across nations and to source materials and skills internationally. Decision-making and authority systems are often remote and inaccessible, financial and business information is complex and difficult to unravel, and mobility affords a capacity to use the 'investment strike' should labour regulations or employee militancy cross a tolerance threshold. The capacity to source materials and markets far beyond those of any individual national boundaries 'immunises' them from the effects of local labour action to an extent (Brewster et al., 2003).

7.4. TNC's and collective bargaining

Lean methods coupled with the capacity to transfer production have altered collective bargaining in western economies. In the late 1970s, after decades of growth in which they achieved rising salaries and standards of living, US union membership and power declined in a wave of layoffs and plant closures and they were forced into 'concessionary bargaining' with wage cuts or freezes and 'give-backs' across thousands of enterprises, affecting millions of workers (Katz and Kochan 2000; Sloane and Whitney 1994; Bluestone and Bluestone 1992). Auto firms led the way. In 1979 Chrysler de-linked pay increases from those of Ford and GM, paying a wage twenty percent below competitors and ending cost of living increases. In exchange the president of the UAW acquired a seat on the Chrysler Board of Directors. In 1982 Ford and GM pushed pay and work rule concessions on the UAW in exchange for employment security guarantees and profit sharing. By the 1990s US firms were more competitive but labour relations had polarised. Some sought more participatory approaches to labour-management relations as in the Saturn project (Bluestone and

Bluestone 1992), while others devolved into more confrontational exchanges as evidenced in prolonged strikes in Caterpillar and the steel industry (Katz and Kochan 2000; Sloane and Whitney 1994). A new wave of concessionary bargaining is now evident (*The Economist* 2005a; Carson 2004). In Germany a similar trend is underway. In November 2004 IG Metall and UAW entered a collective agreement for sustainable future development and to secure employment. VWAG committed itself to maintain employment levels at its six plants in West Germany at the current level of 99,000 (no dismissals for operational reasons) until the end of 2011; the union accepted a wage freeze to end January 2007 (28 months), revisions in the bonus system, restructuring of the remuneration system towards a performance related system by mid-2006, substantially reduced starting rates for new employees, and a 35 hour working week (up from 28,8) (VWAG 2004).

7.5. TNC's and the utility of the strike

The Great Sit-down Strike in General Motors' Flint plant in 1936-1937 obliged the company to recognise and negotiate with the UAW, and the strike (actual or threatened) became the major source of leverage for unions in collective bargaining. Its utility declined when companies were able to move production to other countries although Silver (2003) shows that although unions are weakened at sites of disinvestment, labour mobilisation and strike activity migrate with auto manufacturers. During the 1930s and 1940s 75 percent of strike activity in the global automobile industry occurred in the USA and Canada where the industry was concentrated; it rose from 23 percent to almost 50 percent in Western Europe between the 1930s and 1970s when production grew from 1,1m to 10,4m; from two percent to 32 percent in Southern Europe between the 1950s and 1970s; and it climbed from three percent in the Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, South Africa cluster between the 1970s and 1990s. Although capital mobility relocates labour militancy, the returns on industrial action for labour diminish as there is a move away from the point of origin or innovation of an industry. In addition the risks of strike action for labour are high as illustrated in the VWSA strike in South Africa in 2001 (Anstey 2006).

8. The future

This analysis has tracked the development of the automobile industry through several developmental leaps. Employers have competed for advantage through technological innovation and new systems of work organisation, and then more recently through relocation of production in order to access and develop new markets. Auto production rose from about 10 million in 1950 to 70 million in 1998 with the industry experiencing a huge over-capacity, estimated at between 15 and 20 million vehicles a year. In 2003 the industry operated at only

75 percent of capacity (PWC 2004). As a consumer-pull market has replaced the producer-push conditions of earlier eras, large auto manufacturers are in continuous search for competitive edge in terms of quality, cost, service and delivery to boost growth and profitability.

Several things are clear. The industry has reached its zenith in the developed economies. The labour relations systems for which western workers struggled are now in decline, if not in terms of their structures at least in terms of their fruits. Western markets are saturated, there is a crisis of over-capacity, and investment, returns, jobs and terms and conditions of work are in decline. Unions can use their democratic freedoms to bargain the pace but not the downward direction of their job opportunities and substantive benefits in the industry. This is not to suggest the end of the industry in western nations but certainly the boundaries of growth and profitability have been found.

Major producers have long recognised the need for new markets as reflected in decisions of new investment, and location of new factories. Although Carson (2004 p. 4) suggests the excitement is overblown, investment and production trends clearly indicate China to have become the destination of choice for automobile manufacturers. Its large population, high economic growth rate, low levels of car ownership and a government anxious to develop the industry and willing to develop the infrastructure necessary to support it, make it a region of opportunity.

The move to China is a profoundly important one. This is not a small cost cutting offshore exercise by major western producers to a developing economy offering cheap labour. It represents an accelerating shift in automobile manufacturing out of one region to another. The labour implications of competition have largely been played out in and between democratic nations to date. The Chinese government however is not committed to a democracy, and it will not be a passive partner in the process, simply offering cheap labour to TNC's. It does not just want jobs, it wants investment, expertise, technology and infrastructure as part of grand vision for sustained growth and development. Its bargaining chips are huge market potential, a fast developing infrastructure and cheap labour, at least in the launch phase of the process – and the fact that the TNC's have nowhere to go in traditional markets.

The interesting questions lie less with what will happen in labour relations in traditional western auto manufacturing nations, more what will happen in China. It can be argued that forces associated with economic growth will inevitably see democracy emerge along with a rising worker militancy and strengthening over time of labour rights and protections. Silver (2003) would perhaps argue that TNC's will only enjoy a short period of low wage advantage, before Chinese workers mobilise for a greater share of the wealth they are creating, and for political freedoms just as they have done across South America, Southern and Eastern Europe and in South Africa. Lessons of history run counter to the master-minds of China's development strategy who seem to

think that development can be centrally managed through selective liberalisation. Rather growth is likely to see the rise of new economic and political forces, dispersing the power of the state and obliging it increasingly into a role as partner rather than commander in an industrial development process within a wider democratic dispensation. There is of course strength in such arguments. However there are also some counter views. Sauls (2005) suggests that globalisation may not simply continue along the track envisaged by its western advocates. He argues that there is rising evidence of flaws in its (largely liberal market) logic, and that countries such as India, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brazil and Venezuela are successfully developing their own pragmatic (and nationalist) approaches to challenges of development. In excluding Japan from her global strike trends analysis Silver (2003) argued that unlike western firms its companies had implemented lean production systems in a context of lifetime employment for a core of workers which promoted a uniquely cooperative relationship. In short the Japanese approached issues of industrial development, employment security, and national interest differently to the west. Friedman (1994) has also argued that Asian approaches to managing political transitions and developing economies have been profoundly different to those employed in the west – more centred in national consensus building than simply liberalising markets and introducing systems of pluralist adversarialism. Notably Chinese progress in building tripartite structures seems to be far in advance of its collective bargaining systems. The pace and direction of change in China then might be quite different to western experience and expectation.

The Chinese government has indicated that it is in a rush for managed social and economic development rather than democracy. The TNC's will offer their workforces and trade unions basic rights and freedoms enshrined by ILO standards and pay above average wages, but they will not be pushing to raise labour costs. Chinese unions operate within political, ideological and legal constraints, but does this mean they will inevitably follow the mobilisation routes of western labour movements? For reasons of compliance or culture or indeed, a deep sense of partnership with government in managing the long term national development project labour may not push for rapid wage increases (or political transformation) in the manner of other developing nations. So a cost cushion may exist for some time for TNC's and domestic Chinese producers as they gear up for a more assertive role in the global automobile industry. Besides, the fact that Chinese wages are so low might enable the industry for a period to accommodate both a degree of militancy, and increases in labour cost, without losing its attraction as a production site or losing its growth momentum.

Labour relations systems developed in early auto manufacturing plants reflected a recognition on the part of auto manufacturers that disruptive strike action might be better dealt with through strategies of accommodation than

coercion. Unions were given legitimacy in exchange for periods of labour peace and procedural adherence. These arrangements of 'regulated adversarialism' shaped the labour dispensations of western nations, finding fit not only with the production environment but also western political and economic philosophies. However the systems themselves, and the returns for those in the relationship were only viable to the extent that they allowed businesses to remain in business. As competition has stiffened competitive advantage was sought through modernisation of production systems and the migration of production – the labour relations arrangements of early mass production factories lost fit. The first wave of change was largely absorbed within developed and democratic economies. The waves now progressively reflect manufacturers' choices to locate auto production away from such environments. As production rises in China so too does its influence over the industry as a whole, including labour relations arrangements. As the major emergent player in the world of auto production it is large enough not to have to simply comply with the values and philosophies of the host nations of TNC's or the ILO. Its social partners may not make choices or behave in a manner expected by western analysts. As a consequence a new logic of labour relations may now gather momentum not only in the automobile industry but internationally based on quite different thinking about social, economic and political development.

It is the strategic choices of automobile companies, based in their need for competitive advantage that have shaped labour relations in the industry – this analysis shows that however powerful it is within certain nations, organised labour has been in constant catch-up. Its power is rooted in the successes of the businesses it organises. As the automobile industry moves eastwards, it is reshaping labour systems not only in its destination but its points of departure.

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African Sociological Review, 10, (2), 2006, pp. 72-93.

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Women, NEPAD and Nation Building: Revisiting a Dying Debate

Abstract

This article is not a contribution to the usual critiques levelled against the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) such as the credentials of its architects, the structural capacity of receiving African nations, the benefits of trade and investment proposals over inherent conditionalities for development aid. Rather, the analysis here revisits an earlier but short flurry of debates on the gender implications of this plan. NEPAD has been debated and assessed in many forums. Indeed, the scholarly discourse appears to have shifted to the prospects of a crucial pillar in the plan – the Peer Review Mechanism (PRM). In accentuating the need for a continuing debate on the substance of NEPAD's plan for gender inclusion in social governance, this article argues that the document, similar to its predecessors, remains incomplete, the usefulness of expert evaluations insufficient, as long as it refuses to confront the Women Question in concrete terms.

Introduction

Africa's struggle to achieve minimum living standards, with the exception of a few short years of post-colonial honeymoons here and there, have fallen largely on the shoulders of women (Gladwin 1991, Gordon 1996). Indeed, African women's contributions to family subsistence over these decades vividly portray the centrality of gender in the continent's march towards economic survival and sustainable development. The conditions under which these contributions are made leave no impressions as to the crippling poverty enveloping the majority of African women. Thus, any policy initiative, which boasts of improving the situation, however far-reaching, must be assessed in terms of how well it harnesses women's agency and involvement. As the current global initiative on the forum, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) emerged with some degree of support as a possible blueprint for Africa's twenty-first century Renaissance (Hope 2002, De Waal 2002, Kanbur 2002, Match 2002). But it also attracted formidable critiques as little more than an externally fielded propaganda which hardly reflects the voices and plight of Africa's teeming population (Chabal 2002, Owusu 2003, Edozie 2004, Ilorah 2004).

Based on the continent's present bent towards good governance, this paper assesses NEPAD's potential to integrate women into Africa's decision making process as actors. NEPAD aligns its claims of gender representation and sensitivity with the search for good governance by African leaders, policy makers, and civil societies. The paper provides a critical analysis of this new initiative's potential to empower Africa's women as a social group and as individuals in their own right, who should take their place with their male counterparts as equal partners in nation building. The analysis below is divided into four major sections. The first section provides a brief, conceptual framework for good governance based largely on UNDP reports – a major engine which gave momentum and steering wheels to the debate.[1] The second section examines the place of gender in Africa's search for good governance. The third section takes up the claims of NEPAD for good governance that embraces men and women as equal and able partners poised to tackle the continent's endemic challenge: poverty. The final section concludes the analysis with important considerations for full gender inclusion in Africa's hopeful renaissance.

Good Governance on the National Front and Beyond

Public governance may be defined as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a nation's affairs. It embraces the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and mediate their differences (UNDP 1997). Within this framework public governance envelops actors that are drawn from and beyond the government circle itself, including those whose social location, interest, and responsibilities blur the boundaries (Chabal 2002). This public space is therefore a contested terrain, visibly so when one considers, for instance, the dynamics of power played out in the interactions between social groups (and institutions) engaged in collective action to effect change and stakeholders whose main interest lies in protecting what they consider their share of public resources (Stoker, 1998). These interactions, Jessop (1998) argues, introduce their own anarchies of exchange, given the fundamental contestations evident in the organisational hierarchy within which they occur. The art of governing therefore calls for considerable skill and diplomacy in managing social opportunities, interests, and conduct.

The UNDP (1997) categorised governance into four major dimensions, namely: economic, political, administrative and systemic. Economic governance includes the processes of decision making and implementation which impact, directly or indirectly, on the whole range of a country's material resources with an aim to effect optimal growth, efficient distribution, and mutual gain in relationships with other economies. Political governance refers to decision-making and policy implementation by elected persons in legiti-

mately constituted bodies charged with the responsibility of representing the range of interests of social groups within a state. As constituted bodies and institutions, the state comprises of separate legislative, executive and judicial branches. These entities represent the interests of a pluralistic polity that hold the mandate to freely elect their representatives. Administrative governance is a system of policy implementation carried out through an efficient, independent, accountable and open public sector. Systemic governance encompasses the processes and structures developed by society in order to protect cultural norms, religious beliefs and social values, while maintaining an environment of health, freedom, security. Systemic governance provides opportunities for individuals and groups to nurture and exercise forms of freedom and capabilities that lead to a better life for all.[2]

All developing societies face, in various degrees, continuing challenges of putting in place the relevant conditions for embracing new modalities of governance; modalities that could guide political, economic, and social activities towards a vision of sustainable development. As the World Bank (1989) report aptly reaffirms, the African situation is in many regards a 'crisis of governance'. Indeed, it was the increasing acknowledgement of this crisis by African leaders as well groups within civil society (that claim to speak for the teeming masses), which led to a renewed interest in the concept of good governance. The major objective behind more recent efforts to build regional co-operations and continental alliances in Africa is to achieve good governance. Good governance is defined as the ability to meet up with the critical needs of the society through efficient management of public resources. Good governance, experts argue, should redirect our footsteps from the crisis of ad hoc interventions to carefully designed strategies geared towards fundamental changes (Juma 2004, Owusu 2003). The emphasis in current debates on this subject is on development initiatives that could grapple with poverty as a challenge which demands high priority, address gender disparities in living conditions, provide employment opportunities to maximise the use of human resources, and sustain the environment for future expansion (UNDP 1994, Hope 2004). But ultimately, experts argue, the potential to achieve good governance inevitably rests on the capacity of African states to maintain a politically democratic environment for all stakeholders. As one of the prominent contributors to the debate aptly explained the vision:

> Democracy should reduce the scope for conflict and make good government more likely. In turn, good government should bring about the political stability, the institutional consolidation and the operation of the rule of law that are universally seen as the necessary framework for investment. Greater investment should facilitate economic growth. Growth provides the foundation for development (Chabal, 447-449).

To achieve good governance, society must address the problem of institutional collapse. Every institution within a governing state consists of cognitive, normative and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and

meaning to social behaviour. It also includes: the legal and judicial systems, political systems, family and kinship structures, all of which mediate the legitimacy and authority of the state (UNDP, 1997). The state, in turn, impacts on these institutions as they operate and interact with one another within and across organisational webs. Institutional collapse is, in essence, a crisis that envelops the state and its various interactive segments. The majority of Africa's governance structures, both at local and national levels, are in a state of collapse (Kanbur 2002, Chabal. 2002). Good governance, the UNDP report reiterates, is crucial to addressing this problem.

Broadly defined, the concept of good governance is not only gender neutral, but also does not appear to suggest any discriminatory grounds either for the selection of its agents or the assignment of responsibilities. If the participation of men and women within a social entity is inherently acknowledged, why then should gender as a basis for social organisation pose a significant challenge to good governance?

Gender and Public Governance in Africa

The centrality of gender in Africa's social organisation and development cannot be denied. More importantly, its representations in contemporary society must not be taken for granted because in many ways they point to the roots of African women's present struggle to have their voices heard. Women's progress in most of Africa has been strongly tied to their place in the indigenous society, the colonial transition, and the re-configuration of this place in a post-colonial era. This historical passage was characterised by patriarchal continuities and contradictions that define the present hybridised social order. Patriarchal continuities may be seen as indigenous gender biases, which though traceable to the pre-colonial social arrangements, found a stronghold to germinate and flourish in the contemporary society, albeit in modified forms (Afonja 1990, Moshi 1998, Okeke 2004). The status of women at present, however, appears in many cases, to be stripped of ties to traditional female structures of authority embedded in indigenous societies. For instance, formal politics in much of Africa is considered a male preserve that mirrors, to some extent, the assumedly stronger presence of men in pre-colonial power regimes. But, such an assumption ignores the various openings through which women made their voices heard in traditional African settings. Further, the gender division of labour in the domestic sphere and paid work, gender roles in agriculture, especially women's restricted access to land, and women's near absence in international commerce, are all believed to find some resonance in the relations of gender that characterised much of pre-colonial Africa. 'Indigenous' codes are often invoked to silence women in a contemporary social order that has in many ways parted ways with the past (Amadiume 1987, Imam 1997, Sall 2000). Such assertions of pre-colonial social relations remain one-sided in

as much as they fail to bring into view the culturally placed checks and balances that gave women a foothold to stand on in indigenous social configurations.

Moreover, these gender biases are not easily separable from facets of foreign patriarchy that came with western colonisation and capitalist development as significant markers of Africa's social transformation. Compared to women, these markers afforded men a stronger foothold to legitimise new power bases and privileges, establishing continuities that are hardly justifiable solely on indigenous grounds. Social relations in today's Africa are therefore built on a hybridised social order where men and women must deal with both foreign and indigenous dictates. Women, however, must negotiate their place within this social order – as subordinate persons to men (Okeke 2004, Moshi 1998). Although the exact interaction of foreign and indigenous elements during the historical passage remains unclear, the decline of African women's status from the colonial period to the present is clearly evident (Rogers1980, Gordon 1996, Snyder and Tadesse 1997).

African women have not only shown considerable resistance to the social forces that impact negatively on their lives, but have also made significant contributions to political struggles within the continent. African women played a significant role in national liberation struggles, resisting, as well, various colonial incursions to their social, economic and political domains (Tripp 2001, Chuku 2002, Johnson-Odim 1997). Between the 1940s and 1960s when most African states gained political independence, many prominent African women leaders carved out a political niche for women through their participation in mainstream political movements and individual female organisations. The various national liberation movements, however, showed little commitment to women's advancement beyond the periods of political struggles. Often as was the case across Africa, women emerged in the post-colonial society as second class citizens subordinate to a male ruling class who kept them on the sidelines of formal politics, the state machinery and the modern economy (Urdang 1989, Wieranga 1995).

Gender in development literature is often viewed in terms of societal relationships bound by the traditionally defined roles for and attitudes, values, and norms towards men and women in a given household, work-place or community (UNECA, 1999). Given its centrality in social organisation and interaction, gender cannot be ignored in the analysis of failure or success of governance in Africa. As the South African President, Thabo Mbeki admitted in a meeting of African heads of state,

> In all Commonwealth societies women are suppressed. Our continuing failure to genuinely respond to the challenge of attaining human equality is demonstrated by the very composition of our meeting. We need only to look at the group gathered here to see that maleness is a prerequisite for political leadership. It cannot be that we pride ourselves as a Commonwealth when this special collective distinguishes itself by defining women as alien beings.[3]

Democracy at its core is about representation and resources. As the Nigeria lawyer, scholar and social activist, Ayesha Imam drives home to many others who challenge the underpinnings of inequality in Africa, the struggle to build a socially inclusive society 'is also necessarily and simultaneously profoundly a political struggle over power and resources' (1997: 2). When women, who make up 50 percent of the population, are left out; kept at the margins in political decision making, the extent to which the other half represent women's interests cannot be left unquestioned. Participation is a key factor in the governance process. Participation is even more critical in a situation where far more women, compared to men, are both economically and politically helpless to articulate their demands and demand action. What good would women's continued acquiescence to the status quo be in a situation where their present life conditions are clearly traceable to 'an insufficient access to resources, a lack of political rights and social options'? (Rodenberg 2002: 1) At the very core of African women's struggle to be recognised as equal partners with men in nation building is their denigration, apparent and subtle, in a contemporary society where their potential as productive citizens is exploited rather than nurtured for social progress. Good governance incorporates the idea that all or the majority of stakeholders in the polity should be active participants in this process. In terms of gender relations good governance suggests parity. It calls for the extraction of human ideals of excellence in a world of diverse talents. Parity, in this context, has to be negotiated on a contested terrain with an agreeable balance struck between tolerance and respect for personal autonomy. The achievement of these ideals largely depends on equal political participation; the integration of every group in society into active political life. Such a framework must embrace the interaction of men and women in all spheres of public life, including their representation in all power structures (UNDP 1995). In adopting the Universal Declaration on Democracy in September 1997, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)[4] reiterated the crucial link between gender equity and good and governance, noting that 'the achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarily, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences' (Pintat 1998, 2). Such solemn declarations are yet to find a solid footing in Africa's many initiatives to rethink its development path.

The challenge to empower women; to enable them improve their conditions of life as a prerequisite for contributing to nation-building is a battle fought on different platforms and with various degrees of success. More specifically, the global movement to bring women into forums of decision making has gradually gained momentum over the past two decades. During this period, women have organised at local, national, and international levels to demand action. For example, from the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), to the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), women have elicited support from

national leaders, international organisations, and eminent world figures to push their case for participation in public decision making. Five years after Beijing, women in parliaments world-wide registered an increase from 10 to 12 percent. Regional increases range from 36.6 percent in the Nordic countries to 15.5 percent in the Americas; from 13.4 percent in Asia to 12.5 percent in Europe (excluding Nordic countries). Women represent 11.5 percent of parliamentarians in sub-Saharan Africa, those in the Pacific 8.3 percent, and the Arab States at the bottom with 3.3 percent (Pintat 2000: 4). Despite the range of policies and programmes developed in response to the gender gap in public leadership and decision making, available records still show that women, even on a global scale, are vastly under-represented. At present, women's global representation in decision making is nowhere close to the 30 percent threshold advocated by the United Nations Development Programme (Karam 2000: 9). Even these present gains were not a result of a restructuring of the political space to *include* women as equal partners. Indeed, the IPU (2005) succinctly articulated this development as 'the result of electoral engineering' to accommodate women, often in response to both internal and external diplomatic pressures.

Where do African women stand? Besides the struggle for basic economic survival in which the majority of African women are immersed, the challenges of nurturing sustainable development initiatives faced by the continent certainly demand women's participation in charting a path forward. These two streams of interest are inextricable. African women need to situate themselves strategically in order to influence the decisions that affect their lives and those of their families. They are not immune to changes and trends in the political economy of their communities and nations, or what transpires outside the borders of nation state. As Karam (1998) argues,

> ... women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interest to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision making, goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.[5]

The verdict has come in after three decades of research and praxis on both the status of African women as well as their role in nation building. Over this period, the need to access their wasting potential has been variously expressed by national leaders and policy makers. Indeed, women's growing international profile fanned by the growth of international feminist movements in the past three decades, has propelled African governments to voice a number of policy declarations.[6] For instance, *The Lagos plan of Action* (1988), called for both the integration of African women into the development process, particularly in policy designs that aim at optimising the use of human resources. Further, the *Arusha Declaration* (UNECA 1990) took great pains to highlight the

marginalisation of women in Africa's development initiatives, outlining measures to reverse the trend. Following a similar pattern of response to earlier United Nation's initiatives, many African countries have also endorsed the *Beijing Platform for Action* which spells out the strategies for raising the global status of omen arrived at by international women's coalitions, national governments and international development agencies at the (1995) Fourth World Women's Conference in China. Such responses by African governments in the past may have introduced a number of policy measures to address women's concerns, but they are yet to get to the roots of their marginalisation in contemporary society.

Indeed, a good number of scholars argue that the rise of international feminist movements and discourses that raised women's global appears to have made little impact on African women's social status, particularly their role in national development. Apparently, the various national regimes have exploited this international profile to their benefit, instituting 'state feminism' managed by their female consorts within political circles, who drum up popular support from the less privileged female majority, as they sabotage the efforts of female collectives that question the status quo (Mama 1995, Okeke and Franceschet 2002). African women appear to have also suffered a similar fate with the wave of democratisation across Africa since the late 1980s. As many scholars engaged in this debate clearly point out, African governments may voice their commitment to advancing women's status in the continent, but such declarations do nothing but pay lip service to the gender question, if they do not confront the structural and ideological barriers that militate against women's social mobility.[7] For the most part, women have been kept away from the forefront, and only in a few cases, particularly in East and Southern Africa, has female mobilisation exerted appreciable influence to earn some degree of recognition in the corridors of power (Tripp 2001). Not surprisingly, women's representation in politics and urban governance and their general presence in the modern society remain woefully low. For instance, women's average share of seats in national parliaments across Africa is still below 10 percent compared to Asia and the Pacific (14.5 percent) and the advanced industrial countries (22.6 percent).[8]

For those critically conscious of the patriarchal underpinnings of women's lives in Africa, this record is hardly surprising. The tentacles of patriarchy have an instinctive hold on every effort African women make to assert their citizenship in society. It defines their group interaction, sphere of action and degree of social support. These tentacles continue to undermine African women's struggle to mobilise beyond the boundaries outside which they would have to confront men, male establishments and strongholds (Chuku 2002, Okeke 2004). African women may be organising around all kinds of issues but have yet to question tradition where it holds down their progress. As Nadia Youseff (1995: 287) rightly asserted, 'Women's organizations exist in Africa,

but most are not the kind through which women can become empowered to use law or to effect changes to secure their rights'. Women are left to bear much of the brunt of a social order burdened with archaic systems of gender relations inflexible to the demands of modernisation in economic, social and political terms. If they existed, indigenous social spaces of power and authority have suffered the severe stranglehold of modernity, leaving women to seek concessions on very shaky platforms, wrapping their demands in ever so delicate a parcel to avoid stepping on the toes of the powers that be. African women's minimal political representation only underscores the definition of their role in the contemporary society; their place beside men in nation-building. Women's political representation in African reflects the narrow niche carved out for them in a contemporary society where they are expected to harness their efforts towards family subsistence, registering their presence in the public sphere only to the extent that it does not challenge their subordinate status beside men as brothers, fathers, husbands and leaders who hold the fort and chart the path.

As noted earlier, African women's situation does not stand apart from the common pattern characteristic of life in the developing world. But its patriarchal facets display their own peculiar features which give them potency in each cultural domain. In each case, culture appears to have outclassed other factors in marring women's political ambitions and efforts to join the relevant forums. Defined simply as the ways of life of a people, culture could easily shape women's and men's involvement in production, reproduction, resource use and distribution. The defense of such non-egalitarian systems bars those under its oppressive clutches from asking the question: Should tradition serve us or should we serve tradition? It is a similar state of affairs that bars Africa women from questioning (even when they enter the political forums) the underlying patriarchal assumptions which inform cultural practices such as women's usufruct access to land, the treatment of widows, and early marriage. A more decisive question buried within the literature on gender and development in Africa begs to be answered in political terms: is it in society's interest to maintain these practices or is it time for a trade-off between cultural practices and human development priorities such as progress in development, human rights and democracy? (UNDP 2004).

This paper argues that a people's cultural not only shapes the nature of its democracy and phenomenon of governance. If we admit that governance also involves, among other facets, the management of gender relations, especially with reference to the distribution of public resources, then, the cultural landscape which defines this social order cannot be left unchecked.

NEPAD, Public Governance and the Gender Question

NEPAD is supposedly an African-made-project; a synthesis of three initiatives – Thabo Mbeki, South Africa president's vision of a political, cultural and

economic renaissance for the continent in the twenty-first century; the Millennium Partnership for Africa's recovery Programme (MAP), the Omega Plan for Africa spearheaded by president Wade of Senegal, which focused extensively on infrastructural and skill development; and the Compact for African Recovery, a contribution from the executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). NEPAD is designed to reverse Africa's underdevelopment in the twenty-first century through a sustained regional engagement among African States, on the one hand, and a partnership with advanced industrial countries, on the other. In order to tackle Africa's problems of poverty and social exclusion – a basic prerequisite for full integration into the current global economic globalisation process – these multilateral and bilateral relationships are to be nurtured within the framework of good governance. Towards this end, African states are expected not only to put their houses in order but also to endorse and accept hook-line-and-sinker, orthodox economic reforms (such as trade liberalisation, currency devaluation, subsidy withdrawals, privatisation and private sector-driven economy) stipulated by donor agencies and in bilateral agreements. NEPAD 2001 promises to undertake a fundamental restructuring of Africa's development programme, taking into consideration many of the concerns raised by critics of earlier attempts at hoisting Africa onto the development path. NEPAD is presented as the brainchild of Africa's leaders who have embraced the common vision of eliminating poverty as a crucial prerequisite to the continent's economic and social renaissance. This common vision, the architects of NEPAD explain, must be endorsed by the African peoples whose participation in the various approaches to action cannot be compromised. The basic stance of NEPAD is captured in the following affirmation contained in the first paragraph of the document:

> ... a pledge by African leaders based on common vision and a firm and shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development, and at the same time to participate actively in the world economy and body politic…a program anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and their continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalization world (NEPAD, 2001, Paragraph 1).

The basic challenge to Africa's development, according to the authors of the document, is therefore poverty and the eradication of poverty must of necessity be a consequence of sustained economic growth – the backbone on which the overall well-being of the teeming populations across the continent rests. To keep the economic engine rolling, African states must embrace participatory democracy, which is expected further to guarantee political stability, public security and rule of law. The World Bank had blamed the lack of investment in the continent by both foreigners and indigenous businesses on the absence of these fundamental prerequisites. It defined a good government as the one that

does not interfere in the economic process but limits its activities to providing physical and social infrastructure, including legal frameworks, especially for private sector development. This pressure for good governance has led to the blurring of boundaries between democratisation and the retreat of the state from the social and economic fields As stated earlier on, the debate on Africa's economic renaissance gained considerable momentum around discourses on 'good governance' (Mafeje, 2002). The present state of affairs was the direct result of what the World Bank saw as a gross, prolonged mismanagement of public resources and interests by African governments. Therefore, whatever support extended was hinged on African leaders' preparedness to work towards an efficient, transparent and corruption free governance.

In keeping with the above premises, NEPAD was structured to cover four major areas, namely: Peace and Security Initiative; Democracy and Political Governance Initiative; Economic Governance Initiative, and Sub-Regional and Regional Approaches to Development. The democracy and political Governance Initiative centre on the place of democracy and 'good' political governance in Africa's quest for sustainable development. It incorporates a commitment by African leaders to create and consolidate basic processes and practices of governance that are in line with the principles of transparency, respect for human rights, promotion of the rule of law, accountability, and integrity; support initiatives that foster good governance; respect for the global standards of democracy (including political pluralism and multiparty politics, the right of workers to form unions, fair and open elections organised periodically). The leadership of African countries has to function with an aim to institutionalising all these commitments that ensure adherence to the political core values enshrined in the NEPAD. Political leadership in the NEPAD era is expected to respect the basic standards of democratic behaviour; identify existing institutional weaknesses, and mobilise the resources and expertise necessary for redressing them. Sustainable development is considered inconceivable without the emplacement of an appropriate political governance frame within which the development project can be undertaken (Olukoshi, 2002).

NEPAD potentially wields considerable international support given the commitments (albeit in promissory terms) western industrial countries have made, especially in financial terms. NEPAD also boasts in certain sections of its policy declarations a sensitivity to the concerns of gender as an un-negotiable facet of Africa's struggle to join and compete with the global community in the development race. In spearheading Africa's anti-poverty war, NEPAD promises to take a different path, beginning with a clear recognition of the social structures of gender relations that have kept women under for so long. It seeks to catapult the global indices of women's progress with very prominent references to their presence in formal sector politics, government, education and formal employment. As clearly stated in paragraph 67 of the NEPAD document, the architects of Africa's foremost development

blue print have undertaken the challenge of bringing women into every aspect of nation building, promoting women's roles in those activities specifically earmarked for their progress. In specific terms, NEPAD plans to develop and implement programmes to confront the huge burden of poverty African women carry, to make women visible in the governance process, to address the various forms of discrimination and segregation women suffer in education and formal employment. On the same premise, NEPAD also seeks to transform the existing legal system, modern and customary, to make it responsive especially to socially accepted practices and beliefs which limit or deny women their rights.

NEPAD's sound footing on an assumedly solid resolution of African leaders, the assertion within the document to mobilise the human agency within its populations, and the economic support of western industrialised countries, appear to present some hope for the continent's renaissance. But a closer look at its foundations calls for a more critical reflection of the directions for progress which the document spells out. Such declarations cannot be accepted at face value given the pattern already set by previous policy initiatives in the continent. For one thing, the architects of the document have come under severe criticism for the fact that the deliberations that went into its production did not engage the full awareness and participation of the African peoples. For another, the democratic orientation of NEPAD also presents a problem for critics, given its strong declarations for promoting women's participation in the governance process. The democratic imperative questions the very tenets of NEPAD's conceptualisation, especially the ethical references of its authors: the Presidents of Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria and South Africa. The credentials of these African leaders as political players and the history of their nations as democracies do not provide much ground for embracing NEPAD as anything more than a political exercise organised for the viewing of local and foreign constituencies. In his critique of the process that gave birth to NEPAD, Zo Randriamaro (2002: 4-5) maintains that:

> The civil society and social forces within the continent had not been considered a priority. Even if this can be interpreted as a strategic option aimed at securing the support of influential players in international cooperation, namely the G8, it also reflects a particular conception of the relations between the state and its citizens which contradicts the claims of the NEPAD for democracy, pluralism, transparency, and accountability.

The fact appears to have been taken for granted that the support of Africa's teeming populations, women included, can be harnessed without providing platforms where they can voice their experiences and debate alternative causes of action. Even in their assessments of NEPAD which agreed with some of its policy initiatives, various groups within civil society across Africa have openly criticised the absence of a people-centred approach to the process of the document's formulation.[9] The participation of the masses of African peoples, critics like Zo insist therefore, is not significantly valued by NEPAD given that

it reinforces the relations of power and paradigms of discourses which underpin the neo-liberal model on which most attempts at Africa's economic surge forward are founded. It is therefore safe to argue that NEPAD's basic objectives and the steps outlined to reach them clearly exclude the perspectives and needs of marginalised groups. The consultation of a number of groups within civil society (including women's organisations), after the document had emerged, they argue further, was merely an attempt to co-opt groups of unsuspecting observers into a process with already predetermined goals. In other words, this was merely an effort at managing the exclusion of the large majority of popular social forces while legitimising the economic framework and macroeconomic policies agreed on with bilateral and international partners. In conceiving, developing and presenting NEPAD in the package it was sold, Africa's teeming populations were denied the right to make their own contribution.

Beyond these general assessments, we pose a question that calls for more specific deliberation – In what particular ways has NEPAD handled the clamour for gender inclusion in governance process across Africa? This question (though not new) has been severally posed by scholars, activists and leaders. We argue in this paper that beyond acknowledging the existence of gender inequities in every sphere of society, the NEPAD document lacks a critical analysis of the problem matched with follow-up strategies to begin the task of dismantling process. The treatment of the 'woman question', does not deviate remarkably from previous development initiatives. As Karuuombe, Barney aptly describes this section of the document, (Randriamaro, 2002: 22-23), it takes the usual 'add women and stir' approach. In its hurry to eradicate the feminisation of poverty, NEPAD buries other forms of gender inequality under one banner, avoiding the necessary confrontation with other major barriers to women's progress. The Trojan horse of forward liberation to expand private (especially foreign) investment is another prescription for further erosion of what was left after the decimation of African women's economic foothold by Structural Adjustment Programmes:

> NEPAD wants to implement the Poverty Reduction Strategies of the Bretton Woods institutions which resemble dreadful SAPs which have exacerbated the burden of women as mothers and carers. Further liberalisation of African economies will again hit women the hardest as it will increase the household subsistence burden, which already rests on women's labor and meagre incomes. The majority of women are found in the vulnerable sectors such as textile and clothing, leather, and food. These sectors which, if faced with competition and unfavorable world markets, tend to decrease wages, benefits and job security (Kauuombe 2003: 18).

As with other African development plans, NEPAD's recognition of market forces in the governance process hardly coincides with the recognition of the well-being of the masses and to that extent bears little relation to the process of social transformation. The latter has little or no possibility of emerging where

liberal economic measures often reinforce the exclusion of the poor, the majority of whom are women, in the distribution of social resources while further entrenching patriarchal patterns in the forums of politics and decision making (Randriamaro 2002). The economic framework championed by NEPAD has the potential of keeping women in the poverty trap by re-emphasising access to the usual economic and social opportunities designed to meet their basic needs rather that raising their social status to take their place as equal partners with men in nation building. Women's economic empowerment must go beyond the struggle to earn a living. Attempts to empower women have to go beyond the usual micro-level projects that have little or no connection to the macroeconomic framework that shapes women's overall status in society. By and large, NEPAD appears to have ignored the macro-level interactions in society which speak to the structural causes of women's subordination.

With respect to the concerns of gender therefore, the NEPAD document not only has a very weak appreciation of the roots of African women's marginalisation in today's society but also lacks a viable vision of where to begin the process of redress. NEPAD in all its programmes of action does not embrace the now globally applauded African Development Bank's gender policy which insists that 'the cultural environment is among the factors that influenced the participation of women and men in both the public and private sphere. Indeed, culture has been invoked to legitimise differences in gender status, values and roles to justify unequal gender relations in a manner that, to a large extent, favors men and disadvantages women' (Match 2002: 12). NEPAD outlines in very broad terms gender neutral measures to boost enrolment across the educational system, strengthen the infrastructural support for this expansion and halt the brain drain.[10] But it fails to probe the underpinnings of a learning curriculum embedded in sexist values by which Africa's children grow up. Indeed, the policy document identifies only in vague terms women's access to schooling among its strategies for human capacity building. Beside its traditionally attractive economic prospects for individuals, higher education must be recognised as the basic mechanism for equipping African men and women with the skills for participation in the public sphere. Similar to their male counterparts, higher education for African women should equally provide them with the credentials that would equip them for a career in the professions, civil service and public life.

NEPAD also remains silent on questions of women's access into particular fields of learning and the implication of gender segregation for their chances of competing effectively with men in the new global economy. It ignores the gaping under-representation of women, especially within the lucrative 'male preserves' of tertiary education and provides little if any proactive steps to redress this gross imbalance. On a basic level, the process of empowering women should consider the level of professional skills acquired by women as

the arbiter of family subsistence across the continent. As the United Nations International Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Progress Report, 2000 notes, paid work directly enhances women's economic autonomy, providing them with 'productive resources' outside the control of men. With the exacerbation of regional inequalities resulting from globalisation, this economic autonomy is crucial, especially in poorer regions such as sub-Saharan Africa where women increasingly bear the burden of family subsistence. As the report equally noted, globalisation may have destabilised African economies, but has also brought along new economic opportunities mainly for the highly educated to tap. In this harsh economic climate, African women's access to higher education certainly represents a crucial policy initiative for fighting Africa's war of survival.

With women's access to tertiary education seriously tied to the availability of public funding, the growth of private institutions raises serious questions of social responsibility for their advancement in society. NEPAD in its policy statements appears to subsume the challenges posed by the privatisation of tertiary education in Africa within the general programme of system expansion. It pays little attention to the challenges these changes are already posing to existing measures to enhance gender equality. Indeed, the policy document barely scratches the surface in as much as it does not even recognise women's absence in the formal sectors of African economies as a fundamental flaw in the blueprint for Africa's progress.

Women's participation in schooling and paid work in Africa makes a powerful statement about the roles society has carved for them compared to their male counterparts in the task of nation building. It would not make sense for African leaders and policy makers to promote levels and kinds of training for women, encouraging them to aspire to positions that they are not expected to assume. It is not surprising that in the arenas of public governance and decision making, the document points to the potential input women could provide, but leaves untouched the social structures already in place which deny them a place as a crucial political force to be reckoned with. As cheerleaders for men in African political forums, women 'observe', for the most part, the machinery of public decision making. Without their strong presence in such forums the huge economic burden of social survival placed on their backs receives the usual lip service.

Inasmuch as it does not ear mark any crucial steps for integrating gender into the structures of public governance, especially in sectors where women's contributions have been duly recognised, NEPAD's stance does not necessarily question the status quo. For instance, in outlining measures to revive agricultural sectors across Africa, NEPAD affirms women's important contribution to family subsistence, but hardly reflects this noble contribution in the specific initiatives outlined for boosting food production. Even in its resolutions for sustaining important environmental conditions for social development, NEPAD bypasses female agency which has been internationally

acclaimed. Women's status as the repositories of knowledge whose survival is tied to their management of natural resources, has anything but a prominent role to play in the various initiatives for action.

Conclusion

What implications does the lack of gender sensitivity in the governance process have in Africa's struggle for sustainable development? This is a pertinent question, which if properly addressed would help reduce the corrosive orientation of cultural interpretation of gender roles in the development process. Overall, the neglect of women's needs and rights undermines the potential of entire communities to grow and develop. Poverty, it notes, is deeply rooted not only in the glaring imbalance between what women do and what they have – in terms of both assets and rights – but also in women's exclusion from the forums where decisions are made about the distributions of available resources. Gender sensitivity in the policy making process will also facilitate the global struggle for poverty reduction to a level that meets, at least, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the UNDP. We argue that as women's status appreciates, so do the benefits to society.

While NEPAD reinstates the need to move women at the centre of social progress, it does not outline the concrete steps towards this goal. It does not address in any clear terms how to boost women's presence in the crucial facets of its development strategies and programmes. In outlining the major facets that must be addressed: public governance, energy conservation, environmental management, food production, human capital development and international relations, women are left on the sidelines with little or no input in decision making processes that govern their everyday lives. Any initiative that aims to lift Africa up cannot sidestep serious questions about women's fundamental subordination and absence in political decision making. African women's lack of power is at the very centre of their inability to assert their claims of equal partnership with equal men in the development process. In ignoring this state of affairs, African states continue to endorse not only women's disempowerment but also the massive waste of human resources at the altar of traditions and cultures that block our path to progress. The continent cannot move ahead without confronting the roots of cultures and traditions which justify the treatment African women receive at the hands of men and the state. In this regard, NEPAD may seem to start out on a bolder note than previous continental initiatives, but its foundations remain shaky in as much as it refuses to begin its process of rebuilding Africa with a serious questioning of the status quo that places African men and women on an unequal footing for the journey ahead.

Notes

1. Ever since the onset of Africa's assumed democratic surge from the 1990s after a decade of economic decline, war and political conflicts, the UNDP has been at the forefront of a revitalised debate on both sustainable development and good governance in the continent. See references in this article from 1997 to 2004.
2. These are brief but concise definitions drawn from debates that gave birth to the volume.
3. Excerpts of speech delivered by South African president, Thabo Mbeki in Durban, South Africa, 12 November 1999.
4. The IPU is an international organisation of Parliaments of sovereign States (Article 1 of the Statutes of the Inter-Parliamenary Union). It was established in 1989 as a focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and co-operation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy.
5. See Web page in the referenced collection at the end of this article.
6. The growing concern over African women's declining status can be traced to the resolutions that gave rise to the United Nation's Decade for Women (1975-85), at the end of which the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies were formulated (1986). The poor results yielded by the latter over a ten-year period once more brought international attention back to women in the developing world. This has been clearly demonstrated in more recent international women's conferences.
7. See, for instance, a revisit of this argument in Moshi, L. (1998) *Forward to Women and Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Power, Opportunities and Constraints*, M. Block, J. Beoku-Betts and R. Tabachnick, eds., ix-xii. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
8. Collated from UNIFEM Progress of the World's Women Biennial Report, Tables and Charts on line: www.undp.org/unifem/progressww/2000/index.html.
9. This has been a common point of agreement among those involved in the debate on NEPAD in both the academic forums and feminist coalitions' position papers. See Match International's (2002) position paper.
10. See page 49 of the NEPAD document.

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African Sociological Review, 10, (2), 2006, pp. 94-115.

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'Increasing my value proposition to the struggle': Arthur Mutambara and student politics in Zimbabwe

Abstract

Arthur Mutambara made a dramatic return to Zimbabwean politics in 2005, to lead one of the factions of the split opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change. He was a prominent student activist in Zimbabwe in the late 1980s, and his reputation rests on this legacy. Mutambara led the Student Representative Council (SRC) as General Secretary and then as President at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) from 1988-1990. This period has been eulogised by the students, civil society activists and trade unionists in Zimbabwe ever since. Students still refer affectionately to the period as the 'AGO era' – as he used to sign himself in the 1980s. Many have argued that the student movement became the seed bed for an emergent civil society. By 1990 Zimbabwe was permanently changed and ZANU-PF became the sullied party of liberation. Students helped to pierce the regime's invulnerability, and other groups emerged to voice their own grievances. This paper uses the re-entry of Mutambara into Zimbabwean politics to examine the trajectory of the student movement, a subject that has received no attention in recent discussion of Zimbabwe's political history.

Introduction

At the beginning of 2005 Arthur Mutambara had become a fairly obscure figure. He had been a scientist in the US, working in a number of universities and research institutes. In February he stepped out of relative anonymity to become the head of one of the factions of Zimbabwe's main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change. But for activists, politicians and academic commentators he was remembered as the leader of the first student revolt against the ruling party in the late 1980s, long before it was fashionable to oppose the government. Student activists for years idolised his leadership of the student movement that seemed untainted by the 'bread and butter' struggles that, we were told, dominated student politics in the 1990s. Arthur Mutambara had become synonymous with the glory years of Zimbabwe's student movement.

However denunciations of Arthur Mutambara came quickly. Students from the period where interviewed and now remembered an entirely different and authoritarian side to his character. Others denounced his career, calming that he had fabricated his professional qualifications: 'If you ask me ... the "Prof" blows his trumpet too much, and much harder than can be justified by its size'.[1] But perhaps the most scathing, and bitter attack, came from his old comrade Munyaradzi Gwisai, who had been a student leader with him in the 1980s. Mutambara, according to Gwisai, had abandoned the struggle and had now turned up for the meal. 'It is as though you are looking for fire wood to make sadza (mealie meal). During the search for the wood you might be bitten by a snake. You come home and prepare the fire; your eyes are affected by the smoke. You prepare the sadza. Then from nowhere someone comes out and starts dishing out.'[2] There is a certain justification in Gwisai's angry attack. While the student movement might have been the first to crack the government's image of invulnerability, the great uprising of civil society occurred after 1995. Mutambara played no part in these struggles, and was untouched by what one activist described as, 'the confidence and idealism that drove us in the 1990s' (John Bomba, interview, 18 January 2005).

Arthur Mutambara led the Student Representative Council (SRC) as General Secretary and then as President at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) from 1988 to 1990. This period has been eulogised by the students, civil society activists and trade unionists in Zimbabwe ever since. Students still refer affectionately to the period as the 'AGO era' – as Mutambara used to sign himself in the 1980s. Today the 'AGO' years are regarded by many as the first urban opposition movement to the government, and in some accounts as the force that stalled the regime's plans for a one-party state (Saunders, 2000). Later generations of student activists describe the importance of the 'AGO' period. Stephen Chisuvi – Research and Education Secretary for the Zimbabwe National Student Union (ZINASU) for 2003-2005 – explains Mutambara's influence: 'When I was in my Form 1 in Goromonzi High School we used to read about student leaders. I remember that's when I heard the name Arthur Mutambara ... he became a legend because of how the UZ had organised political demonstrations in which even leading Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) leaders had participated ... and how one day such people will form a movement that will destroy the state' (Interview 16 May 2003).

Students were among the first to criticise the government, breaking with ZANU-PF several years before the ZCTU. The break with the government in 1988 was dramatic, months before students had demonstrated as 'revolutionary intellectuals' in support of President Robert Mugabe. Arthur Mutambara was a leading figure helping to direct and organise students in their opposition. In October 1989 he was arrested with fellow student leader Munyaradzi Gwisai, for organising a demonstration that had compared the regime with the apartheid government across the border.

> Who in this government can have the audacity and credibility to criticise the De Klerk regime in South Africa? Or are we even worse than De Klerk? Ian Smith never banned political seminars at this university ...That one fought for this country does not justify them to loot, plunder and wreck the economy of Zimbabwe and let alone stifle people's democratic rights ... You can't push a cat into a corner- after all we are not cats but tigers! Defeat is not our agenda![3]

Student leaders were thrown into the maximum security prison Chikurubi. There was general outrage. Morgan Tsvangirai, the young leader of the ZCTU, issued a denunciation of the arrests and the victimisation of students. His act of solidarity was rewarded with imprisonment. The student movement had become the seed bed for an emergent civil society. By 1990 Zimbabwe was permanently changed and ZANU-PF had become the sullied party of liberation. Students had, to a large extent, pierced the regime's aura of invincibility, and other groups emerged to voice their own grievances. As Tendai Biti – a leading activist at the time – argues: 'It was the first time people criticised the legitimacy of these heroes. It showed you can make noise and not get killed' (quoted in Alexander, 2000: 386).

In 1991 Arthur Mutambara left on a Rhodes scholarship for Oxford, where he completed his PhD. He then moved to the United States, where he worked at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, NASA and then in 2002 he returned to Africa. As he said: 'I am coming home but I don't want to come to the country and play the MDC game. My role in Zimbabwe and Africa will be to make a difference'. This paper does not take up the arguments of Mutambara's new critics; it uses Mutambara's re-entry to the political scene as an opportunity to examine the student movement through his eyes. It argues that students in Zimbabwe inherited a politically privileged status from a 'student intelligentsia' who fought in the liberation war in the 1970s. The paper argues that the 'AGO' years were contradictory, moving from support for the government to furious denunciation. With the impact of the Economic and Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) after 1990, students saw their status change. The paper asks two related questions, firstly what was the political and social context of the 'AGO years'? And how can student activism in Zimbabwe be understood? This paper centres on interviews conducted in 2003 and 2004 with current and ex-student activists, and a prolonged interview in July 2003 when Mutambara was the director of payments at the Standard Bank in Johannesburg, responsible for developing a payment strategy for banks in Southern African countries. This may seem like strange employment for a radical ex-student leader, but as he claimed in the interview, he was simply increasing his 'value proposition to the struggle'. In the interview Mutambara displayed the confidence, even arrogance, of the student movement that he once led.

The student-intelligentsia and national liberation: 1970-1980

Mutambara describes the importance of the liberation movement on his political consciousness: 'I grew up partly in the rural areas that is where I saw the guerrillas for the first time. So I saw a bit of the war but I was too young to fight. But I attended some of the *pungwe* [evening meetings] up in the rural areas. And up to now I have a very soft spot for people who pick up the guns to drive out the oppressor. The principle that the price of freedom is death and Africans decided to pick up guns.' Students at the main university were sucked into the war for national liberation. The University of Rhodesia – as the University of Zimbabwe was known before it was renamed in 1980 – was never *A Non-Racial Island of Learning* as the title of a study from the 1970s described it (Gelfand, 1978). However in 1968 – the year of student revolt across the world – *The Rhodesia Herald* proudly announced: 'Rhodesia is lucky in its University College', apparently there was little evidence of 'subversive elements', 'in fact at the moment no evidence is visible at all' (quoted in Cefkin, 1975: 135). But within months of this article black and white students at the university erupted in revolt against the proposed changes to the constitution that would have postponed black majority rule indefinitely. This marked one of the first occasions at the university when European and African students came together against attempts to entrench white minority rule (Cefkin, 1975: 135). The self-contained community at the university, segregated from the rural and the main urban centre, created a unique political and social space for activism that fed inextricably into the war that divided the racist state. It was also an important centre of recruitment during the war, providing many of the military and ideological cadres for the struggle.

Student politics on the campus mirrored the wider Africa nationalist movement in the country. In August 1963 the main party of African nationalism, the Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union (ZAPU), split, leading to the creation of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) under the leadership of Reverend Sithole, who represented a more radical approach to independence and national liberation. ZANU plunged itself into the university milieu, recruiting student activists and addressing meetings in an attempt to win political hegemony on the campus. This led to the accusation of ZANU being nothing more than a 'party of intellectuals' cut off from the masses (see Chung, 1995: 146 and Cefkin, 1975: 141). Yet this strategy was consistent with ZANU's emphasis, at least in the early years of the movement, on education and the political training of militants. However, ZANU's prescription for the student movement was very clear: students were to play an obedient role in the coming struggles, 'being part of the revolutionary movement you are to ... be directed by it', and there was no space for an 'independent line' (quoted in Cefkin, 1975: 149).

For some time the campus was torn in two by an internecine struggle between ZANU and ZAPU activists that was only bought to an end by the National Union of Rhodesian Students (NURS), which played an important role in 'coalescing the forces of African nationalism in campus' after the split (Cefkin, 1975: 148). NURS also managed to maintain a degree of political mobilisation after the paralysis of nationalist politics caused by the banning of the ZANU and ZAPU in 1963. One student remembered that as the leaders of ZAPU fled the country in 1963, 'The university student in that year became more conscious than ever of his role as a revolutionary' (quoted in Cefkin, 1975: 148). However the period saw the marginalisation of the urban struggle by a nationalist strategy that increasingly focused on rural guerrilla warfare led by an exiled political leadership. To a certain extent, this thrust the university and the student-intelligentsia into the centre of urban politics, with students feeling an obligation to assume the leadership of the nationalist cause.

The 'pots and pans' demonstration in 1973 was a high-point in the pre-independence student movement, and the key turning point in the evolution of the 'student-intelligentsia'. Racial issues had exploded onto the campus: the main concern was the presence of a university delegation at the Association of the Commonwealth Universities in Edinburgh. Many African students regarded support for the delegation as being tantamount to accepting the racism at the university – the predominance on the University Senate and Council of Rhodesian Front supporters. Most white students, however, saw the issue differently, that the delegation should be applauded as representing the university's multi-culturalism. These issues were further heightened over the issue of the non-representation of African workers at the university, who turned to the student union to represent them. The president of the student union at the time explained that 'workers have started coming to me not because I am the right channel but because they are both frustrated and desperate' (quoted in Tengende, 1994: 141). African students occupied the Principal's office in 1973 demanding the end of racial discrimination, the employment of Africans in all fields and an increase in the wages of catering staff. This act of solidarity was not accidental, but typical of the nature of early student activism. Black students at the one national university could see themselves at once removed from the realities of the black non-academic members of staff who had approached them with their complaints and also representatives of them.

Dissatisfied with the Principal's response on the issue of wages for African non-academic members of staff, students launched the 'pots and pans' demonstration, a demonstration that Tengende (1994: 141), in his seminal study of the period, describes as 'the last significant confrontation between the students and the Administration and the Rhodesian state'. A crowd of students proceeded to remove tea urns and other 'tea' utensils and locked the property in a student union building before making their petitions to the university authorities. The identification of these utensils was not accidental; on the contrary:

> I thought it was the most exquisite demonstration that had ever been invented ... [taking] all the tea equipment from every department in the university before morning tea. They rightly recognised that in our [white] society, if you don't have morning tea, it's a fate worse than death! You can be raped, you can do nothing else, but you mustn't be deprived of your morning tea! (Knottenbelt quoted in Veit-Wild, 1994: 129).

After a series of further consultations by the University Disciplinary Committee several days after the initial demonstration, a decision was made to expel a number of students. The decision inflamed student feelings. In the riot that ensued $70,000 worth of property was destroyed. The main target of their fury was the recently built – and much hated – Senior Common Room. The university administration was also attacked and 150 students were arrested (Tengende, 1994: 142). Most pleaded guilty and many were sentenced to six months with hard labour; several others pleaded not guilty and went through a lengthy trial. After serving their sentences the students faced further penalties and were restricted from coming within 20 kilometres of the city, making their continued studies impossible. The effect of these expulsions was dramatic. Tengende (1994: 143) explains that many 'escaped to neighbouring countries en route to join the liberation struggle'.

The effect of the liberation war on student consciousness at the time cannot be overestimated. The 1973 demonstration at the campus coincided with the opening of a new front in the north-east by the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) – ZANU's military arm. After years of fratricidal struggles with ZAPU, this was regarded as a turning point in the war and that now – finally – liberation and independence were around the corner. Student militants and activists fed into and helped generate this renewed optimism. At the same time Rhodesian authorities intensified political repression on campus. The government had recently lowered the minimum age of conscription to 17 and it was not uncommon to see white students in military fatigues on campus. Students from rural backgrounds would also have had direct experience of the repression of the state at home: 'The university was now resembling the wider Rhodesian white society – armed and defiant' (Tengende: 144). The 1973 demonstrations were the last effective resistance at the university. The mass arrests, imprisonment and expulsion of students, together with the militarisation of the campus, effectively ruled out further open displays of resistance. The Student Representative Committee was left to impotently issue press releases that were ignored by the state media (Tengende, 1994).

It was not only university students who gave up their studies to fight in the liberation war; after 1973 secondary school students joined *en masse*, forcing at least six rural schools to close down (Mungazi, 1992: 85). Mutambara emphasises the role high school students played in the 1970s:

> they were the bedrock. Those who were in high school and who were old enough crossed from Mutambara Mission School into Mozambique, most of these ex-fighters were actually high school students, who left form 4, form 6, they left the University of

> Zimbabwe [sic] to go to Mozambique. So the student movement has always been the basis of change in Zimbabwe, even internally ZAPU, ZANU, NDP, students were the youth movement. But the fighters, I would venture to say that the 90 percent of the fighters came from the colleges, high schools and the University of Rhodesia. People would leave in their first year, in their second year. People would go from St. Augustine, Mutambara ... All those fighters were students (Arthur Mutambara, Interview 10 July 2003).

However it was the role of university students in the guerrilla struggle that was extremely important.[4] After the 1975 assassination of Herbert Chitepo, one of the foremost guerrilla leaders, a large number of the ZANU leaders in Zambia were arrested. The leadership vacuum was filled by an energetic student-intelligentsia who had fled from the university and secondary schools in Rhodesia over the previous years. They took control of the struggle through the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) that was a product of the merger between ZANLA and ZIPRA forces (the rival military arms of the ZANU and ZAPU) in the mid 1970s. ZIPA developed a reputation of being led by young leftist intellectuals (Saunders, 2000: 13). Fay Chung (1995), who was active in the ZANU-PF at the time, writes about how 'the university intelligentsia ... who had successfully established themselves in Zambia ... found an opportunity to take a more direct role'. She notes that the 'university intelligentsia' were not only students (or from Rhodesia), but also Zimbabwean intellectuals from across Africa and the UK and the USA. 'Dozens of young university graduates followed, from Britain, Sierra Leone and Rhodesia' (Chung 1995: 141). Education was at the centre of their approach, and they sought to develop coherent political training for political commissars. Groups of cadres were educated in the main tenets of Marxism-Leninism, and on an inherently egalitarian basis. Distinctions between officers and recruits were eliminated and democratic procedures were, albeit briefly, introduced. When ZANU resumed leadership of the liberation movement, this critical left-wing perspective was replaced by a 'populist-authoritarianism' that shunned independent thinking (Moore, 1991).

In the 1990s there was a certain amount of political capital made from these facts. The ruling party contrasts the true revolutionaries of the 1970s who came from the university with the 'fakers' of today. Mugabe used Zororo Willard Duri's funeral in 1996 to attack current activists, 'It was the dedication of cde [comrade] Duri's generation that led the ZANU (PF) politburo to give him the status of a national hero ... The new generation has to emulate that spirit in the new battles facing the country' (*The Herald,* 1996). The role of the student-intelligentsia reflected the weaknesses of popular social forces in Zimbabwe and the exaggerated (indeed 'fetishised') importance of university education. These combined processes turned an extremely small layer of the population into politically privileged (and deeply contradictory) agents of social change.

The development of a pre-independence intelligentsia has been discussed in a number of important studies (Mandaza, 1980; Zvodgo, 1994; Moore, 1991). All of these authors discuss the choices and dilemmas for a group of educated Zimbabweans, which emerged from the expansion of secondary education in the 1950s and 1960s. Mandaza saw that this group wanted to rid settler society of the racial fetters to their own self-advancement, and so the principal issue was not to 'raise questions about the mechanisms of exploitation. This would risk exposing their own class position in relation to the African masses' (Mandaza, 1980: 370). However, another choice – that of 'self-denial' – lay open to them: the intelligentsia was to immerse itself in the mass upheavals of the liberation struggle, and to perform a type of class suicide that was advocated by Amilcar Cabral (1969). 'Only when the petit-bourgeoisie [sic] itself decides to sacrifice its own class interests for those of ... a socialist Zimbabwe' (Cabral, 1969: 374).

It is important to identify the weaknesses in the nationalist struggle, and in the student movement that was an adjunct of it, as marginalising the role of the urban poor and working class. In this context students at the University of Rhodesia failed to develop a clear political strategy that linked the rural revolt to an urban struggle, in the townships, factories and at the university. Student activists were ultimately paralysed by this failure, and their uncritical engagement in the nationalist movement gave them no alternative but to decamp from the university into exile and the guerrilla struggle, and not to the black townships or factories. Cefkin (1975: 157-8) explains this paralysis brilliantly in his pioneering study of the student movement in 1960s Rhodesia:

> Expectation that the African townships might explode into popular rebellion rested upon fond hopes for spontaneous action: students did not undertake an analysis of the conditions under which uprisings occur. In the absence of effective nationalist organisation in the townships which could utilize campus demonstrations to touch off, spread and direct revolutionary actions the student initiative remained an isolated event of little impact within the African community.

Cefkin (1975: 158) reflects on the uncritical acceptance in the student movement of political tactics that derived directly from the nationalist leadership. The failure of student activists, he argued, to focus on bread and butter issues that could have connected more immediately to the needs of black Rhodesians, hindered the potential to build a mass movement.

State-privileged activism: university, diplomas and politics

Independence in 1980 saw, perhaps, the speediest reconciliation and negotiated settlement on the continent. Between 1980 and 1995 there were broadly three periods of student activism. The first, a pro-government period, lasted until the anti-corruption demonstrations in 1988, with student activists still glorifying the national liberation struggle. The second, an anti-government period, was

followed quickly by the 'convergence of forces' in the 1990s – between an impoverished student population and an economic crisis pulverising urban Zimbabwe – the period saw the onset of structural adjustment and the struggles against privatisation. This period was marked by the consolidation of the ZANU elite around IMF and structural adjustment programmes and the break up of revolutionary nationalism and the collapse of Stalinism. These periods are discussed in turn below.

In the 1980s, although changing quickly, the UZ still resembled the former University of Rhodesia. The Vice-Chancellor's report in 1984 noted the total number of full-time undergraduate students had increased to 2,705. As a result of recent reforms in 1983, 25 black lecturers had been appointed compared with just two in the past (University of Zimbabwe Annual Report, 1984: 3). Overall, in the first five years following independence, student enrolment at the UZ rose from 1,481 to 4,741, reaching 7,699 in 1988 (Auret, 1990: 30).

The university – the only Zimbabwean university at the time – sat at the apex of the education system, as an institution that would forge the country's elite. However the wider educational environment had a profound effect on the status and importance of university education. Education had played a central role in determining social status and class position, a situation that long predated independence. These points are well made by Pascal Bianchini (2004) who sees the 'diploma fetishism' of sub-Saharan Africa linked to what he terms the 'primitive accumulation of education capital'. This was initially a colonial process that saw the 'forced education' of a layer of *évolués* divorced from the mass of the population to whom they were destined to become the 'liberators' (a bureaucratic elite running the colonial states). The 'accumulation of education capital' became a central element in the post-colonial hierarchy, and competition to obtain these diplomas a vital resource in accessing political and social power. Bianchini (2004: 39-41) argues that it is only through appreciating this 'fetishism' that the post-colonial crisis in higher education – that has seen the successive '*dévalorisation'* of these diplomas – can be understood.

These views towards education had their roots in the colonial system. Education became fetishised in proportion to its scarcity, giving those who possessed it enormous status. It also had a peculiarly Zimbabwean twist: the incarceration of nationalist guerrillas saw the transformation of prisons into centres of learning and study, the 'prison university' that Robert Mugabe graduated from with numerous degrees (often with the help of the Rhodesia Christian Council). Those not serving prison sentences were often the recipients of foreign scholarships for African students from the breakaway colony (Tengende, 1994: 191-201).[5]

At independence student life could not have contrasted more with the rural and urban worlds students emerged from. Most students received full grants from the state, which were, until the mid-1990s, more than adequate to live on. In fact money allocated for grants increased by almost Z$10,000,000 between

1993-1995 (Zvogbo, 1999: 164). In the 1980s, for example, these payouts did not only allow students to indulge in 'beer' and 'showing off' but as many former students note, to build houses for their parents in the rural areas. As Mutambara recalled: 'materially we never had any issues, we had disagreements here and there about payouts but by and large there was enough food. Actually it was excessive, in the Halls of Residence. We used to throw away bread. We use to call it, "Christmas every day". When you go to Varsity it is Christmas every day. In the rural areas, Christmas Day would be when you had rice and chicken. But at Varsity you would have rice and chicken everyday.'

Although there were frequent demonstrations about the late disbursement of 'payouts' (grants), they were regarded as generous (*The Herald*, 1995). As late as 1995 a mature student, Talkmore Saurombe, who had been teaching for years in a rural school, fulfilled a dream to go to university to upgrade his teaching diploma:

> When I arrived at UZ ... it was a very exciting situation because life at campus was very different from life at work. So I was excited you know that I had come to university to have my ambition fulfilled. You know because if I actually go back to my diploma days at college, I remember putting up a photograph of my graduation day at college, and I had this script at the bottom inscribed 'a pipe dream unfulfilled'. So, when I came to university it was actually the beginning of the fulfilment of that pipe dream.
>
> Then we used to get a payout, which was a lot of money then ... to begin with it was seventeen thousand in the first year, then in my final year it went up to thirty two thousand and that was a lot of money... I know that it was something like five times more than the salary of a diploma holding teacher at that time (Talkmore Saurombe, Interview 5 June 2003).

This meant that students could sponsor other members of their family through school, send money home and socialise. In Hopewell Gumbo's words they could 'drink beer daily' (Hopewell Gumbo, Interview, 28 July 2003). Many students chose to illustrate this by explaining that they had enough money to eat between meals, which is perhaps more an illustration of the crisis in the university sector today than a reflection of the affluence that existed in the past. Saurombe goes on to explain: 'We used to have full-course meals, you know. One could afford to get three meals a day and then it was nice. It was conducive to study. Because you had *nothing to worry about but your books'* [emphasis added]. One important element needs to be emphasised here, Saurombe describes the vital importance of diplomas (cf. Bianchini's 'accumulation of education capital') and the status of the university, as the highest institution distributing these diplomas. Student activists in the first years of independence were ardent supporters of the new government.

At the time most students were subject to a system of 75 percent grant and 25 percent loan. In the case of Saurombe who was returning to education, it was 100 percent loans, repayable over five years when he returned to his teaching position (Information Office, *University of Zimbabwe* 6 March 2005). The

status of university students, privileged and cut off in many ways from the harsh realities of the rest of society, had profound effects on their activism. Activism combined a vanguardism – championing the cause of the poor and dispossessed – with an elitism that came from their privilege. It also meant , as student activists will tell you today, that students were not solely preoccupied with 'bread and butter'.

It was not only among university students that the regime was supported. In high schools across the country school students revered liberations heroes who were now national politicians. Mutambara describes the importance of the period:

> When I was in grade 7 in 1980, Lancaster House had gone on in London, I use to draw pictures of Nkomo and Mugabe, they were my heroes, I used idolise these guys. That is 1980. I am 14. They are also talking the right language. I was sold to the socialist agenda ... ZANU was our party of revolution ... The commitment was socialism, and the one party state was the vehicle, the vanguard one-party state ... When I was in High School in 1986 – Gwisai included – we entered a national essay competition, it was called the 'one party parliamentary system rather than the multi-party system is more conducive and relevant to Zimbabwe's socialist development. Do you agree?' And we all agreed that the one-party system would serve our goals of socialism better. So we had faith in ZANU.
>
> Slowly we got disillusioned. It was a very painful break, from romantising these guys as heroes. When the guerrillas came into my village around 1977 – up until now I have a very soft spot for people who picked up guns to bring about freedom that was an extreme sacrifice because some of them never came back. So when I saw them in the village in 1977 I was so impressed, 'from today this country is not called Rhodesia it is called Zimbabwe'. That was so powerful that someone can declare in the bush that the country has changed its name. Now with hindsight we should have been more critical then just endorsing the one-party state.

Elites and vanguards

One of the most notable actions among students in the 1980s was a demonstration and rioting outside the South African embassy after the death of the Mozambican president Samora Machel in 1986. However, by the late 1980s the blatant corruption of the government could no longer be ignored by the student activists (Saunders, 2000). The first anti-government demonstrations were only against certain members of the government and regarded by students as supportive of Mugabe's own 'anti-corruption drive'. An anti-corruption demonstration took place in September 1988 at the UZ. The demonstration, regarded as a milestone in the movement, marked an abrupt fissure in the relationship between students and the ruling party: a party that they had previously regarded as their own. The students called themselves 'revolutionary intellectuals' and protested in *support* of Mugabe's drive to return the ruling party to the Leadership Code.[6] Students issued an 'anti-corruption document' detailing ten cases of corruption within government circles. Mugabe's response, angrily dismissing the demonstrators who were protesting explicitly

in his defence, was a violent moment of truth for hundreds of student activists who had regarded the president as their hero. They demanded that ZANU-PF be transformed into a vanguard party before a one-party state was introduced (*The Herald,* 1988).[7]

Mutambara describes the sense of betrayal when the student movement realised that they had been following a false prophet. 'It was a very painful break, from romantising these guys as heroes ... we should have been more critical ... We should not have taken the socialism seriously'. The movement was inherently political. The leadership of the SRC at the university at the time was heavily influenced by socialist politics. As general secretary and then president of the SRC, Mutambara recalls how the leadership would regularly visit the East German, Russian and Chinese embassies:

> I read *Das Kapital* in my first year. We used to go to the Soviet Embassy to get books, from the Cuba Embassy, and I had lots and lots of books and I read and read and read. So to me the first year at varsity was about politics ... We believed in ideas. Gwisai, Beti [Tendai Beti, currently General Secretary of the opposing faction of the MDC]. We were very thorough. We read everybody. Mao, Trotsky, Stalin, Lenin, the Black Panther Party in the states, Malcolm X, King, Mugabe. So we were thoroughly, thoroughly exposed and we had bold ideas ... We were battling in the game of ideas. We thrived on knowledge and ideas. I am not sure how many really realize this? We were not fighting Robert Mugabe from the right we were fighting him from the left. We said that Mugabe had done nothing for workers. Mugabe is a stooge of imperialism. We were opposed to Mugabe from the left and consequently we got no support from the white farmers, from the British or US. Because at that time the Brits, the US and white farmers were in bed with Mugabe (Interview, 10 July 2003).

The period was marked by ideological debates – centred on questions of Marxism. Another student from the 1990s argued that 'We were all dialectical materialists' (Brian Kagoro, Interview 23 June 2003). The campus was not limited to ideological debate; there was a thriving social scene. The theatre company Zambuko Izibuko was an important component (Mutape, 1999). It staged political drama often on regional themes, the struggle in Mozambique and the battle against the apartheid regime.[8] Mutambara describes the thriving cultural scene at the university:

> another reason for our success was being able to combine a very good social programme with a good political programme. Which meant that people would come to our political events because they were satisfied. We had cultural galas, we had bands, we had alcohol, although I didn't drink I would provide it (Interview 10 July 2003).

These processes informed and motivated their social and political mobilisations. But these 'ideas' were not 'free-floating' but connected inextricably to an inherited political and social context that promulgated a Stalinised form of Marxism.

By the late 1980s, students at the university were beginning to break with the government, opening up the second period of their activism: a process that saw their transformation from Mugabe's 'committed revolutionaries' to an

irritating oppositional force. The success of this period of student activism was linked to the changing relationship with the regime. First, it was a turning point for the regime and its attempts to impose a one party state, an idea that was initially supported by students. Between 1988-1989 students saw the reality of the state that they defended. Mutambara identifies this element as the key reason why 'people are so keen on our period ... we were the first people, we have been vindicated. We looked very radical and extremist but everyone is doing it now ... We were the first people to draw the guns and shoot from the hip'.

But Mutambara disguises the pain and loss felt by his generation of activists at the betrayal by the government. This sense of betrayal explains the explosiveness of their subsequent action. Hal Draper (1965: 162), in a detailed study of the Berkeley student revolt, describes how this clash of expectations explained the volatility of early student activism:

> This was the explosiveness of uncalculated indignation, not the slow boil of planned revolt. In many cases it was born of the first flash of discovery that the mantle of authority cloaked an unsuspected nakedness. The experienced radical on campus did not consider this to be news ... There is first love; there is the first baptism of fire; there is the first time that you realise your father had lied; and there is the first discovery of the chasm between the rhetoric of Ideals and the cynicism of Power among the pillars of society.

It was in these circumstances, Draper argues, that the student movement became the most explosive. Paradoxically, it also explains one of the principal strengths of student action. Infused by a powerful indignation student activists were 'able to win so much because they didn't know it was "impossible"'. Older radicals and activists may feel oppressed by a careful analysis of the balance of forces, whereas student 'naiveté and inexperience was as a shield and a buckler to them' (Draper, 1965: 163). The student movement in Zimbabwe managed to lead the assault on the government, heralding a new and uneasy period of opposition and resistance in civil society (Bond and Manyanya, 2002).[9]

ESAP and the collapse of the Berlin Wall

The trauma at the collapse of Stalinism was felt heavily across Zimbabwe's political scene. University professors who had educated a generation in a version of Stalinised Marxism were left without their ideological moorings.[10] The collapse coincided with the introduction of ESAP in 1991, a wide-ranging programme of economic reform promoted by the World Bank and IMF. The sacred cow of university funding would be tackled through a policy of 'cost recovery'. The real causalities in the first five years of ESAP reform were primary and secondary education. The introduction of a new fee structure after the 1991 Education Amendment Bill amended the 1987 Education Act, which had provided the legal basis of free education. Real expenditure on primary

education fell by 11.3 percent in 1992-3, and between 1991 and 1993 secondary school enrolment fell by ten percent (Zvobgo, 1999: 148-152). Between 1993 to 1994 and 1994 to 1995 funding for tertiary education increased by Z$74,605,000, with expenditure on the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and the UZ representing approximately 80 percent of the total (Zvobgo, 1999: 164). The withdrawal of grants and subsidised, university-run facilities would occur later in the decade.

This third period, many claim, marked a decisive break with an earlier and more political period of activism. Mutambara is typical in arguing that the 'sparkling and shining' AGO era was a result of the pure politics promulgated by a clear-headed leadership: 'we stole the nation attention because we provided a platform to critique the government. So if you talk about the student movement between 1987-1991, we were not known for demonstrating for payouts, or burning down kitchens we were known for pushing that national agenda and challenging Mugabe'. In this formulation students who had formally fought corruption now sought only to increase their payouts, and a crude 'economism' came to dominate student politics.[11]

The reality is not so neat. The literature tends to romanticise earlier periods of activism, as do ex-activists. The 1980s is a case in point. That decade is seen by Mutambara as marking a period of untarnished political struggle at the university, 'our agenda was driven by the national agenda as opposed to sectional interest'. In fact, the 1987 SRC executive emerged as a reaction to a campus divided ethnically – reflecting the civil war being fought against 'dissidents' in Matabeleland – and riven by 'hooliganism', that affected all forms of political activism on campus.[12] However Mutambara does acknowledge the serious ethnic cleavages on the campus, though in this account he emerges as the one figure who managed to rise above ethnicity: 'The Masvingo people would have a candidate, Matabele people would do the same. If you were not backed by one of these guys you wouldn't win. Except me. I had the advantage of being a well known activist. I used the Secretary General position to campaign on what I had done. They had a candidate from Manicaland, but I clobbered him'.

The 'indiscipline' (Tengende, 1994: 236-45) at the UZ continued through the late 1980s and was reflected to a certain extent in the language used on campus. *Nose-brigades* was a derogatory term used to described students from formerly whites-only Group A schools, who were regarded as speaking 'through their noses'. The linguistic retaliation was similarly class bound and the *Nose-brigades* responded by calling 'rural' students 'SRBs' (Strong Rural Background).[13]

These issues are central to the way that 'student mobilisation' is viewed in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Some of the literature on student movements tends to make use of a false dichotomy of the student movement. According to this categorisation the early post-independence years coincided with a period

of political mobilisation (and it is no accident that the period coincided also with the student activism of the authors who make these arguments), unaffected by the crude economism (and 'hooliganism') of students today (see Bathily et al., 1995). The example of Zimbabwe points to a much messier reality. As Tengende (1994) documents, the 1980s were replete with moments of 'indiscipline' and political action; similarly the late 1990s, purportedly representing a degenerative collapse into daily 'corporatism', abound with moments of 'high' politics.

Students continued to make explicitly political demands: the high point in this period perhaps was their involvement in the anti-police brutality demonstration in October 1995 and the anti-racist campaigns of the student union in the early 1990s. This also saw the emergence of the International Socialist Organisation (that had previously existed as a study circle at the university) onto the public arena. ISO would continue to play a vital role in the formation of student activists, attempting to fill the ideological vacuum that had been left by the collapse of the Stalinist left (Gwisai, 2002).

The rapid transformation for students in higher education came after 1995. This marked the sharp convergence of student and urban struggles in urban Zimbabwe. Students were no longer lone activists fighting on behalf of a voiceless civil society. They became intimately involved in a tumultuous period of strikes, demonstrations and political arguments about an alternative to the ruling party. This period, marking a new phase in student activism, saw the convergence of student activism with the wider movement for democratic and social change across Zimbabwe.

From 1995, under the impact of structural adjustment, Zimbabwe entered a period of deepening social crisis and prolonged revolt. A key study describes the period well:

> the urban masses have waged massive struggles that have shaken to the roots not only the post-colonial authoritarian state, but also the vicious neo-liberal paradigm imposed by our rulers ... The struggles have gone further than most in challenging one of the continent's most entrenched and violent ruling classes (Gwisai 2002b: 50).

The anti-police brutality riot and demonstration in 1995 was a key moment in student mobilisation, bringing students and the 'popular forces' together on a large scale for the first time (the demonstration was organised by students at the university) (Seddon 2002). But it also marked a new period of activism that led eventually to the political transition in the late 1990s. The main national university, the UZ, had also changed during this period. There was an increase in student numbers from 2,240 in 1980 to 9,300 in 1990 and to 10,139 in 2001 (personal communication, Information Office, University of Zimbabwe, 6 March 2005).

The rarefied and privileged existence of university students was beginning to break down. Students were plunged into conditions at the university far removed from those previously experienced. Deepening privatisation, under a

new programme for structural adjustment, Zimbabwe Policy Reforms for Social and Economic Transformation (ZIMPREST) introduced in 1996, meant that students faced hardships a world away from the 'Christmas everyday' that Mutambara described. Government thinking about tertiary education was expressed by Mugabe during the opening of parliament in 1997, when he introduced the second phase of the Economic Reform Programme (ZIMPREST): 'It seeks to stabilise the macro-economic environment ... enhance competition, promote equity in the distribution of income and wealth and bring about further reform of the Civil Service, parastatals and the financial sector' (Parliamentary Debates, 1997: 2). The country's institutions of higher education would never be the same again.

Battles were now fought at the university over what was commonly known as 'ESAP 2', the attempts to introduce 50 percent grants and 50 percent loans in 1997, and privatisation of catering and accommodation services at the university in 1998. The government moved to scrap grants, Mugabe explaining in 1997: 'The funding of higher education programmes will continue to take cognisance of equitable distribution of limited resources. It is now Government policy that students are expected to contribute a proportion towards their education through payment of fees, although care will be taken not to prejudice students from poor families' (Parliamentary Debates, 1997: 12-13). These 'cost-recovery' measures led to the government requiring students, in the words of Rungano Zvobgo (1999: 164), to 'provide 50 percent of their university education costs'. Kagoro describes the convergence of student hardship during this period with wider social disaffection and rebellion:

> the establishment came up with a more drastic ESAP 2. So ... you moved from '95, '96, '97 the rapidity with which the university privatised essentially meant that you no longer had student discontent, you had an outright student rebellion on your hands. You had the most violent demonstrations during the '96, '97, '98 period and so curiously you then had a third thing that happened ... the prices for almost everything were liberalised: the fuel price, everything just shot up. The largest numbers of redundancies were created there, so you now had students supporting their parents on their student stipends which were not enough, because their parents had been laid off work. So in a sense as poverty increases you have a reconvergence of these forces. And the critique started off really being around issues of socio-economic justice. Right to a living wage you know, the students started couching their demands around the right to livelihood (Interview, 23 June 2003).

The effects of ESAP 1 and 2 were profound on government thinking, and specifically the way they intended to offset student resistance. University students were recast to fit the new policy paradigm as 'spoilt and privileged' and needing to show respect for their education (Kagoro, Interview 23 June 2003). As early as 1992 the government considered reviving an earlier project of national service. It was cast explicitly within the new framework, as Brigadier Mutambara, charged with assessing the feasibility of such a scheme, explained:

> the government pays most of the expenses of students going onto universities and other forms of advanced training. This practice may have to be discontinued however because of the economic situation. To gain these education benefits in the future, it may be necessary to do a period of National Service. Students may have to work on community programs during their holidays and when they obtain their degrees, may spend a period as National Service cadre where they trained recruits (Mutambara 1992).

Although the regime returned to the scheme under very different circumstances in 2001, it was the political dispensation instigated by ESAP that first resuscitated the idea of national service.[14] It is interesting to note that these changes occurred at the same time as an expansion of tertiary education, so by 2000 several new universities had opened, including the Great Zimbabwe University in Masvingo, Gweru University College and Africa University near Mutare, in eastern Zimbabwe. There was also a policy of devolving certain degree programmes to teacher and technical colleges (Zvobgo 1999: 157-164).

Conclusion

Arthur Mutambara is today both celebrated and reviled by Zimbabweans; accused of fabricating his CV or hijacking an opposition movement that he played no part in forming. But this paper has argued that it is perhaps more fruitful to examine his actual legacy and the student movement that he led. Mutambara represents the student movement in Zimbabwe in its most boastful and precocious period. There can be no better illustration of this arrogance then the description Mutambara gives of an impromptu meeting he had with Mugabe in 1990:

> There was a vicious encounter with Robert Mugabe himself. It was graduation ceremony in 1990, I was still president. He was officiating at the graduation ceremony. The tradition then was that the procession was led by the SRC president and then at the back was the national president. We go into the hall and do the ceremony and then come out to what was called College Green, were people have drinks and talk. The Vice-President came with Mugabe to introduce him to me: 'So SRC president this is Robert Mugabe'.
>
> Mugabe wanted to do 'small talk', he said something like: 'Oh how many graduates were there this year? When I graduated in the 1951 there were nine graduates in the country...'
>
> Because I knew that I was only going to have one second with him I said, 'No. I don't want to talk about that. I want to talk about national issues. We are completely against the one party state by any means necessary'.
>
> Mugabe said – I have a picture of that – 'Oh well if you take such strong views, we are going to very dismissive'.
>
> I replied: 'We have already dismissed your views.'
>
> The Vice President intervened. Mugabe is a very arrogant and proud man. He was livid. We were quickly encircled by his sycophants. But there was nothing they could do because I was already launching into him, he had initiated the conversation and I took the conversation were I wanted it to go. His circle remained after he had gone, saying 'How can you speak like this to the president?'

> I replied: 'He is just a human being who happens to be president of this country and he is not above reproach'.
>
> This was our radical way then.

From revering Mugabe as the pre-eminent liberation hero and ZANU-PF as the 'party of revolution', students at UZ turned bitterly on them. Perhaps 1988 – the year of dramatic reawakening and betrayal – for the student movement marked the birth of the struggle for democracy in Zimbabwe. This struggle would reach it apogee with the formation of the MDC eleven years later. Students again played a decisive role in the formation of this organisation.

The role that students continued to play in Zimbabwe, long after the 'AGO years' illustrates another important point in the trajectory of the student movement. Mutambara's years were not entirely unique in their 'sparkling' contribution to the democratic struggle in the country. Student life at the university in the 1980s was peppered with its own dose of 'hooliganism' that even prompted Mutambara to give up alcohol:

> I haven't had a drink since the 1 January 1988. In the first year I drank. I tried it. But come the 1 January I have not touched a molecule of alcohol ... I am just trying to show that alcohol was not our game. We were very focused. One of the reason that I stopped drinking it that the CIO would trap you, they would go to a club and if you were drunk, you are likely to react. Then in the paper, 'SRC president in drunken fight'. If you are sober you are in control. One of the reasons was to make sure that there was never a reason that I wasn't in control. We were leaders. We were able to tell the hooligans, that this is not what we are going to do. They respected us.

The 'hooligans' respected the leadership, but there *were* 'hooligans'. Political life on the campus was riven with ethnic politics and students indulged in anti-social behaviour. The neat categorisation of student politics by an older generation of student leaders into a 'golden age' followed by crude economism, where students struggle only over the disbursement of 'payouts', does not correspond to the historical record.

There is, however, an ideological side to Mutambara's argument that does stand up. Mutambara describes the frenzy over ideas: 'we read. We believed in ideas … We were very thorough. We read everybody ... We were battling in the game of ideas. We thrived on knowledge and ideas'. But there was a specify historical juncture to this. The celebrated ideological vanguardism that Mutambara describes of the 1980s was a consequence of the collision of forces that are not present today. This does not preclude the development of these politics today, nor explain the important role students continued to play as privileged political actors in the historical movement in the late 1990s, even without old ideologies (typically various forms of Stalinism).

This paper has argued that the 'agency' of Zimbabwe university students was forged in the liberation war that was in part run and organised by university students, who saw themselves uniquely placed to bring liberation, a process that saw, according to Andre Astrow (1983: 20-26), the marginalisation of

urban trade union struggle by a petit bourgeois leadership. For much of the 1980s students continued to support the new regime, breaking with it in 1988 and entering a period of violent opposition. The third period of student activism from the early 1990s, marked the 'convergence of forces', as conditions at the university and in wider society were further eroded and students mobilised in a politicised environment. They were no longer a 'rarefied elite' above society, but increasingly a proletarianised opposition staring at society from a similar perspective as the urban working class. Later in the decade students continued to play – in circumstances completely different to the 'AGO' era – a politically privileged role in the formation of the MDC and the frustrated transition. This was one political feast where Mutambara, to his enduring disadvantage, played no part.

Notes

1. See http://www.zimonline.co.za/lettersdetail.asp?ID=11775.
2. See http://zimdaily.com/news2/article.php/20060318131429256.
3. Quoted from http://zimpundit.blogspot.com/2006/02/is-mutambara-answer_22.html.
4. The list is indeed long: Zororo Willard Duri (former leading ZANU member), Sobusa Gula-Ndebele (a prominent lawyer), Christopher Mutsvangwa (former director general of ZBC), and John Majowe (former ambassador to Mozambique), Stan Mudenge (Minster Foreign Affairs), Witness Mangwende (senior ZANU member and government Minster), and Kempton Makamure (university lecturer): a generation that gave up their studies at the university and became the ideological and military leadership of the war.
5. It is Bianchini's 'diploma fetishism' that helps explain the obsessive interest in Zimbabwe in Mutambara's CV and academic qualifications. A huge number of articles, letters and blogs have discussed the intellectual achievements listed on his CV, and the number of his 'diplomas'.
6. A document that emerged after independence committing ZANU-PF to a strict anti-corruption code.
7. The merits of a one-party state were discussed openly (see for example, Mandaza and Sachikonye 1991). But in the case of the support for the 'one party state' by student radicals at the university, it was connected not to a contemporary notion of 'dictatorship', but the party as the embodiment of progressive ideas that would bring about political transformation. In this respect Kriger (2005) is wrong to express astonishment at the fashionable ideas of one-party state in the 1980s.
8. See Benson Mutape's (1999) extraordinary three volume collection of life at the university. The first volume deals with the first ten years at the University of Zimbabwe and focuses on the vibrant social and cultural life at the university. Mutape has been an eyewitness at the university for more than 20 years, first as a student and then librarian. Unfortunately the collection has not been catalogued at

the library, and is unpublished. The collection resembles an elaborate and detailed 'scrap-book' of life at UZ.

9. The ZCTU supported the student action, and the Secretary General Morgan Tsvangirai was imprisoned for issuing a statement condemning the arrest of the Student Union leadership in October 1989 (see Saunders 2000: 59-63).
10. Three of the most important Marxists at the University of Zimbabwe were Shadreck Gutto, Kempton Makamure (both in the Law Faculty) and Robert McLaren (Department of Drama, and the initiator of Zambuko Izibuko).
11. The 'many' referred to are principally an older generation of activists who attempt to valorise their period of activism with the 'evident' degeneration of the student movement today (personal communications with Gwisai and Mutumbara, 2003).
12. A number of students supported the University Amendment Act in 1990 in reaction to the 'indiscipline' on campus (students interviews in *The Herald*, 1991), even though it was widely condemned by the student movement.
13. Neither of these terms are used on the campus today.
14. ZANU Youth Brigades are also not a contemporary phenomenon in Zimbabwe. On the contrary, they were used continually in the 1980s, particularly as the student body broke with the government in the latter part of the decades. The regime increasingly used loyal party 'youths' organised in ZANU structures to physically defend the ruling party. At the ZCTU May Day celebrations in 1990 students who had turned up with banners critical of the government were beaten and chased out of Rufaro stadium by ZANU youths (SRC, University of Zimbabwe 2 May 1990).

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African Sociological Review, 10, (2), 2006, pp. 116-132.

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An Issue Overlooked in Nigeria's Reforms: The Continuation of Government Discriminatory Practices

Abstract

On the basis of the view that the democratic structures established by the 1999 General Elections are adequate for administering Nigeria, the Obasanjo Administration has refused to convene a National Conference of popularly elected delegates to design a new Constitution for Nigeria. It has for this reason devoted itself to economic reforms, initiating political reforms pretentiously or actually in pursuit of its interest in political control. According to informed opinion, there are many neglected steps even in the Administration's economic reforms project. But this paper is concerned with an aspect of political reform which in the Administration's stillborn political reform initiatives did not receive the urgent attention it deserves for its high political and economic impact on the majority of Nigerians. This is the dichotomy governments at all levels of the Nigerian federation – federal, state and local – make between 'indigenes' and 'non-indigenes' in the allocation of economic and social benefits. It shows the impact of this dichotomy on the rights to seek elective office and demand political accountability, which neither economic reform nor political reform initiatives have accorded necessary attention.

Introduction

Although the Obasanjo Administration was several times soon after its inauguration in May 1999 forced by violent ethnic and religious conflicts to acknowledge the unsettled structure of political and social relations in Nigeria, it did not agree to convene a National Conference to address the issue as popularly demanded by civil society organisations and sub-national groups. It maintained that the representative institutions established by the 1999 General Elections were adequate for administering Nigeria. It has for this reason devoted itself to economic reforms, initiating political reforms on paper, or in actuality in pursuit of its interest in political control.

A strong feeling is expressed in the opinion pages of Nigerian newspapers that the lack of urgent attention to the irregular electricity supply, bad roads, moribund rail transport, prohibitive interest rates and institutional decay are

serious drawbacks on economic reforms, that is, bank consolidation, privatisation, etc., with which the Obasanjo Administration has preoccupied itself.[1] Thus, even in the Administration's economic reforms project are many overlooked steps. But this paper is concerned with an aspect of political reform which in the Administration's still-born political reform initiatives did not receive the urgent attention it deserves for its high political and economic impact on majority of Nigerians.[2] This is the dichotomy governments at all levels of the Nigerian federation – federal, state and local – make between 'indigenes' and 'non-indigenes' in the allocation of economic and social benefits.

Generally, non-indigenes 'are discriminated against in the provision of vital government infrastructure and services such as schools, health care and even roads'.[3] In most cases, they are charged higher school fees, and denied scholarship and employment in government establishments. This paper aims to show the impact of the manner of administration of economic rights as indicated above on political rights, specifically, the rights to seek elective office and demand political accountability, which neither economic reforms nor political reform initiatives have accorded necessary attention.

As Michael Lister notes, social citizenship, which encapsulates all kinds of economic rights, 'is too infrequently related to the political and civil elements of citizenship'; and as he adds, 'research on political citizenship is isolated from social and civil elements'.[4] However, he recognises a few exceptions, but which also failed to explore the impact of enforcement of social citizenship on the development of political citizenship.

Hence, what is generally known is that minimum economic needs must be met for a person to effectively exercise political rights provided for in the Constitution and statutes.[5] How the enforcement of social rights along cultural or ethnic lines affects the political rights of individuals (including those whose minimum economic needs have been met by hard work, if you will) in an ethnically diverse sovereign state as Nigeria is not known. If, according to Marshall's unified concept of citizenship, the effective exercise of one type of citizenship right requires other types of citizenship rights, how the enforcement of one type affects another type of right is a good subject for research.[6] It is the opinion of this author that Nigeria provides the essential material for this.

The next section is devoted to the intellectual and policy milieu of government discriminatory practices, followed by evidence of these in the section immediately after it. These two sections are woven together in a theoretical perspective in the section on the impact of denial of social citizenship on political rights followed by the conclusion.

The Tension between Economic and Political Rights

In its full connotation, citizenship includes the right of residency, civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights as well as administrative

inclusion.[7] But even with the constitutional guarantees of political rights to vote and seek elective office to all Nigerians in any part of their country they may choose to live in, Nigerians generally lack the confidence to exercise the right to seek elective office outside of their ethno-territorial constituency because of the denial of ownership of that territory or constituency by indigenes or governments.[8] This denial is reflected in the denial of social rights to non-indigenes.[9] Discriminatory practices by governments and sub-national groups that engender such denials have been neglected in social science investigation even though they are widespread.[10]

Whereas citizenship claims within 'the territorially bounded and state centric international order' that deny social and/or political [citizenship] rights to immigrants in some affluent countries in Western Europe are being challenged in a renewed scholarly debate on trans-state boundaries, writers on Nigeria continue the tendency uncritically to assent exclusive claims in which Nigerians discriminate against other Nigerians in their ethno-territorial enclaves.[11] These enclaves have become numerous with thirty-six states and seven hundred and sixty-nine local government areas.[12] The assured punishment by this fragmentation of territorial homeland/constituency that awaits Nigerians who are inevitably subject to market-driven migration and the economic disability it occasions, make the inattention to it by scholars blameworthy. What is more, *indigene* has replaced *citizen* in the vocabulary of public discourse in Nigeria. Academic and democracy activists, just as politicians, journalists, community opinion leaders and ordinary Nigerians, are given to the language of an indigene/non-indigene distinction according to the ethno-territorial definition of indigene. To take an example, Dr Kayode Fayemi, a political analyst and democracy advocate who is aspiring to the governorship post of Ekiti State has written that 'Ekitiland deserves no less from concerned and committed indigenes'.[13]

There is a political awareness of the issue of ethno-territorial identity based discrimination. The Political Bureau that the Babangida Administration instituted 'to examine the causes of national problems and make recommendations' recommended residency for the enjoyment of social benefits.[14] This, like many other necessary measures of political engineering recommended by the Political Bureau was not implemented by the Babangida Administration. That was perhaps because it turned out to be 'unpopular' given that the recommendation was rejected by the Constituent Assembly, which considered the report of the Political Bureau in 1988. In a public lecture, the Governor of Bauchi State, Ahmad Adamu Mu'Azu, noted '... the continuous promotion of the fake lines drawn to further polarize the nation through the use of North-South dichotomy; and of recent the indigene/settler syndrome which has done much harm than good to the unity and brotherhood' of Nigeria. He then urged:

> Time is ripe for us to expunge the indigene factor from the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria ... we should be seen to be moving forward into the era of HITECH

> than moving back to primitive age. We should exploit the diversity in our culture and multi ethnic nature of our country to create a pan Nigeria where everyone can go and be what he wants to be anywhere in the country without fear of harassment or molestation.[15]

But political awareness of the issue of discrimination evident above has not led to concrete policy measures for dealing with it. Therefore, the reluctance of political leaders to deal with the issue needs to be tackled by scholars.

Surprisingly, scholars do not even show the same degree of awareness of the issue of government discriminatory practices, not to mention noticing the contradictions. Their analyses of group inequalities have only provided the ground for such practices. For example, Adele L. Jinadu observes that the problem that afflicts the state formation process is that while it is based on the 'notion of common or inclusive citizenship', access to state power and its benefits is unevenly distributed between ethnic groups.[16] The logic of his analysis that followed is that 'redress' of the situation requires some form of discriminatory practice. However, the contradictions in the kinds of discriminatory practices in Nigeria challenge scholars to espouse an empirically based normative argument for social citizenship rights to be claimable by residency. The positive effect inclusive social citizenship will have on political participation and accountability commend it to a scholarly exposition.

Currently, discriminatory distribution of social benefits allows 'local' political leaders to do as they please with the public treasury while they look like heroes in the eyes of their lowly ethnic folks for championing an ethno-territorial language of rights. This is more so that indigenes have preoccupied themselves with seeking and defending preferential treatment against non-indigenes and are not disposed to holding ethno-territorial governments to account for the huge financial resources at their disposal that could possibly make a much more positive difference for their well-being. They have at times gone as far as constituting themselves into defence counsels for their indigenes in government being prosecuted for embezzlement of public funds.

Governed by closed ethnic polities' thinking, writers have treated poor governance in Nigeria as a national problem only. They have assumed, regardless of the evidence on ground, that ethnic minority rights or the welfare of individuals of ethnic minorities inhere in the sub-national or ethnic polity and thus in further fragmentation of state structure in furtherance of the distribution of resources along ethno-regional origin.[17] They have swept under the carpet the abuse of the rights of new minorities in the ethno-region in their tendency to propose pro-ethno-territorial approaches to ethnic minority grievances because of their narrow and strictly ethno-territorial concept of minority.

The gravity of discrimination by governments against Nigerians in various political units has escaped the notice of students of Nigeria because of many other factors. Reference to two of them will suffice. The first factor is the real or perceived preference of Nigerians for the ethno-territorial distributive principle. Although it is recognised in the literature that this principle has been

championed by the elite mostly for their own benefit,[18] investigation into the economic and political contradictions of discriminatory administration of rights is not deemed necessary because of the generalised utility of ethnic identity.[19] Consequently, there is an implicit acceptance in the extant literature of the impossibility of a socially and politically integrated Nigerian multi-ethnic state without first critically examining the political, social and economic implications of the exclusionist policies of autonomous political units for individual well-being, group (minority) rights, and the Nigerian polity.

The second factor in the absence of policy-driven research on discriminatory practices and the actualisation of group rights and individual well-being is the essentialist view of group identity, which is based on three assumptions. First, all [presumed] members of the group want to preserve the group's identity because only in it lies their well-being. Second, all [presumed] members of the group regard its boundaries as sacrosanct. Third, all [presumed] members of the ethno-territorial group wish to remain permanently in it and nurse no desire for membership of another group. Consequent upon this essentialist view and reification of group identity, there is inattention to the examination of the ethnic polity as the guarantor of individual well-being and the empirical trends that challenge or deviate from attachment to ethno-territorial boundaries. Take for example the mismanagement of homogeneous ethnic polities and migrations across Nigeria that indicates an increasing detachment from ethnic culture of points of migration and increasing cross-cultural interactions in Nigeria. If there are individual behavioural exceptions to general group cultural attitudes and practices or defiance of walls between cultures by individuals as for example indicated by cross cultural marriages, the search for the understanding of sustenance of group attitudes and practices and cultural barriers must focus on individuals. This is to suggest that cultural attitudes such as ethnic or racial prejudice are actually individual phenomena rather than group ones, as they might appear. They have assumed a group characteristic only because most members of the group are indulging in them.

Administration of Socioeconomic Rights[20]

Discriminatory practices against non-indigenes who are nonetheless citizens of Nigeria are based on the 'notion that state governments are only responsible for the well-being of indigenes'.[21] They are so widespread that they are passed off as normal even though unconstitutional. Case studies of Kaduna, Kano and Plateau States indicate the following types of discrimination. One category of discrimination concerns government employment or retirement pensions. Non-indigenes are employed on 'contract' rather than on a pensionable basis by local and state governments. Some contract civil servants have been sacked after two or more decades in service without any forms of compensation. The

federal government for its part practices discrimination in recruitment into its establishments supposedly in pursuit of fairness to all geo-ethnic groups.[22] It explicitly bars non-indigenes of the location of its establishment from seeking employment into the lowest cadres, Grade Levels 01-07.

For some state government officials, even employment in private sector establishments situated in their states should be for indigenes only. They promote and where possible, thrust this policy on these establishments. There is no better evidence of this official policy than in the welcome speech of Governor Peter Odili of Rivers State to the Managing Director of Lufthansa while paying him a courtesy visit on 17 April 2005 in his office at the conclusion of Lufthansa's plans to operate direct flights from Port Harcourt to Germany. He wished that out of every ten Nigerian employees Lufthansa was to recruit, eight should be 'true sons and daughters' of Rivers State.[23] The mainly Rivers State audience expectedly cheered hectically. In the implementation of jobs in the state for indigenes of the state policy, there have been occasions where Rivers State indigenes who are not qualified for certain jobs in the private sector presented themselves for employment, only to sell their offers at the point of appointment. The State's Commissioner for Youths and Sports admitted in a Radio interview that Bonny (the location of Nigeria's Liquefied Natural Gas Company) youths indulged in such a practice. He then advised them to allow other Rivers indigenes to take up such appointments instead of selling them to non-indigenes.[24]

In this regard, distribution rather than production is the thrust of employment even in the private sector as it often is in government establishments. This explains why government establishments are often overstaffed in Nigeria. This curious definition of employment in a market economy is partly responsible for the inefficient service delivery especially by government agencies, which, ironically, economic reforms are intended to tackle. It goes without saying that indigene policy could clog the drive for efficient production and distribution of goods and services by economic reforms in Nigeria.

Discriminatory admissions' practices, fees charged and scholarship opportunities are the second category of government discrimination. Both state and federal governments are guilty of discriminatory admissions' practices. The Federal government currently discriminates to the extent of 55 percent in admissions into its universities, including around 35 percent for 'locality' of the university and 20 percent for States that have been dubbed Educationally Disadvantaged.[25] State governments for their part, reserve limited quotas for non-indigenes including those who were born and raised in their states. This means that entry qualifications are exceptionally high for applicants regarded as non-indigenes. Having secured admission on what is not a level playing ground with indigenes, non-indigenes are subjected to another form of discrimination when they are charged fees, while it is free for indigenes or higher fees where indigenes are charged at all. Sometimes, the differential fees paid by

non-indigenes are two or three times those of the indigenes. Charging non-indigenes higher fees is made worse by the denial of scholarship opportunities or benefits where they are provided by the state government that owns the educational establishment. Such a denial absolutely takes no account of the financial status of the guardians of non-indigenes who are mostly poor judging by the 54 percent poverty level of Nigeria according to the National Population Commission 2004 survey.[26] Furthermore, state governments indulge in the discriminatory practices against non-indigenes even if their parents or guardians have lived all their working life in their states and paid taxes to them.

The various forms of discriminatory practices, from education to employment opportunities and benefits, are based on the assumption of that the victims of discrimination have a safe haven in another local or state government that will recognise and treat them as their own [indigenes]. However, this is not often the case. Safe havens are increasingly disappearing for many a Nigerian who cannot demonstrate their indigeneity of any part of Nigeria with a certificate issued by local government in consultation with its traditional rulers. A Report from Human Rights Watch deserves quoting at length:

> A Nigerian who does not have an indigeneity certificate will be treated as a non-indigene in her formal interactions with all levels of government. In addition, a Nigerian who does not have a certificate of indigeneity from a local government somewhere in Nigeria is effectively an indigene of nowhere. An increasing number of Nigerians find themselves in trapped in this category of stateless non-indigenes. In some cases this is because their families have been living on the land they now occupy for generations and no longer remember precisely where their ancestors migrated from. In other cases non-indigenes may know where their families originated but cannot persuade local officials there that they are bonafide indigenes.[27]

Thus, Nigerians who are unable to procure an indigene certificate have become citizens without states, that is, with no homeland and without which they cannot claim citizenship rights anywhere in Nigeria. For such ones, the Nigerian identity is empty.

The circle of discrimination is completed when non-indigenes are denied direct political participation such as seeking elective office to represent the constituency in which they have lived all their life – or all their adult life – but are not recognised as indigenes. It is not surprising that indigenous community leaders have resorted to violence to stop non-indigenes from seeking political office in Warri, Delta State. As a non-indigene in Kaduna State put it, '[Even though] I have lived in Kaduna State for twenty years I cannot run for the chairmanship of my LGA [Local Government Area]. The party stalwarts would tell me to go back to my home state. But of course I cannot be elected there either after being away for twenty years'.[28] While the point about the possibility of being elected in the 'home' state (where it can be traced) is exaggerated as will be shown in the next section, it underlines the difficulty into which political rejection in the place of abode puts the victims should they resort to seeking

elective office in a place they have not lived in for a very long time. As Human Rights Watch reports,

> The government of Plateau State has appointed a local government administration in the state capital's Jos North local government area, and refuses to hold elections there, because of fears that the area's large non-indigene Hausa population might propel candidates from their own community to victory; state government officials say they worry such a development would spark violent conflict.[29]

The foregoing are examples of direct actions of indigenes against the political rights of non-indigenes in their midst. The next section shows the link between the denial of socioeconomic rights and the political efficacy of non-indigenes, a necessary step to the critical requirement of political participation beyond voting at elections. Indeed, it puts the psychological impact of the denial of social citizenship on political citizenship of non-indigenes in an explanatory frame.

Impact of Denial of Social Citizenship on Political Rights

Michael Walzer aptly captures the link between identity and access to socio-political goods when he stated that membership is a primary 'social good' because it is a prerequisite to the distribution of other goods.[30] Nationality is such a necessary membership for direct political participation. As I argued elsewhere, culture is the supreme determinant of nationality.[31] If the nationality of an individual is free of dispute, the individual is invariably guaranteed the right of political participation including the right to seek office to represent and demand accountability from office holders of the constituency. Such an undisputed claim to a territory/constituency is a necessary seed for the development of political efficacy (a psychic quality) of an individual. It is the foundational social capital for political participation.

The unmistaken message of discrimination in the distribution of social benefits to non-indigenes, then, is that they are not nationals of the constituencies of their abode who as such cannot engage in direct political participation, in this case, seeking to be representatives or asking questions about the administration of those constituencies. It is a subtle but powerful message to the extent that it has been internalised by Nigeria's by all from low to mighty or economically advantaged and disadvantaged. The extent of internalisation of this message can be seen from the behaviour of Nigerians who have taken it upon themselves to champion the personal liberty and well-being of their less privileged fellow Nigerians. Quite usually, they leave the constituency where they have lived all their working and public advocacy life for the ethno-regional constituency that is assumed their own when they decide to take the bull by the horns by seeking political power (see below for select examples). The message of discrimination sinks even in these personally economically advantaged persons in Nigerian society even though they might not be personally touched

by discrimination because of its underlying identification mark on them. Thus, it is the identity behind the discriminatory administration of social benefits in a given constituency that erodes the claim to its nationality, and not necessarily the experience of discrimination personally. The message sinks even deeper in those personally touched by discrimination because of their lowly material status. In any case, all who bear the mark of non-indigene (non-national) are burdened by a sense of alienation that effectively divests them of a sense of belonging to the constituency.

Discriminatory administration of social benefits brings about in effect political inclusion and exclusion. While indigenes of the ethno-territory/ constituency are included, non-indigenes are almost totally excluded. Non-indigenes can give their votes but cannot ask the votes of others to represent the constituency. They do not for that matter have the moral obligation or authority to demand accountability from those who (indigenes) rule the constituency even when they are faced with the need. Lack of moral authority is apart from the loss to discrimination of a stake in the constituency that should prompt the need to demand accountability. To that extent, non-indigenes are not full citizens.

Partial exceptions to this gradation of political citizenship are whole migrant settlements that are big enough to form a mini ethno-territory/constituency within a 'foreign' ethno-territory/constituency. Examples are Sabo, Oremeji, Oketunu and Okoro areas of Mokola, Ibadan, Oyo State (south west) and Sabongari in Kano, Kano State (north west) where non-indigenes enjoy full citizenship so long as it is strictly to represent the settlements of the mini ethno-territory. This means that their enjoyment of full citizenship is permissible only at the level of the smallest political constituency, that is, the Ward of the Local Government Council. They can seek to be a Councillor to represent the Ward in the Council and not to be Chairman of the Council, member of the State House of Assembly or National Assembly on the platform of this constituency. If they have such higher political aspirations, they must seek them through their 'indigenous' ethno-territorial constituency.

Yet, in ethnically mixed settlements as examples above, political inclusion accommodates some and excludes others according to broader ethno-territorial concept of indigeneity. It is this definition of indigeneity that has made it possible for Yoruba and not Igbo immigrants to enjoy full political citizenship in Lagos State, a part of Yoruba land. Rauf Aregbesola originally from Osun State (Yoruba land), is Lagos State Commissioner for Works and Infrastructure while Senator Olorunibe Mamora originally from Ogun State (Yoruba land), is representing the Lagos East Federal Constituency in the Senate, to mention a few examples. Those included derive their inclusion entirely from different sources just as can be used by indigenes from objective membership of the ethnic group whose traditional homeland straddles the place of their domicile. Markers of objective ethno-territorial membership include names, language

and physical features. Any of these can erode the political efficacy of non-indigenes whose definition of their indigeneity is entirely from different sources just as can be used by indigenes to deny them political inclusion no matter how long they have lived in the ethno-territory.

Even non-indigenes who derive their political citizenship from belonging to the ethnic group of the ethno-territory have at times had their political inclusion challenged by the indigenes of this ethno-territory. For example, Babatunde Oduyoye who represents Ibadan North West/South West Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives had his political inclusion in the constituency seriously disputed when he was seeking re-nomination to contest election on the platform of the Alliance for Democracy to renew his tenure in 2003. He strenuously used his landed material assets and not the fact that he had lived all his life in Ibadan to defend his inclusion. If it is hard to enjoy political inclusion by individuals like Oduyoye who belong to the ethnic group that spans his constituency, it is better imagined how harder it is for those whose objective ethno-territorial membership is totally different from that of the place of their abode. As a non-indigene of a different ethno-territorial membership living in Kano, Kano State, put it, 'non-indigenes there generally did not even consider running for office because "all kinds of coalitions would build up against you and prevent you from competing effectively"'.[32]

Political exclusion of non-indigenes operates in a way that leads indigenes to adopt protectionist and defensive behaviour. Ethnic folks in government are seen as a gateway to national resources for the ethno-territory. As a result, charges of misconduct by someone of another group against an ethnic folk are easily dismissed as witch-hunting. On the other hand, non-indigenes lack the motivation to initiate, much less press the demand for accountability from the government of the ethno-territory, which they have been told does not exist for them by discriminatory policies. Ultimately, the defensive behaviour of indigenes combines with lack of moral obligation of non-indigenes to participate in the administration of their locality to stall the ripening of issues of accountability toward a resolution for good governance and by implication, the welfare of all, even before they take the centre ground of public discourse.

Impact of Administration of Economic Rights on Political Rights: Selected Profiles

– Dare Babarinsa, Co-founder/Executive Editor of *Tell* magazine, one of the two guerrilla news magazines (the other is *TheNews*), is known for creating a publishing outlet in the struggle against military dictatorship between 1993 and 1998. Specifically, these magazines together with Radio Kudirat earned the label 'guerrilla' media from their 'hit-and-run style in which journalists operating from hideouts continued to publish opposition and critical material in defiance of repressive and authoritarian power'.[33] Operating in an environment very hostile, even dangerous, Babarinsa has lived virtually all his

working life since 1982 in Lagos but is aspiring to the office of the Governor of Ekiti State rather than Lagos State under the Alliance for Democracy.[34]

- Femi Falana, a lawyer and human rights activist, is a member and director of numerous civil society organisations in and out of Nigeria. He is the President of West African Bar Association; former President, National Association of Democratic Lawyers; former President, Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR); Defence Counsel in Federal Republic of Nigeria v. Ken Saro-Wiwa & Others, to mention but a few. Falana is easily identified as one of the 'people's' lawyers because of his role in challenging human rights abuses and anti-people policies of governments both in the court and in public commentaries. For his anti-government posture, he was several times between 1995 and 1998 detained and charged with unlawful assembly, sedition and treasonable felony, but never convicted.[35] Falana has lived and worked in Lagos for over two decades and has been Ekiti State gubernatorial aspirant under the National Conscience Party since 2003.
- Adams Oshiomhole, President, Nigerian Labour Congress and social critic, is a highly regarded labour leader and advocate of the rule of law and rights of workers. He has been dubbed 'unofficial leader of opposition' because of his political activism.[36] Oshiomhole is Edo State Gubernatorial aspirant even though he has lived and worked in Kaduna and Lagos States.
- Dr Kayode Fayemi, academic and human rights advocate, was also co-founder of the opposition radio, Radio Freedom, later Radio Democracy International and Radio Kudirat. He was, remarkably, the founding Director of the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), a non-governmental research organisation devoted among others to the study and mobilisation of public consciousness around issues of good governance and democracy in West Africa. Dr Fayemi has lived in Lagos, Lagos State since 1998 and is Ekiti State gubernatorial aspirant.
- The late Dr. Ayo Daramola, former lecturer, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State and World Bank Consultant, lived in Lagos, Lagos State and was gubernatorial aspirant of Ekiti State.
- Professor Julius Kayode Omozuanvbo Ihonvbere, political scientist, former Ford Foundation Programme Officer in Governance and Civil Society, is a human rights activist and was an active member of the Nigerian Diaspora pro-democracy movement that operated Radio Kudirat. He is currently Special Adviser to the President on Programme and Policy Monitoring.[37] Born and raised in Yoruba land of Osun State, since returning to Nigeria in 2001 he has lived in Yoruba land of Lagos, Lagos State. Professor Ihonvbere is Edo State gubernatorial aspirant.
- Dr Tunji Abayomi, lawyer and human rights activist, is the founder and Chair of Council of Human Rights Africa. He was detained for advocating

the then General (Rtd.) Olusegun Obasanjo's innocence in the alleged 1995 coup plot against General Sani Abacha. Dr Abayomi has lived all his working life in Lagos, Lagos State but is Ondo State gubernatorial aspirant.

Conclusion

Citizenship is a critical institutional and identifying mark of any political economy because it defines the boundaries of political and economic participation.[38] Full citizenship is a license for full participation just as partial citizenship is a limitation on participation. The trend in Nigeria, with administrative territorial fragmentation and an increasingly mobile population, is that more and more Nigerians are being rendered partial citizens who cannot participate fully because of the discriminatory administration of social benefits. Discriminatory practices have brought this situation about by promoting the idea that the political space of the ethno-territory belongs exclusively to the indigenes, and by forcing non-indigenes to remain aloof. As a result, the development of an inclusive political and economic community required for the efficient production and reproduction of the state and society is stunted.

Cultural exception has been the ready tool for the strong particularistic tendencies in Nigeria. For proponents of such tendencies, the argument against ethnically based discriminations is most insensitive to the cultural diversity of Nigeria. But for these ones for whom Nigerian cultures are sacred, there is no problem with the bearers of these cultures relishing the consumption of products and services from countries that enabled their production with socio-political citizenship arrangements sharply at variance with Nigeria's. Even more contradictory is the acceptance of champions of particularistic tendencies of their folks to embrace the citizenship of developed countries with the prospect of full inclusion rather than contemplating extending full citizenship rights to Nigerians of other cultures in their ethno-regional enclaves.

Its generic cause, discriminatory administration of social benefits, aside, political exclusion of non-indigenes has some rationalisation in the perception of political representation. The history of corrupt use of democratic mandate has given a bad name to political representation in Nigeria.[39] It is not viewed as an expression of the General Will or as a means for pursuing the collective good. Rather, political representation is seen as a means of great personal gain for the representative. There is much evidence of this in the stupendous remunerations, perquisites of office and outright appropriation of public funds for personal enrichment by elected representatives.[40] That being the case, the electorate is naturally averse to a situation where non-ethnic Nigerian folks would ride to great wealth on the back of their constituency. They would rather have one of their 'own' take the slice of the spoils. However, Nigeria needs to learn from the European Union (EU).

The EU's approach to economic integration has rightly recognised that political integration is necessary for the achievement of economic integration. It is also recognised that there cannot be political integration without economic integration. As a result, EU political leaders who want to see EU member countries united economically are granting political rights in addition to economic and social rights to each other's nationals who reside among them.[41] They are doing this to encourage grassroots acceptance and support for economic unification of EU. This bottom-up approach to economic unification gives the entire people of EU an incentive to be involved in working toward European economic integration. It is significant even though in the opinion of analysts, progress toward a European identity is slow.[42]

Nigerians, wherever they live in Nigeria, need similar incentives to believe in the Nigerian state project. If Nigerian authorities are serious about this project and in the context of this paper, about economic reforms, they ought to notice the contradiction that the indigene/non-indigene dichotomy in the distribution of social benefits constitutes for Nigeria's political economy. It is a serious contradiction in a political economy to punish those who respond to its market principles by being mobile.[43] Nigerian authorities also ought to notice that it is contradictory to institute democratic rule and limit political participation indirectly by denial of social citizenship. As Jean Grugel has noted, participation and representation, among others, are central to democratisation.[44] As such, disenfranchisement of non-indigenes as in limiting their political aspirations and erosion of their stake in the accountability of elected representatives in the ethno-territorial constituency of their dwelling is indicative of a 'weak' democracy. Fostering a real stake in loca life can help build a political identity faster than by simply demanding that Nigerians should focus what they can do for Nigeria in radio and television jingles.

Notes

1. See for example, Said Adejumobi, 'The bogey of reforms', *The Guardian*, Lagos, 16 August, 2006, http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/editorial_opinion/articles03, downloaded on 6/08/06, 12 noon.
2. Examples of stillborn presidential political reform initiatives are All-Party Technical Committee, 1999 and National Political Reform Conference, 2005. The Administration evidently intended to use the latter to elongate the tenure of President of Olusegun Obasanjo. This intended use of the Conference was its undoing because of its unpopularity. Hence, the reform process it started collapsed on the floor of the Senate on 16 May 2006.
3. Human Rights Watch, *They Do Not Own This Place: Government Discrimination Against 'Non-Indigenes' in Nigeria*, Vol. 18, No. 3(A), (2006), Washington, DC: Human Rights Watch, p.17.

4. Michael Lister, '"Marshall-ing" Social and Political Citizenship: towards a Unified Concept of Citizenship', *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 2005, p. 472.
5. D. King & J.Waldron, 'Citizenship, Social Citizenship and the Defence of Welfare Provision', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1988, pp. 415-443.
6. For the unified concept, see T.H. Marshall, 'Citizenship and Social Class', in T. H. Marshall, ed., *Sociology at the Crossroads*, London, Heinemann, 1963, pp.67-127. This concept of citizenship renders the debate on which, between civil and political rights on the one hand and economic and social rights on the other, take precedence over the other, rather esoteric. For the debate, see for example, Rhoda E. Howard, 'Evaluating Human Rights in Africa: Some Problems of Impact Comparisons, *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No.2, 1984, pp.160-179; Claude E. Welch, Jr. & Ronald I. Meltzer, eds., *Human Rights and Development in Africa*, Albany, N.Y., State University Press, 1984; and Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im & Francis M. Deng, eds., *Human Rights in Africa: Cross Cultural Perspectives*, Washington, DC, The Brookings Institution, 1990.
7. Seyla Benhabib, 'Transformations of Citizenship: The Case of Contemporary Europe', *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2002, p.439.
8. The Constitution in its provisions on citizenship implies the right to seek office anywhere. Section 42(1) is particularly instructive. It states,

   '(1) A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person:-

   (a) be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions are not made subject; or

   (b) be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religion or political opinions'.
9. In spite of the evidence adduced by research regarding the situational character of ethnicity, the tendency to treat ethnic groups as real continues in popular, political and administrative discourses. No where is this more true than in Nigeria. See Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2004.
10. Human Rights Watch, 'They Do Not Own This Place'.
11. Seyla Benhabib, 'Transformations of Citizenship', p.439. An early scholarly challenge to the dominant idea and actual division of the world into states is by Edmund Burke. For this and some recent scholarly doubts on a world with borders, see Herbert Dittgen, 'World without Borders? Reflections on the Future of the Nation-State', *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 1999, pp.161-199. For a critique of the reification of ethnic groups and identities by popular and adminis-

trative discourses in spite of the research proven situational character of ethnic identity, see Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press, 2004.

12. Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, Lagos, Federal Government Press.
13. Kayode Fayemi, 'Collective Rescue Mission: Restoring Integrity, Ensuring Development in Ekiti-State – A Message from Kayode Fayemi', http://www.nigerianmuse.com/projects/EkitiDevelopmentProject/KF-CV-POLITICS.DOC, 2006, p.1. Downloaded on 19/09/2006, 14.35.
14. Richard L. Sklar, 'Foundations of Federal Government in Nigeria', in Adigun A. B. Agbaje, Larry Diamond, and Ebere Onwudiwe, eds., *Nigeria's Struggle for Democracy and Good Governance: A Festschrift for Oyeleye Oyediran,* Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 2004, p. 9; see also *The Political Bureau Report 1987*, Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information.
15. *The News*, Lagos, 23 August 2004, p. 34.
16. Adele L. Jinadu, 'Explaining and Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Towards a Cultural Theory of Democracy', Uppsala University Forum for International and Area Studies Lecture, 5 February 2004.
17. This assumption dominates the thinking of other very informed Nigerians. Witness for example, the argument of Nigeria's English Professor and poet, John Pepper Clark, for more states for the Ijaw ethnic group. See J. P. Clark, 2006, 'Two more homes their own', *The Guardian*, Lagos, Opinion page, 19 June 2006.
18. Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, Enugu: Fourth Dimension Press, 1978.
19. In a critique of the elite perspective on ethnicity that suggests the elite invest in the construction of ethnic identity for their own economic and political goals, Osaghae (1991) argues that the non-elite also use ethnic identity to further their interests such as in securing a job or contract. Osaghae, E. Eghosa, 'A Re-examination of the Conception of Ethnicity in Africa as an Ideology of Inter-Elite Competition', African Study Monographs (Kyoto), Vol.12, No.1, 1991, pp.43-61.
20. This section draws some of its field reports from Human Rights Watch, They Do Not Own This Place.
21. Ibid., p. 27.
22. The Constitution states in 14 (3), that 'The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few State or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies'.
23. Seven o'clock broadcast of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Port Harcourt, 17 April 2005.
24. Radio Rivers 2 (FM Station), 9-10 a.m., Interview, 28 July 2005.

25. B. Ahmad. Salim, 'Problems of Assessment and Selection into Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria, Paper presented at the 21st Annual Conference of AEAA held at Cape Town, South Africa from 25-29 August 2003.
26. Otive Igbuzor, 2006, 'Review of Nigeria Millennium Development Goals 2005 Report', Paper presented at the MDG/GCAP Nigeria Planning Meeting held in ABUJA, Nigeria on 9 March, 2006.
27. Human Rights Watch, *They Do Not Own This Place*, p.20.
28. Ibid., pp.30-31.
29. Ibid., p.31.
30. Cited in Seyla Benhabib, 'Transformations of Citizenship', p. 24.
31. Isumonah, V.Adefemi, 'Land Tenure, Migration, Citizenship and Communal Conflicts in Africa', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.9, No.1, 2003, Spring, pp.1-19.
32. Human Rights Watch, *They Do Not Own This Place*, p.31.
33. Ayo Olutokun, 'Authoritarian State, Crisis of Democratization and the Underground Media in Nigeria, *African Affairs*, Vol. 101, 2002, pp. 317.
34. http://www.nigeriannews.com/Dare_Babarinsa_Curriculum_Vitae.htm, downloaded on 19/09/2006, 14.30.
35. http://www.internetbar.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=32&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0, downloaded on 19/09/2006, 14.45.
36. http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200609150396.html, downloaded on 19/09/2006, 13.08.
37. http://people.africadatabase.org/en/profile/2626.html, downloaded on 19/09/2006, 14.07.
38. Elizabeth Jelin, 'Citizenship Revisited: Solidarity, Responsibility and Rights', in Elizabeth Jelin and Eric Hershberg, eds., *Constructing Democracy: Human Rights, Citizenship and Society in Latin America*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996, pp. 101-119.
39. Tom Forrest, 'The Political Economy of Civil Rule and the Economic Crisis in Nigeria (1979-84)', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 13, No. 35, 1986, pp.4-26.
40. The President and Vice-President are currently engaged in allegations and counter allegations of corrupt personal enrichment against each other. The Vice-President has been indicted by a panel of the Federal Executive Council. See for examples, Reuben Abati, 'A Bolekaja Presidency (4)'; T.O. Shobowale Benson, 'The Obasanjo-Atiku Imbroglio' and Levi Obijiofor, 'Obasanjo, Atiku and the imperilled nation', *The Guardian*, Lagos, 23 September, 2006. Http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/editorial_opinion/article02, 10.00 a.m.
41. Roger Morgan, 'Towards a common European Citizenship', Review article in *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 1996, pp. 241-249.

42. Alan Rosas, and Esko Antola, *A Citizen's Europe: In Search of a New Order*, London: Sage, 1995.
43. Mamood Mamdani, 'Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism', in Centre for Advanced Social Science (CASS), *Ideology and African Development*, Proceedings of the Third Memorial Programme in honour of Professor Claude Ake, Port Harcourt, CASS, 2000, pp.4-22.
44. Jean Grugel, 'Democratization Studies: Citizenship, Globalization and Governance', *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 2003, pp. 238-264.

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African Sociological Review, 10, (2), 2006, pp.133-150.

ADDRESS

Sociology, Endogeneity and the Challenge of Transformation

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[An Inaugural Lecture Delivered on Wednesday 16 August 2006 at Rhodes University, South Africa]

1. Salutation and Introduction

The Vice-Chancellor, the Vice-Principal, the Registrar, the Dean of Humanities, other Deans, esteemed colleagues, friends and family members with us tonight, fellow students of sociology, ladies and gentlemen; it is with great pleasure that I present the Fifth Inaugural Lecture on behalf of the Department of Sociology.[1] It is a privilege in a triple sense. First, tonight is not about personal achievement. It was grace that brought me this far; it is grace that will lead me on. Second, this is the first inaugural lecture in the tenure of the new Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University. Third, it is an honour for me to speak as a sociologist on behalf of a Department of Sociology, with a sociologist as Vice-Chancellor.

I have chosen for the title of my lecture: Sociology, Endogeneity, and the Challenge of Transformation. Sociology is sometimes described as the 'master social science', in the sense of its foundational concerns with 'sociation' and its dynamics. In this sense alone, Sociology offers tools for making sense of the transformation challenges that we face. In a second and more important sense, the developments in sociological scholarship in Africa and the global South offer compelling illustrations in addressing the challenges of contents and curriculum transformation. The Lecture addresses these dimensions of critical sociological thinking.

The developments I mentioned earlier mark an exciting new phase in Sociology. They not only go beyond 'protest scholarship' but involve critical intellectual affirmation with a distinct flair for epistemic rupture.[2] I should emphasise that these developments build on the works of older generations of African sociologists, and they point to what can be done if we take our locales seriously. The increased affirmation of the sociologies of the Global South is in the context of what Dipesh Chakrabarthy[3] calls 'provincializing Europe' – in

the sense of acknowledging the idiographic or particularity of western thoughts rather than treat them as universal or nomothetic. Tiyambe Zeleza[4] has argued that this involves a double logic for African scholars: 'provincializing Europe' while opening up the diversity of African libraries – textual, oral, archaeological, etc., – to the wider world. This, to paraphrase Joseph Ki-Zerbo, the Burkinabe historian, requires *endogeneity*.[5]

Mr Vice-Chancellor, permit me to address, briefly, the question of 'endogeneity' since it tends to jar the postmodern and the not so postmodern ears. The demand for endogeneity is often met with the charge of nativism or 'cultural nationalism'. In its place we are invited to embrace the 'triumph of the West'; to become cosmopolitan. This is strange considering the contents of our education and public discourses. We are asked to take particular ideas of culture, forms of governance, philosophical expositions, rights discourses, patterns of interpersonal relationship, and accounting for history, among others, as universal, when in fact what is presented in the name of universalism and cosmopolitanism is fundamentally a closure. It involved an erasure; a silencing of non-Western voices and knowledge systems. Discourses with their roots in particularistic histories of Europe and North America are presented as human discourse.[6]

As I argued in my 2005 Presidential Address to the South African Sociological Association:[7]

> Contrary to the false claims of universalism and unicity of Sociology,[8] endogeneity is fundamental to the canonical works of what we call western sociology.[9] 'Universal knowledge' as Archie Mafeje notes, 'can only exist in contradiction'.[10] More importantly, 'to evolve lasting meanings, we must be "rooted" in something'.[11] It is precisely because Marx, Weber, and Durkheim were firmly rooted in their specific contexts that they produced the canonical works that we today consider essential to Sociology. [As] Kwesi Prah reminded us: 'If what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed'.[12]

In earlier works,[13] I have drawn attention to the global impact of African historiography, starting with Onwuka Dike's insistence (at the Ibadan School of History) on the oral sources as a valid basis for writing history. The Dar-es-Salaam School asked: 'Who built the Pyramids?' Definitely not the Pharaohs; so who writes the stories of the slaves, and workers who cut and bore the stones when building the pyramids? The effect was to draw attention, as Shula Marks noted, to the 'connection between the crisis of historical representation that came about when historians began to hear the voices of those who had been voiceless and the more general epistemological crisis affecting all the sciences and humanities'.[14]

2. What Is Sociology? Extroversion as the nomothetic

Mr Vice-Chancellor, permit me to briefly address the perennial question that we have to answer as sociologists: You meet someone at a reception, s/he pops

the question: 'So, what do you do at the university?' 'Sociology', you reply, 'I teach sociology'. 'What's that?', you are asked. And there goes your evening of relaxation. As with many things in life, there is the short answer and there is the very long one. I will start with the short answer because it provides an orientation to this lecture but and the wider context, which takes us back to the issue of endogeneity.

Sociology is the systematic study of sociational lives or the human society. Period. OK, may be not. Sociology is concerned with how human society coheres and/or dissembles; the place of the individual in the collective and the collective in the individual, and so on. At the level of macro-sociology, we might deal with the sociational bases of the economy or polity. At the level of meso-sociology, concerns might focus on large group entities. Micro-sociological interest would deal with things like the rituals of coffee breaks. Given its remit, sociology is compelled to ask foundational questions about human society and its sociational dynamics. It is in this sense that it is sometimes referred to as 'the central [or the master] social science'. The focus of sociology is the social rather than the psychological or biology. Where the psychological comes into play, it would involve how the individual is located within the wider sociational context. The sociological imagination that C. Wright Mills[15] spoke about – which allows us to link biography and history; private 'troubles' with 'public issues' – cannot simply be one of quantitative increase. When an individual loses her job or a marriage ends in divorce, these are 'private troubles'. When six million are unemployed or three in every five marriages end in divorce, these are 'public issues'. However, what is inadequately theorised in C. Wright Mills's accounts is the sociational context that gives private troubles their names and resonance, and the agency of the collective that makes mass unemployment a 'public issue'. The sociational is what links biography and history; private pains and public issues.

But there is a larger context and it brings us back to extroversion and erasure of memory. Two examples will suffice. In his 1996 collection of essays, ironically titled *In Defence of Sociology*, Anthony Giddens argued that 'Sociology is a generalizing discipline that concerns itself above all with modernity – with the character and dynamics of modern or industrialized societies'.[16] The average sociology textbook, like Giddens, will date the emergence of the field to Auguste Comte, the nineteenth century French philosopher, and identify the 'founding-fathers' – Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim.

Giddens's definition makes sense within the spatial division of intellectual labour among European scholars who studied societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. 'Sociologists' are those who stayed at home and studied their societies. 'Anthropologists' are those who went abroad; studied strange peoples and cultures; learnt strange languages, and ate strange foods.[17]

The irony of Giddens's circumscription of Sociology is that a systematic study of sociational lives in pre-industrial England becomes impossible. For

one thing, it cannot be sociological because this was not an industrial or modern society. It cannot be anthropological either be-cause, *a priori*, it would not fit the definitional context of the 'inferior Other'; what Mafeje called the epistemology of alterity would not apply. The absurdity of such position should be obvious.

More significant for us is the erasure of memory, and closure of history that is immanent in it. Here Ibn Khaldun may suffice as an example of the erasure in the western historical accounting for Sociology, considering that his works had been available in English since 1967.[18] Other examples abound.

Ibn Khaldun completed his three volume magnus opus, *Kitab Al 'Ibar*, in AD 1378. In the first volume, *Muqaddimah*,[19] not only did Ibn Khaldun set out the conceptual framework and the methodological basis for adjudicating between competing data sources, it was self-consciously sociological. As Sayed Farid Alatas[20] noted, Ibn Khaldun outlined his new 'sciences' of human organisation and society ('ilm al-'umran al-bashari and 'ilm al-ijtima 'al-insani). This was 452 years before the first volume of Auguste Comte's six volume *The course of positive philosophy*, was published.

In the same work, Ibn Khaldun articulated the concept of 'asabiyyah' to explain the normative basis of group cohesion; how it decomposes and is reconstituted; the different ways in which it manifests at different levels of social organisation and among different groups.[21] This was 515 years before Emile Durkheim's *The Division of Labour* (1893) and its idea of social norms, was published. But here is the rub; you would hardly find one Sociology textbook available to our students in South Africa that mentions Ibn Khaldun, much less discusses his work.

A second example – and a more widespread one – is found in Steven Bruce's popular *Sociology: a very short introduction* and it relates to the 'science' in sociology as a 'social science'. In explaining what science is not Steve Bruce used the following illustration:

> A client comes to a witch doctor with a very bad rash. The witch doctor poisons a chicken, and, from the way the chicken staggers before dropping dead, the witch doctor determines that the rash has been caused by the client's sister-in-law bewitching him. The client is given a charm and told that, if he wears it for a week, the spell will be broken and the rash will clear. But it does not work: a month later the rash is as bad as ever. Instead of concluding that the idea that illness is caused by evil spells is nonsense and the charm is without curative power, the witch doctor explains that the charm did not work because the client did not have enough faith. What appears to be failure is turned into further support for the system of belief.[22]

The illustration, Bruce claims, 'is taken from African traditional medicine'.[23] If it is African it has to be mumbo-jumbo, charm-wielding shenanigans; what else? It is an erasure that simultaneously denies systematic knowledge to a whole people and puts them outside of history – in the Hegelian tradition. It might be useful to remember that the phrase 'witch doctor' is part of the

paraphernalia of alterity that includes phrases like 'tribes', 'Bantu Languages'. No African community refers to its healers as 'witch doctors'!

I wish to contrast Bruce's claims to the findings of the Nigerian organic chemist, Professor Kayode Adesogan, who retired from University of Ibadan two years ago. In the first twelve years of his post-doctoral work, he added over twenty new compounds to Chemistry, almost all of which derived from his work on traditional medicinal remedies.[24] Much of this research was inspired by what he knew growing up in his parents' villages in South-western Nigeria. Among the new compounds are oruwal, oruwalol, and oruwacin which he named and were extracts from *oruwo*, a medicinal plant used in the treatment of malaria and mental illness! More interesting, for us, is the use of 'ground earthworm casts with salt to taste', which is 'used for curing chronic dysentery'.[25] Now fancy the use of earthworm cast to treat dysentery. Who licks earthworm cast or swallows the paste other than ignorant Africans? Professor Adesogan and his research team followed up on the information he received as a young person on the efficacy of the treatment. His conclusion was: 'We have shown that earthworm casts intact (total water extract) has antibiotic activity against organisms which cause enteric fevers, i.e. dysentery-like diseases. The remedy works... [W]e isolated various chemical compounds... The most interesting of this was a new compound which we named *oxysporone*'.[26]

In his 1987 Inaugural Lecture, Professor Adesogan had this to say:

> My results as well as literature search have led me to respect our forefathers for their fantastic power of observation, correlation and judgement... The shape of leaves, the smell, the taste, the habitat, all have special meanings for them. It is amazing how many of their remedies have been proved right in modern medicine.[27]

I do not want to substitute erasure for uncritical adulation. The important point is to highlight the immanently ethnocentric (and largely racist) tendencies to create binary opposites: between knowledge and ignorance; science and 'dubious magic'. Ignorance and 'dubious magic' as signifiers of the non-Western Other.

As the saying goes: 'until lions have their own story-tellers, the tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter'.[28]

3. Endogeneity and Sociology: from translation to doing sociology with epistemic intent

Mr Vice-Chancellor, permit me to shift my focus to what has been a central intellectual concern of mine over the last seven years, marking my return to the meta-theoretical issues that first engaged my interest when doing my PhD. It concerns how we do sociology which is meaningful to us and our contexts, especially those done with epistemic intent. It is about recording the stories of the lions and lionesses of our savannah plains.

At the heart of the project of valorising endogenous knowledge is the challenge of dealing with what the Beninoise philosopher, Paulin Hountondji,[29] referred to as the 'extroversion' of Africa's societies and systems of knowledge production.[30] He drew a parallel between the extroversion of the economies – export cocoa or gold; import chocolate or jewellery – and knowledge production process, where data is exported and theory imported. Scholarship became little more than proselytising and regurgitating received discourses – left or bourgeois – no matter how poorly they explain our lived experiences.

I take Ibn Khaldun's works as examples of the classical sociological writings in Africa and the global South. The repudiation of the value of Ibn Khaldun's work on the ground that it was ridden with religious 'thinking'[31] is something I will address shortly.

As I argued in a recent encyclopaedia entry,[32] Sociology is, arguably, the social science discipline that benefited most from the 'nationalist' project – both as a state-building project and an intellectual endeavour. To offer a minor clarification, 'nationalist', as the Tanzanian scholar Issa Shivji reminded us, is anti-colonial or anti-imperialist.[33] For these 'nationalist' movements, including the ANC, there is no linguistic or cultural 'nation' to construct or reconstruct – the project was and is meta-national.

As a beneficiary of the state-building project, sociology flourished as the number of universities and student enrolments grew exponentially. As an intellectual project, sociology flourished in the wake of the rebellion against alterity. A segment of it took on a radical anti-imperial orientation.[34] In making sense of scholarship in the post-colonial, nationalist era, Tiyambe Zeleza distinguished between 'translation' and 'formulation'. Translation involves 'articulating the tenets of African culture and ideas in western academic terms'; 'formulation' involves African intellectuals 'framing their own theories, interpretation and criticism'.[35] Ari Sitas described the latter as involving 'exemplary ideas'.[36] Let me set the content of the sociological enterprise on our continent in a wider frame.

I mentioned 'scholarship as regurgitation' (radical or conservative) earlier. Much of this involves the practice of imposing received categories on local conditions; functioning as extensions of Euro-American discourses.[37] This type of scholarship is not my concern in this section, neither is translation scholarship. My concern is with scholarship as formulation or what I would call scholarship as affirmative, which may or may not involve epistemic rupture, but it takes its locale seriously enough to challenge received paradigms. Underscoring it is protest and/or affirmation of one's space and experience. They often produce exemplary ideas.

Across much of Africa, the first wave of protest scholarship took to task anthropology's epistemology of alterity, as Archie Mafeje called it.[38] In a series of articles published between 1967 and 1971, Bernard Magubane led the charge against the epistemology of alterity. His 1971 paper, 'A critical look at Indices

used in the study of social change in Colonial Africa',[39] acquired a cult image among a new generation of African sociologists. In a 1971 paper, Onoge referred to Magubane, as 'to my mind, the most exciting African [...] sociologist today'.[40] Magubane's earlier paper on 'The Crisis of African Sociology' refers to colonial scholarship in Southern Africa, rather than what I or Onoge would call 'African sociology'. As Magubane told me during a recent interview, trying to teach urban sociology to Zambian students exposed the futility of using materials that treated the students and their people as subordinate others! He literally threw the books and journal articles out and started writing alternative materials. Omafume Onoge's rejection of the feasibility of being 'a native anthropologist' is set against what he argued must be the 'revolutionary imperatives' of African Sociology – it must break with the epistemology of alterity and proselytising.

In 1971 Archie Mafeje published his 'Ideology of Tribalism'. It was a partial and situational rejection of the viability of the concept of 'tribe', and a substantive rejection of 'tribalism' as a viable concept for explaining political relationships. In 1973 his paper 'The fallacy of "dual economies" revisited' was published – a paper he wrote while head of the Sociology department at the University of Dar-es-Salaam. It represents an important corrective to the careless deployment of the idea of neo-colonialism, which was nonetheless lost on most intellectuals working in the field.[41] That the idea of two economies would resurface in South Africa some 30 years after Mafeje's piece on 'The fallacy of "dual economies"' is an object lesson in how a dubious idea can regain currency when policy-makers and scholars fail to read the progenitors who preceded them!

An important antecedent of Magubane and Mafeje is Amilcar Cabral.[42] Here I will refer to Cabral's 'Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea' (1964) and 'Weapon of Theory' (1966).[43] The former is an exemplar of sociological analysis and product of what we would today call field methods. It served as the source-codes for the 'Weapon of Theory'.

Marx and Engels proclaimed that the history of humankind is the history of class struggle – something that was the mantra of radical politics at the time. On the basis of analysis and praxis within the Guinean context, Amilcar Cabral argued that 'the true motive force of history is the mode of production' rather than 'class struggle'. To accept the mantra of class struggle as the signifier of history, Cabral argued, not only runs against the grain of observed historical patterns, it produces 'for some human groups in our countries... the sad position of being people without history'.[44] It negates 'the inalienable right of every people to have its own history'.[45]

If Archie Mafeje's 1971 piece on the 'Ideology of Tribalism' can be classified as protest scholarship, his book *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* represents a work of epistemic significance. The concept of 'tributary modes of production' originally developed by Samir

Amin, the Egyptian/Senegalese scholar, formed the organising hypothesis for making sense of the interlacustrine kingdoms of the Great Lake region. The idea of 'tributary modes of production' was itself meant to capture what was 'outside the purview of European history' and needed to 'be understood in their own terms'.[46] However, what Mafeje produced was a concept of tributary relations that transcended several dimensions of the contents that Amin gave it.

In the sub-field of Political Sociology Ruth First's *The barrel of a gun* (1970)[47] was published. It was such a nuanced deployment of the category of class, in explaining coups d'etat on the continent that it fundamentally altered the debate. This was against the dominant Africanist explanation where ethnicity explained everything. Peter Ekeh's 'Theory of the Two-Publics' (1975),[48] represented a similarly profound deployment of grounded scholarship and a resourceful sociological mindset. It is instructive that in spite of Ekeh's analyses – which continued in later years – the essentialist explanation of political behaviour remains deep-seated in Africanist scholarship.

The most exciting area of scholarship by sociologists anywhere today, I will argue, is in the field of African gender scholarship. The works of Ifi Amadiume and Oyèrónké Oyewùmí are exemplary, representing distinct epistemic ruptures. As Amadiume's *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* (1987),[49] and Oyewùmí's *The Invention of Women* (1997),[50] demonstrate, 'gender categories are [not] universal or timeless ... [or] present in every society at all times'.[51] The inscription of gender ordering in the anatomical body or the coincidence of anatomical maleness and anatomical femaleness does not reflect the experience – historically or even contemporarily in the two contexts in which they worked. Not only, unlike English, are Igbo and Yoruba languages gender neutral, the social ordering in both cultural contexts has more to do with age-seniority than body-difference. Seniority within consanguine relationships was the primary marker of social position; 'the subordination of women [was and is not] universal'. Amadiume and Oyewùmí demonstrated across the spectrum of social, occupational, political, and economic ordering in both contexts that 'biology [did not and does not] determine social position'.[52] Both have inspired other studies by African scholars to explore other cultural contexts. While not universal, similar patterns have been found in other contexts.[53] Beyond scholarship is the value of these works for women's rights struggles: much of the androcentric power play and diminution of women that is often claimed in the name of 'tradition' are in fact not traditional!

3.1. African Ontological Narratives as Source-codes for Sociology

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I wish to end this part of my lecture by looking at the significance of ontological narratives as source codes for Sociology – of an epistemic nature. In my 'Sociology and Yorùbá Studies'[54] I explored the feasibility of deriving epistemic frameworks from the Ifá literary corpus among the

Yorùbá. The work and my current interest were inspired by the extensive and seminal works done by Akínsolá Akìwowo.

Akìwowo's works involved distilling sociological categories from the Ifá literary corpus. In a 1999 response to aspects of the debate (supportive and critical) generated by his works, Akìwowo extended some of his earlier propositions using insights from Bart Kosko's works on Fuzzy Logic.[55] My engagement with Akìwowo is methodological and substantive. I have tried to show that Akìwowo's works was trapped within a functionalist paradigm, when the insights from the Ifá texts and the larger corpus of Yorùbá ontological narratives point in a different direction. While Fuzzy Logic represents an epistemic advance on Aristotelian Logic it does not adequately reflect the epistemic imperatives of the Ifá orature. Rather than 'vague' logic ('everything is a matter of degree', as Kosko puts it) or 'fuzzy set' (i.e., 'a set whose members belong to it to some degree'), I have argued that what the Yoruba ontological discourses yield is the cohering of seemingly contradictory things. I refer to this as the 'mutual self-embeddedness of seemingly contradictory things'. Orúnmìlà, I argued, is not a fuzzy logician.

There are three illustrations from the wider corpus of Yoruba ontological narratives on which I wish to draw. The first concerns ideas of life, death, and existence. Central to Yorùbá cosmology is the idea that conception is not when life begins nor does existence terminate at the point of physical 'departure' (or what in English we would call 'death'). Further those in the 'physical plane of existence' (*Isàlú Ayé*) and those in 'the other plane of existence' (*Ìsàlú Òrun*), are not completely cut off – interaction exists between both planes of existence. In the Ifá texts, accounts of movements between the two planes are common. This account of the cosmology explains the themes of 'ancestral veneration' (not worship) and the idea that they can adjudicate in disputes. The point here is not whether one believes these accounts to be true or not. My concern is this: relative to Aristotelian Logic and Fuzzy Logic, what are the epistemic implications of these Yorùbá ontological narratives? If we take life as an illustration: conception and death will be two sides of a binary divide in Aristotelian Logic, and two ends of a continuum in fuzzy logic, with 0 as the point of conception and 1 as the point of death. However, in the Yorùbá ontology, 0 is not the beginning of life and 1 is not the end. What more, life and 'death' are mutually embedded.

The second concerns an aspect of Yoruba world-sense, and it relates to the idea of *àyànmó* – the choice of life chances before coming to *Ìsàlú Ayé* – is often wrongly translated as 'predestination' – in the Yorùbá cosmology, this is not an immutable destiny. Read with humility, generosity of spirit, and acts of propitiation can make the huge difference. Contingency and your agency are critical elements in how you live your live, both at the individual and collective levels.

The third illustration concerns an encounter between Orúnmìlà and Ògún.[56] Ògún was visiting Orúnmìlà, who asked Ògún to get an item from his reception

room. While in the room Ògún noticed a beautiful young woman. He returned to Orúnmìlà and wondered who the beautiful young woman was. Orúnmìlà said she was his child. After a while, Orúnmìlà asked Ògún to return the item to the room. This time, Ògún noticed an old, wrinkled woman. Ògún returned and asked Orúnmìlà who the woman was. Orúnmìlà replied that it was the same person Ògún saw earlier. How could it be Ògún asked? Orúnmìlà said, 'But it is obvious. Marriage is not only about youth and beauty; it is also about frailty and old age. The two mutually cohere: the one who marries the young beautiful bride also marries the frail, old maid of the future'.

I have used the phrase '*Ti'bi-Ti're Logic*' as an integrative description of the ontological narratives described above. 'T'ibi Ti're' refers to the Yorùbá saying that 't'ibi t'ire l'adá 'lé ayé', or 'the world was made in the cohering of [seemingly] contradictory things'. I believe that the implications for sociological analysis are significant.

First, an affirmation of contingent co-existence of what people might consider 'opposites' provides the basis for a distinct sociological paradigm: one that stresses nuanced discourse rather than binary opposites. It allows a sociological orientation to sociational life that embraces the coexistence of 'opposites' and the open-endedness of outcome in social interaction or between contending social forces. It suggests an analytical framework devoid of teleology or historicism. The cultural, for instance, is embedded with 'contradictory' forces. For instance, when we confront class, ethnic, religious, gender (etc.) our sociological instinct should not be to look for alternative and competing identities. Rather it is in their interpenetration and mutual embeddedness that we understand real, lived existence as multi-layered, 'contradictory' and context-situated. We are not 'either/or'; we are many things embedded in one. The negotiation of multiple identities – sometimes 'contradictory', sometimes not – is something we do everyday. Unlike functionalist discourse, this is not about 'role play'. The salience of one particular identity in one terrain of sociational engagement will not exclude the other identities. Unlike the anarchic posturing of postmodernism, there is epistemology and we have the foundational basis for adjudication among competing claims.

Second is the methodological aspect of *Ti'bi-Ti're* Logic. The currents in western discourse make the distinction between knowledge derived from three sources: senses and experience (Empiricists), reason (Rationalists), and Inspiration or Illumination (Mysticism). The sharpest distinction is drawn between the material (senses and reason) and the non-material (faith/inspiration/illumination) sources of knowledge. Positivistic-empiricist reasoning would discard illumination as metaphysical nonsense: if it is not verifiable it does not exist. To put a Popperian spin on it; if it is not falsifiable it does not qualify for science. We know that this, in fact, is not a useful or an accurate description of actual practice even in the natural sciences. I have used the cases of the discovery of the DNA and the first description of the Haley's Comet to demonstrate the

absurdity of the positivistic claims. While the Aristotelian logic will privilege one or the other, *Ti'bi-Ti're* Logic will argue that the three sources of epistemic vocation are mutually inclusive and interpenetrating. Most scientists will talk about the role of 'serendipity', 'happenstance', or an imaginative 'leap of faith' in explaining their discoveries. Is that not what we would call 'inspiration' or 'illumination'?

The idea of 'the religious' as something hostile to and distinct from 'scientific knowledge' is again a product of the nineteenth century European positivistic modernity. In the case of Sociology, much of this is rooted in Auguste Comte's positivistic pretensions; of sociology as 'social physics'. We should recollect that Comte's anti-clerical position did not lead to the absence of 'religion' – only that it is a religion without God.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I have focussed on epistemic extracts from the Yorùbá ontological discourses only as an illustration of what is feasible when we take our social contexts seriously enough to derive epistemic analysis from them. I am concerned mainly to illustrate the value of endogeneity and a more foundational engagement with global Sociology. A major research project that we will be launching under the African Sociological Association involves diverse ontological discourses across Africa.[57] The conceptual and methodological aspects of that project could be the subject of another lecture.[58]

The capacity for the sociological insights derived from non-western sources to 'talk back to the west' is something that James Spickard[59] demonstrated using classical Confucianism as source codes for an alternative sociology of religion. For instance, not only did Max Weber's typology of power [60] fail to account for China's experience, Weber's sociology of religion fails to account for what is evident in the Western context. Regarding the typology of power, Spickard noted that the Confucian society was 'traditional':

> Not because it adhered to established patterns but because it placed great emphasis on nurturing the web of relationships that constitute both social life and individuals. Weber, with his individualistic bias, did not see this.[61]

Regarding Weber's sociology of religion, Spickard argued that:

> The same theoretical failings that prevented us from seeing the religions of other societies also prevent us from seeing the religions of our own. A Confucian sociology of religion throws light on underappreciated aspects of Western religious life. At the very least, its focus on popular religion and its more collectivist orientation provide a needed corrective to established methods.[62]

4. Sociology and the Challenge of Transformation

Mr Vice-Chancellor, permit me, in the few minutes that I have left, to address two aspects of the challenges of transformation that we face at Rhodes University, and how the sociological enterprise may illuminate our under-

standing. The first concerns institutional culture. The second concerns curriculum transformation.

4.1. 'Institutional culture'[63]

How does Sociology shed light on what we often call 'institutional culture'? A sociological approach will highlight two dimensions of organisations. The first concerns activities and behaviour that derive from an organisation's core mandate. Take away these values and activities and the organisation ceases to belong to that genre. The second aspect concerns the sociational dimensions of organisational life. These constitute the 'protective belt' around the core aspects of an institution's culture; as products of sociational dynamics, within specific spatial and temporal contexts, they mark the organisation out within its genre but they are mutable. It is important to keep in mind that the 'core' is also a product of human agency and that both core and the more mutable sociational practices exist in a dynamic relationship.

Applied to our context, often our discussions on 'institutional culture' are about the 'protective belt'; and are more mutable and disposable than the inertia of memory and tradition suggest. Holding on to the legacy of Rhodes University's origin and the continued embracing of the settler identity have little to do with our core mandate. The claims of having a sub-culture that is 'white and middle class' immanently excludes; it is subliminally hostile to those who are either 'outsiders', recent arrivals, or people of European descent who want nothing to do with such a legacy or are not of middle-class background; it facilitates the continued flourishing of racism among too many of our students and staff. Singing the university anthem in English and Latin has more to do with the inertia of memory than what a university in twenty-first century South Africa should be. Singing the same anthem in English and Xhosa will not threaten our 'credibility' or 'brand' – whatever that means in reality! Critical sociological thinking allows us to separate the chaffs of institutional culture from its sorghum.

4.2. 'Curriculum Transformation'

Concerning the contents of our curriculum, I have highlighted several areas of erasure of memory and closure in what we teach and how we understand knowledge production. A pedagogy that privileges one spatial zone in the globe as the source of knowledge production not only fails in the task of adequately educating our students; it creates schizophrenia in the majority of them – especially those whose progenitors do not derive from Europe or those who find no value in an imperial legacy. It reproduces a form of erasure, in which the non-western collective memories that such students bring to the university are declared as non-knowledge. I do not suggest that we substitute one erasure for another. Weber will be no less relevant to our Sociological education, nor will

Hegel to Philosophy, but there is a world out there that is much more than these, and our students and us, deserve to be exposed to all these knowledge systems.

I have highlighted what can be gleaned from ontological narratives because the foundation of epistemology and philosophy is ontology (descriptive or formal), and every culture, every group of people has its ontological narratives. The task of a curriculum that is fit for post-1994 South Africa is to open the space for diverse ontological narratives, not to insist on erasure or a Euro-ethnic mono-discourse. The works of Julian Cobbing, at the time when it was assumed that you could not do African history, and Dan Wylie's contemporary historical works are important object lessons in what is feasible. We are surrounded by a sea of Xhosa ontological narratives; isn't it time we started treating these as potential source codes for our scholarship?

Notes

1. The first Inaugural Lecture from what is now the Department of Sociology was delivered in 1949 by Professor James Irving. The Fourth and most recent one was delivered by Professor Fred Hendricks. In between the two were Professor Edward Higgins and Professor Jan K. Coetzee.
2. 'Doing sociology' which finds the source codes for its epistemologies in local ontological narratives takes us beyond scholarship as 'translation' or data-gathering for others in a global division of intellectual labour.
3. Dipesh Chakrabarty, 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference.* Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press.
4. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, 2006. 'The Disciplinary, Interdisciplinary and Global Dimensions of African Studies', Keynote Address, *The National Conference on the Strengthening of African Studies in Africa and South Africa.* Department of Education, 26-28 February. CARS, Pretoria.
5. Joseph Ki-Zerbo, 1990. *Educate or Perish: Africa's Impasse and Prospects.* Paris: UNESCO.
6. As Oyewùmí noted in the context of Anthony Kwame Appiah's railing against African scholars who demand endogeneity, what Appiah claims as plurality is the privileging of Euro-nativism. Cf. Oyeronke Oyewùmí, 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.24. For an in-depth discussion of the erasure and colonising epistemology at the heart of Appiah's disguised tirade against Akan matriliny, on which he sought to impose the patriliny of his own English *abusua* see Nkiru Nzegwu, 2005. 'Questions of Identity and Inheritance: A Critical Review of Kwame Anthony Appiah's *In My Father's House*'. In Oyeronke Oyewùmí (ed.), 2005, *African Gender Studies: A Reader.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, originally published in *Hypatia* 11 (1): 175-200, Winter, 1996.
7. Jimi Adesina, 2005. 'Sociology Beyond Despair: recovery of nerve, endogeneity, and epistemic intervention', Presidential Address, 2005 SASA Congress. Polokwane, University of Limpopo.

8. Cf: Martin Albrow, 1987. 'Editorial: Sociology for one world', *International Sociology,* Vol. 2, No.1; Margaret Archer, 1991. 'Sociology for one world: unity and diversity – Presidential Address', *International Sociology,* Vol. 6, No.2.
9. Jimi Adesina, 2002. 'Sociology and Yorùbá Studies: epistemic intervention or doing sociology in the vernacular', *African Sociological Review,* Vol. 5, No.2. For the extended version of the paper see J Adesina, 2000. 'Sociology and Yoruba Studies', *Annals of the Social Science Academy of Nigeria*, No.13.
10. Archie Mafeje, 2000. 'Africanity: A Combative Ontology', *CODESRIA Bulletin* No. 1, p.67.
11. Mafeje, *ibid*, p. 66.
12. Cited in Mafeje, op cit., p. 67.
13. Jimi Adesina, 2005. 'Realising the Vision: the discursive and institutional challenges of becoming an African University', *African Sociological Review,* Vol.9 No.2, 23-39; Adesina, op cit., 'Sociology Beyond Despair'.
14. Shula Marks, 2000. 'The Role of the Humanities in Higher Education in South Africa', Lecture 1: *Higher Education Lecture Series 2000.* Pretoria: Ministry of Education.
15. C. Wright Mills, 1959/1970. *The Sociological Imagination.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
16. Anthony Giddens, 1996. *In Defence of Sociology: essays, interpretations and rejoinder.* Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 3.
17. Giddens, op cit. See chapter 6 of the book on 'The Future of Anthropology'.
18. Ibn Khaldûn, 'Adb al-Rahmân, 1378/1981. *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldûn*. Beirut: Dar al-Qalam, trans. Franz Rosenthal. Ibn Khaldûn, `Adb al-Rahmân, 1967. *Ibn Khaldûn: The Muqadimmah – An Introduction to History,* 3 Vols, trans. Franz Rosenthal. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul. (credit: Sayed Farid Alatas [2006].
19. *Muqaddimah li al-Kitâb al-'Ibar.*
20. Sayed Farid Alatas, 2006. 'A Khaldunian Exemplar for a Historical Sociology for the South', *Current Sociology* Vol.54, No.3. (May): 397-411.
21. Mahmoud Dhaouadi, 1990. 'Ibn Khaldun: the founding father of Eastern Sociology', *International Sociology,* Vol.5 No.3: 319-335.
22. Steve Bruce, 1999. *Sociology: a very short introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 3.
23. Bruce, op cit. p. 4.
24. Personal communication (e-mail), Adesogan: 9 Jan 2006; 23 Jan 2006; 13 July 2006; 23 July 2006.
25. E. Kayode Adesogan, 1987. *Illumination, Wisdom and Development Through Chemistry.* Inaugural Lecture 1987. Ibadan: University of Ibadan, p. 15.
26. Adesogan, ibidem.
27. E. Kayode Adesogan, 1987. *Illumination, Wisdom and Development Through Chemistry.* Inaugural Lecture 1987. Ibadan: University of Ibadan.

28. Shepi Mati, 2005. 'Who Was Alfred? A native gazing at Rhodes University from Makana's kop', *African* S*ociological Review.* Vol.9 No.1: 196-210, p. 205.
29. Paulin Hountondji, ed.,1997. *Endogenous Knowledge: research trails.* Dakar: CODESRIA Books.
30. Extroversion, Hountondji argued, must be understood as immanent in colonial conquest and current location of Africa in the global economy and knowledge production systems.
31. Cf. F.T. Hendricks, 2003. *Does the South African Constitution legitimise Colonial Land Alienation? A Sociology of Nation and Identity: an inaugural lecture delivered at Rhodes University on Wednesday 17 September 2003.* Grahamstown: Rhodes University.
32. Jimi O. Adesina, 'African Sociology', *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (2nd edition), Macmillan Reference (forthcoming, 2007).
33. Issa Shivji, 2005. *Pan-Africanism or Imperialism: Unity and Struggle towards a New Democratic Africa.* 2nd Billy Dudley Memorial Lecture, University of Nsukka, 27th July.
    The conceptual confusion is evident in contemporary South African debate that mistakes the African National Congress (ANC), for the vehicle of a *nationalist* project similar to the English and Afrikaner nationalism that underpinned colonialism and apartheid.
34. Most those involved were originally trained as *anthropologists* – what else? One of the few exceptions to this rule was N. A Fadipe, whose PhD thesis was submitted in 1939 at the University of London. Cf. N. A. Fadipe, 1939/1970. *The Sociology of the Yoruba.* [ed., with introduction by F. O. Okediji and O. O. Okediji], Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press.
35. Zeleza, op cit.
36. Ari Sitas, 2006. 'The African Renaissance Challenge and Sociological Reclamations in the South', *Current Sociology*, Vol.54 No.3: 357-380.
37. I have pointed at the rapid uptake of the idea of 'Public Sociology' in our community as the latest example of this type of scholarship, even when it should be obvious that it represents a refraction of global sociological practices through the prism and historical experience of American sociology. In South Africa, public sociology *was* policy sociology, and the claims for Professional Sociology against Policy, Critical or Public Sociologies not only misrepresent the US experience – where much of the classical Industrial Sociology texts were policy studies done for US firms – have the potential of undermining efforts at democratising the intellectual space within our universities.
38. Archie Mafeje, 1997. 'Who are the makers and objects of Anthropology? A critical comment on Sally Falk Moore's *Anthropology and Africa*', *African Sociological Review* Vol.1, No.1: 1-15. See Vol.2, No.1 edition of *ASR* for the firestorm that Mafeje's critique evoked.
39. Bernard Magubane, 1971. 'A critical look at the indices used in the study of social change in Colonial Africa', *Current Anthropology,* XII, 4-5, pp.419-445.

40. O. Onoge, 1971/1977. 'Revolutionary imperatives in African Sociology', in P. C W. Gutkind & Peter Waterman, eds., *African Social Studies: a Radical Reader.* London: Heinemann, fn.27, p. 43.
41. 'While neo-colonialism can be rightly regarded as a revision of forms and methods of control to maintain the old dependency relations, it is equally important to bear in mind that it is *within the competence* of independent governments to counteract such manoeuvres', Archie Mafeje, 1973/1977. 'Neo-colonialism, state capitalism, or revolution', in Gutkind & Waterman, op cit. p. 412.
42. 'Amilcar Cabral? Wasn't he an agronomist?', I hear you say. As I argued in my *2005 Presidential Address* to SASA, Cabral was not a professional sociologist but neither was Karl Marx or even Max Weber except for a very brief period of nine months. Cabral's works, as with Frantz Fanon – a psychiatrist – are profoundly sociological.
43. Amilcar Cabral, 1964/1969. 'Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea', in *Revolution in Guinea: an African People's Struggle (Selected texts by Amilcar Cabral).* London: Stage 1, pp. 46-61. Amilcar Cabral, 1966/1979. 'The Weapon of Theory: presuppositions and objectives of national liberation in relation to social structure', in Amilcar Cabral, 1979. *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings (texts selected by the PAIGC); trans.* Michael Wolfers, New York: Monthly Review Press, pp. 119-137.
44. Cabral (1966/1979), op cit. p. 125.
45. Cabral, ibidem.
46. Archie Mafeje, 1991. *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations: the case of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms.* Dakar: CODESRIA Books, p. iii.
47. Ruth First, 1970. *The barrel of a gun: the politics of coup d'etat in Africa.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
48. Ekeh, P. P., 1975, 'Colonialism and the two Publics in Africa: a theoretical statement', *Comparative Studies of Society and History,* Vol.17, No.1.
49. Ifi Amadiume, 1987. *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: gender and sex in an African Society.* London: Zed Books.
50. Oyeronke Oyewùmí, 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourse.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
51. Oyewùmí, op cit. p. xi.
52. Oyewùmí, op cit., p. 17.
53. Cf. Oyèronké Oyewùmí, ed., 2003. *African Women & Feminism.* Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, and Oyèronké Oyewùmí, ed., 2005. *African Gender Studies: A Reader.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan. I witnessed, first hand, the shock and incredulity that followed Oyewùmí's solo evening session at the SASA Congress in Polokwane in 2005. It was so disruptive of received wisdom that some thought it was an invention of its own, yet both her book and Amadiume's won several international awards and was widely acclaimed to be extremely well-researched. In spite of what I would consider my depth of understanding of Yoruba cultural

milieu, I find Oyewùmí's work astonishingly brilliant, well-researched, and theoretically rigorous.

54. Jimi Adesina, 2001, op cit.

55. Bart Kosko, 1994. *Fuzzy Thinking: the new science of Fuzzy Logic.* London: Flamingo.

56. Orúnmìlà is the mythical founding figure of the Ifá divinity. Ògún is the *òrìsà* of hunters and metalworkers. I would argue that *òrìsà* does not adequately translate into 'god' in English. In Yoruba cosmology, *Olódùmarè* is the supreme diety. It affirms monotheism. Ò*rìsà* by contrast are often human-beings whose 'super-human' deeds mark them out after they pass on to or return to *Ìsàlú Òrún*. They are closer to the concept of 'patron-saints,' more *messenger beings* than 'gods', and serve as intermediating agents between humans and *Olódùmarè*. A more dramatic erroneous translation, involving the imposing of an alien cosmology on the Yorùbá world-sense is *Èsù-Elégbera* which early Christian missionaries and Bible translations substituted for 'Satan'. Yet *Èsù* is more a companion and interlocutor for other *òrìsà*, a trickster, than 'evil' or satanic. More recent versions of the Yorùbá translation of the Bible have corrected this by using 'Satani' to indicate 'Satan' rather than *Èsù*. Unfortunately, 200 years of mis-representation has left the messenger-being with a reputation that is completely devoid of what one can discern from *Odù Ifá* or any other Yorùbá ontological discourse (or orature).

57. An important methodological issue regarding oral sources concerns their reliability – cf. J.F. Ade-Ajayi, 2000. 'The Ibadan School of History', in Toyin Falola, ed., 2000. *Tradition and Change in Africa: the Essays of J. F. Ade-Ajayi.* (Ch. 24). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, and Ari Sitas, 2006. op cit. These concerns are far less onerous when we approach oral sources as aspects of *ontological narratives*, rather than sources for history-writing or historiography. In the case of *Odù Ifá* the concerns are even less so – see Wande Abimbola, 1976. *Ifá: an exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus.* Ibadan: OUP Nigeria – for the intensity and length of the training of Ifá priest-scholars, and the emphasis on accuracy in reciting the verses. We are also able to check on the accuracy by comparing their rendering in different sites – from Brazil to different sites in West Africa. Hountondji used 'endogenous knowledge' rather than 'indigenous knowledge' to account for the extent to which these knowledge systems would have changed in response to external (non-indigenous) influences.

58. Further research, since the publication of the work I cited above, suggests that Kosko's claim that Buddhist ontology is the premise of fuzzy logic is misplaced. From the Cherokee and Sioux of the North American plains to Korea, the nineteenth century 'scientist' thinking, which denigrates the non-sensual bases of knowledge, is in fact the aberration. From Chinese notions of Yin-Yang to the ontological narratives in the Nguni contexts, a common thread is much closer to what I outlined in the Yorùbá ontological discourses, and very distinct from what is normally ascribed to Aristotelian logic of binary discourse or Cartesian dualism.

59. James V. Spickard, 1998. 'Ethnocentrism, Social Theory and Non-Western Sociologies of Religion', *International Sociology,* Vol. 13 (2): 173-194.

60. Traditional, Charismatic, and the Rational-Legal.
61. Spickard, op cit., p. 188.
62. Spickard, ibidem.
63. This section benefits from the version of my paper 'Realising the Vision', that was presented at *Reinventing Higher Education* Conference held at Rhodes University (6-9 December 2004).

African Sociological Review, 10, (2), 2006, pp.151-163.

RESEARCH REPORTS

Researching children: Studying agents or victims? Methodological and ethical difficulties in a study among children and young people in South Africa

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Introduction

All research has to deal with professional codes of conduct, but research among children raises some particular issues (James et al. 1998: 187), which stem from the way childhood is perceived and understood. Until the 1970s, a developmental approach to childhood was dominant (James & Prout, 1990: 10) in which development was seen as a linear progression, with each stage being more complex than the previous one (Archard, 1993: 33). Childhood was considered as a stage to adulthood and marked by incompetence and innocence. This social-development discourse was embedded in practices and institutions, and stemmed from psychology.

From the 1970s, sociologists started to move away from these rather psycho-biological explanations of childhood. There was a growing awareness of the various constructions of 'childhood' in different periods of history and in different parts of the world (James & James, 1999: 190). The dominant perspective in contemporary sociology is that childhood is socially constructed, that children are social actors in shaping their childhood experiences, and that there is diversity in childhoods. Childhood is no longer seen as 'becoming' but as 'being' (James et al., 1998: 207). This means that childhood is not understood as merely a stage to adulthood. Rather, children are seen as social actors who can be valued in their own right.

Little research has been done into the needs of children from their own perspectives. Children have not often been the unit of analysis in social research, but have usually been addressed in terms of their relationship to social institutions such as households or families (Prout, 2002: 69). However, there is a growing awareness of the importance of listening to children, as demonstrated by the many children's forums that have been established. Many organisations dealing with children refer to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). According to the UNCRC (1989),

children have the right to participate as full members of society and their voices should be heard (article 12). Participation of children has been identified as one of the crucial principles essential to achieving the rights set out in the Convention, because when children are asked about what matters to them they will often highlight other issues than those emphasised by adults.

Various authors have written about new research techniques to study children and childhood inspired by these new views. However, most of this research has been conducted in the western world. As I will discuss in this paper, some of these research techniques did not suit the context of my research. Besides, some authors argue that childhood researchers need not adopt different research techniques per se (Christensen, 2004; James et al., 1998) but rather need to reflect on what it means to be an adult or a child (ibid).

Ethical issues following from this new view on childhood have received less attention and existing ethical guidelines for conducting research with children are based on developmental discourses. A number of authors, therefore, argue that ethics should be the focus of new studies of childhood (Christensen & Prout, 2002). Christensen and Prout (2002) argue that ethical issues in studying children as agents should depart from conceptions of 'ethical symmetry' between children and adults in which 'the researcher takes as his or her starting point the view that the ethical relationship between researcher and informant is the same whether he or she conducts research with adults or with children' (Ibid: 482). In this paper, I discuss ethical difficulties that arise when one conducts research informed by the view that children are capable actors, a view that often clashes with existing ethical guidelines in childhood research. Also, local perceptions of childhood and contextual factors, such as poverty, can cause further ethical and methodological difficulties. In this paper, I focus on ethical issues but also briefly discuss methodological matters, as these are inter-twined. I start with background information on my research and my role as a researcher.

Background to the research

The research dealt with coping strategies and characteristics of child-headed households in one of the 'black townships' in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Port Elizabeth is the fourth largest city in South Africa, and is situated in the Eastern Cape where the majority of black people are Xhosa. The number of HIV-infections is highest among the black population in South Africa, and results in many deaths, especially in the 25 to 35 age group. Many people in that age group have children, many of whom consequently are orphaned. Many orphaned children are taken care of by grandmothers and other family members, but the capacity and willingness of the extended family is lessening, with the result that children form households on their own. Children and young people living in child-headed households (CHHs) were the main informants in

this study. CHHs are a relatively new phenomenon and are mostly regarded as deviant living arrangements for children and young people because they clash with dominant beliefs about what childhood should be like. Children and young people have to take over 'adult' roles and responsibilities, such as caring for younger siblings. The ages of children and young people in my study ranged from 13 to 18. A non-governmental organisation (NGO), based in one of the townships of Port Elizabeth, helped me to gain access to orphaned or abandoned children. The NGO is a South African and USA collaboration, which will be referred to as SAU. Young adults from the community work as counsellors for children in need of emotional support. Three of their counsellors participated in my research. They worked as interpreters and helped me find CHHs. The research involved ethnographic fieldwork for one year, and the children involved were visited twice a week. The purpose of the visits was to interview the children about their daily lives, who they visited, what and where they had eaten, what they had done over the weekend, and what their worries were. I always visited the children with the same interpreter, in order to encourage a relationship of trust.

My role as researcher

When doing research with children one needs to reflect on one's role as researcher and one's conceptions about childhood. From earlier research, I was aware that Xhosa culture is very hierarchically organised, especially when it comes to age differences (van Dijk, 2002). Traditionally, children cannot directly confront an older person. They have to do as they are told, and also show respect to older women or men by calling them 'mama' or 'tata'. In my research, I viewed children and young people as social actors, both influenced by and influencing their environment. During my fieldwork I tried as much as possible to have the children and young people wield their power, as will be discussed in a later section. Nevertheless, I discovered that there were large differences in authority between older and younger people, which made it difficult for younger people to wield their power.

It is sometimes suggested that fieldworkers should adopt the role of 'the least adult', which means complete involvement in the children's world (James et al., 1998: 183; Christensen, 2004: 166). However, according to James et al., (1998: 183) it is not possible for adults 'to pass unnoticed' in the company of children as differences in age, size and authority always intervene. Moreover, there may be benefits to maintaining differences between the child and the researcher (James et al., 1998: 183). The researcher can behave in a non-child like way and ask ignorant questions. Hence, researchers need not pretend to be children to argue from their point of view (ibid).

During my fieldwork, I always introduced myself as a research student from abroad in order not to raise high expectations of support. Moreover, I explained

that because I was from a different culture I might ask silly questions, or say something inappropriate. I asked them to always explain these to me, so I could learn from them. My whiteness influenced how people perceived me. Often community members mistook me for a social worker when I visited children. Many people also perceived me as wealthy. This resulted in neighbours visiting the children after I had left to ask what they had received from me, or neighbouring children coming to the house asking for food.

In what follows, I will discuss ethical principles based on dominant views of children as powerless and vulnerable, and ethics that depart from seeing children as not necessarily needing a different ethical approach than adults.

Dominant and Alternative Ethical Principles in the Study of Childhood

All research involves observing ethical standards. However, in researching children and young people it is argued that extra precautions are needed (Schenk & Williamson, 2005). It is argued the most important principle when doing research is always to put the best interest of the child first (ibid). The problem with this, of course, is who decides what the best interests of the child are. Ethical considerations in research with children depart from the assumption that children are more or less powerless in relation to adults. Schenk et al., suggest three fundamental duties or responsibilities that the researcher has in addressing power differences: to seek individual informed consent, to protect participants from harm and increase possible benefits, and to ensure that the benefits and burdens of research are distributed (Schenk & Williamson, 2005: 4).

There is always the need to get informed consent from respondents or participants when doing research. The concept of informed consent has both a moral/ethical component and a juridical one (van Gog & Reysoo, 2005: 4). The juridical component represents the formalised form of morals and is based on principles related to rights. These rights are protection of integrity, safeguarding of privacy, openness, and right of self-determination (ibid: 8). The moral/ethical component of informed consent is mainly based on two principles: autonomy of a person and beneficence (van Gog & Reysoo, 2005; Schenk et al., 2005). The latter principle means the researcher must ensure that participants receive maximum benefit from the research while being sure to do no harm (Schenk, 2005). Autonomy of the participant means that he or she has free will to participate, not participate or stop participating.

Are these principles of informed consent usable with research with children? Christensen and Prout (2002) argue that research should depart from the view that the same ethical standards should be used with adults and children. However, children are often legal minors with little decision-making power. This means in practice firstly that consent is needed from their parents or guardians. However, obtaining consent from parents or caregivers seems

contradictory to the right of children to participate. Also, if consent from adults is required first, certainty of choice from the children cannot always be guaranteed because children are subject to sets of power relations, such as in school or at home (James et al., 1998: 187). Hence, it is possible that the child consents because of fear of sanction.

The second issue in ethics is that of protection. Children should be protected from harm caused by research. Harmful results are, for example, distress caused by emotional questions or children disclosing sensitive information. A possible dilemma, following from this, is whether or not to intervene when a child discloses that he or she is at some sort of risk. Some argue that adult researchers have a moral obligation to protect children and should thus intervene, even if this causes losing access to or the trust of the children (James et al., 1998: 188). James (ibid) warns that overemphasis on protection can result in excluding children from research altogether. The researcher should also maximise possible benefits. However, in most social research, the outcomes will not directly benefit participants. In my study for example, the possible benefits would be the eventual design of support structures that correspond to the needs and strengths of children living in CHHs. However, it is unlikely that children participating in my study will benefit.

The meanings of childhood are contextual and therefore differences between children and adults also vary. Christensen and Prout (2002: 482) argue that research practices should correspond with children's experiences, values and everyday routines. Also, the researcher has to take into account the local perceptions of childhood. During my fieldwork, I struggled with ethical principles and local perceptions of childhood as they often clashed with my intention of viewing the children and young people as social agents. My research relationship with Mona serves as an illustration of how things can go wrong.

Ethical difficulties: Mona's story

Mona is 16 years old and has lived alone since her father died four years ago. After her father's death, family members wanted to sell the house in which she had been living with her father. With a neighbour's help, the councillor, who represents the community in city management structures dealt with the matter and helped to prevent that from happening. As a result, her family told her not to expect any support from them.

When I first met Mona, she had been sleeping with a neighbouring family for a few weeks as she did not feel safe in her own house at night. According to her, some men knew that she was a child living alone and 'wanted to rape' her. The family started adoption procedures so they could receive a foster grant to support Mona. After I met Mona for the first time, I went to the family she was staying with to introduce myself and explain the research. I did not ask their

permission as Mona had already agreed to participate in the research. I always, at Mona's request, met her at her own house or at my interpreter's house.

I interviewed Mona a few times after she started talking less and seeming upset, but she did not want to talk about it. My interpreter, whom I refer to as Leah, thought it had something to do with the family she was staying with. They applied for a foster grant, but the translator thought Mona did not want to stay with them.

Mona never wanted us to talk with the family with whom she was staying and we had only spoken with them on the occasion when we explained the research project. One day we went to their house to talk with Mona. Mona seemed not to want to talk with us, and the family was upset with me. We went into the house to talk with them; they were angry and wanted to know what we were talking about during the interviews. I explained that I did not want to talk with them about the interviews without Mona's permission. They insisted, however, that they wanted to know exactly what we were talking about or they would not let Mona talk to us anymore. Mona was upset as well and I asked Mona to talk with us and the family to explain the interviews but she did not want that. I suggested that we stop the interviews as they had created problems for her and she agreed.

I talked with Leah who thought that Mona was not happy about staying with the family and suggested that they must have something to hide. After a few weeks, Mona wanted to meet us at the office of the NGO where Leah worked. She seemed happy to see us and started to apologise for the last time we had seen her: 'the way I talked to you, I didn't mean, I was under pressure, they insult me, use vulgar language, and ask me what we talk about... I like what we are doing, because I think the thing we were doing, in the long run it's going to help me... they always talk funny to me so I regret living with them now...' After a while, Mona was crying. She wanted to continue seeing us, but was not allowed to. She did not want to stay with the family any more, but if she left who would help her then?

Later that week Mona met with the interpreter and told her that she did not want to live with that family any more, and a few days later she moved back to her own house. After Mona moved into her own house, I started meeting her on regular basis again. Problems did not end however. Because Mona was without support now, she started to rely heavily on Leah and me. We tried to convince her to see social workers but she did not want to. Leah told me Mona was lying a great deal during the interviews. For example, Mona repeatedly told me she did not have anything to eat, and did not receive any food from anybody. However, the interpreter lived nearby and often gave her bread. Mona's assumed dishonesty annoyed Leah, and sometimes the interviews resulted in Leah giving her lectures in Xhosa. I could not follow what they were talking about, but from what Leah explained me they had a strong pedagogical character. This did not contribute positively to our relationship. My fieldwork came close to an

end, and in the short time left to us, it was not possible to restore a relationship of trust.

Dealing with ethics in a study of child-headed households

Luckily, the story with Mona is an exception and my other research relationships with children were far less problematic. However, most issues that arose in my relationship with Mona were, at some level, present throughout my fieldwork. They result from contradictory views on childhood. As my study takes its point of departure from the view that children are social actors and capable of making their own decisions, it should be guided by ethical principles based on that view. Nevertheless, local views also need to be considered. In the following, I discuss how I dealt with the main issues in existing ethics in research and local perceptions on childhood during my study.

Informed Consent

As discussed, according to dominant ethical guidelines, parents or caregivers should give consent first when doing research among children. In a study among CHHs, though, parents or caregivers are absent. As I discussed in the story of Mona, the foster family felt passed over because I did not consult them. They prevented Mona from speaking with us unless I told them what we talked about. Because Mona did not want me to talk with them, we decided to stop the interviewing as the family started to bully her. At first, I thought I had made the mistake of not obtaining their consent before speaking with Mona. However, Mona showed that she wished to participate on her own free will when she decided to meet us as the office.

Neighbours, family members or volunteers are thus involved in the lives of children living in CHHs. Often it was precisely these people who introduced us to the children after they heard about the research. Although I did not ask their permission directly, they did serve as 'gatekeepers'. It is therefore possible that children agreed to participate in the research because it was introduced by an older person in their community.

In order to make sure participation was voluntary, I viewed consent as a continuous process, and mostly it worked as follows. The first time I met the children I would briefly explain the research and myself to them and ask them to tell me about their living situation and the composition of the household. If the composition of the household was suitable for the research, I would tell them more about it. This entailed explaining that my research was about children in situations like theirs; that I wanted to learn from their experiences about how they dealt with difficulties in their lives; that no help should be expected to come from the research; that participation was and remained voluntary and that they could stop participating if they wanted to; and that information was confidential.[1] I would ask if we could make an appointment for

the first interview. In this way the children had a chance to think and talk with others about it.

At the start of the first and following interviews, I always asked if they still wanted to participate in the research. In the first interview, I asked them to tell me what they thought the research was about. This way I gained some insights in what they understood or not from my earlier explanations, and we discussed it more thoroughly.

The children always decided when and where the next meeting would take place. Each meeting I would ask them if they felt like talking to me, or whether they felt too tired or were occupied with other things. This way, I thought that if they did not feel like talking to me they could say that they were busy with homework, for example. Occasionally children cancelled our appointment for that reason, and we made a new appointment.

Protection

The second ethical issue in research with children is that of protection. It is argued that children need protection in the research relationship. This is based on dominant views of children as vulnerable and powerless (James et al., 1998: 187). Also, contextual factors can make children even more vulnerable. Children possibly reveal sensitive information that puts them at risk. In my study, the information could be sensitive in the sense that it could cause emotional distress. Many children had recently experienced their parent's death or been abandoned by them, and interview questions would relate to that. Mona got into trouble with her foster family because of my research. One could argue that I should have protected her from that by consulting the family. However, I view young people as capable social actors and I had to respect Mona's choice. Nevertheless, my suggestion to Mona that we stop our conversations was also motivated by protection. I wanted to protect her from getting into more trouble with her foster family.

Another issue related to this is the ethnographic nature of my research. The research aimed at close interaction with the children involved, over long periods. The relationships expected from these interactions would end at the end of the research. People working at at the NGO involved thought the relationships established should not end when I went back to the Netherlands. They felt the children had dealt enough with loss and abandonment, and therefore the relationships should continue. For that reason, I worked with their counsellors. Children who wished could be involved in the counselling programme at the SAU. In this way, a hopefully continuous relationship was established, and children could get counselling in dealing with emotional problems. Moreover, the counsellors were experienced in working with children who had similar problems (poverty, loss of parents), and their views and participation have been helpful during the research.

Issues of power

At the start of the study, I felt the research created high expectations of support in the children. During my fieldwork, this worried me, as I was not able to do much for them. I discussed the issue with SAU, and we agreed the children should receive some incentive when participating in the research. I started by giving small financial and material incentives to the children. The interpreters in my study thought I should bring food instead of money when I visited the children. They felt the children would not spend the money wisely, but, for instance, buy candy with it. In my opinion, children should be able to decide what they needed the most. Nevertheless, at many occasions we also brought food, such as E-pap.[2]

With some children, I became more and more involved in their lives. Because I was working closely with counsellors from an NGO, this meant that we sometimes intervened in children's lives. This always happened with the children's agreement. Examples are going to a hospital with a sick young woman, contacting the Department of Social Work for advice, paying school fees for two children, going to the police station when one child was in trouble, and bringing some children in contact with organisations or people that could help them.

It is sometimes argued that paying respondents to participate in research further widens the power differences. However, in research, relationships of trust require a level of reciprocity (Lammers, 2005: 60-61). In my view, not supporting the children in my research would have been unethical. Besides, I felt that this form of reciprocity lessened the power differences between me and the children.

A second argument used against paying respondents is that people may only participate in research for that reward. However, only after children expressed interest in participating did we talk about incentives. In my experience, also, many children thought reciprocity was necessary in our relationship. This becomes clear in the answer of a young man, David (16), when I asked if he felt more obliged to participate in the study because I was helping him: 'also I am helping you... we are helping each other'. He was aware that he was helping me with the study. In the last conversation we had, he told me that after a while he had become tired of our conversations and therefore did not show up at our appointments any more. However, a friend of him told him that if he did not show up at the meetings, he would not get any help. He decided then to continue participating: '...I said to him I'll hold on, maybe I will find something from them...'

It may not have been clear to the children what I, as a researcher, would achieve from the research. However, it was clear that I would gain something, as David puts it: '... Keep it up, don't get tired [...] when you persevere you will get something at the end...' When I asked him what I would get in the end, he replied: '... you know what you are going to get at the end, you know...'

Supporting the children that participated in the research was also in accordance with the local perception of 'the spirit of ubuntu'. In Xhosa culture, ubuntu is an important part of community life. 'Ubuntu' is derived from the expression 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' [a person is a person because of other people / a person can only be a person through others]. This means that one person's personhood and identity are fulfilled and complemented by the other person's (Mtuze, 2004: 103). 'Ubuntu' has been translated as 'humanness', 'generosity' or 'philanthropy', but none of these seems to grasp the concept as it involves 'sharing yourself, your humanity with the other person first' (Mtuze, 2004). In practice having 'ubuntu' means sharing your wealth with poorer members of the community. You are expected to do what is in your power to help a person in need. Being a white person in a black community meant that people saw me as a wealthy person.

Besides the support discussed above, I asked the children if they wanted to meet other children in similar situations to discuss their problems. Most of them liked the idea, and we established a discussion group that met twice a month. One of the counsellors facilitated the group. Although not everybody showed up every meeting, the group has continued to meet until now. The research has thus continued to benefit the respondents.

Research techniques

In my study, I chose to use a range of research methods (one-to-one interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires), as all children are different and feel comfortable with different techniques. To help children express their ideas, various stimulus material such as vignettes, photo's, and drawings were used. Respondents also took pictures themselves of family, friends, and their neighbourhood. Besides my getting a better representation of the social relationships of the respondents, taking pictures could be an enjoyable element for children involved.

It is argued that with group interviews the adult-child relationship is less influential than in one-to-one interviewing. However, in the context of my research this was very difficult to realise. The first difficulty was in finding an available venue accessible for all the children participating. Children do not have money to take a minibus, and do not want to travel too far. The second issue is presence at meetings. Many times during my fieldwork, children were not present at the time or place where we were supposed to meet for interviews. There were several reasons for this. Most children in this study did not have a diary or a watch; they simply forgot. For adults and children, when there was something more pressing than the interview, they did not show up. For the children, this could range from school duties, being sent somewhere by neighbours, to having the opportunity to go to the swimming pool on a hot day.

To prevent 'no-show', I always wrote down the date and time of our next meeting on a piece of paper with my phone number for the participants. Although most participants would be unlikely to have money to call, it was always possible to send a free 'call me back' with one of the South African cellular phone services. Also, whenever possible, one of my interpreters would send someone to remind respondents of our appointment a day in advance.

With all the children I had one-to-one interviews with the help of an interpreter. The interviews mostly had a conversational form, meaning that children could discuss the subjects they wanted to discuss. After some children and I got to know each other better, we had fun during the interviews. Because I asked them so many 'silly' questions about the how and why of some culturally bounded activities, they also started to ask me questions about my culture.

It was not always easy to talk with young children. I discussed this issue a great deal with the counsellors. According to them it is sometimes difficult because in their culture 'children are not used to talk about their feelings...they don't learn that...' Therefore, I asked children and young people to make drawings, pictures and life maps. Nevertheless, with most children the interviewing worked well. After a couple of meetings, most children seemed comfortable talking with me and often started talking about subjects related to my research without my asking them directly. I often discussed the story or example of another child in a similar situation. From their reaction I could learn if things like that happened more often, and ask them what they would do if something like that happened to them.

During my fieldwork, I realised that not all the intended methods were working for all participants. This suggests that there are no special research methods suitable to the study of children. Christensen (2004) also argues that in research with children different research methods to working with adults are not required. Rather, the researcher needs to adopt practices which resonate with children's own concerns. Children are individuals, and methods should thus correspond with a child's own interests and abilities. David, aged 16, for instance, directed most conversations to a more serious level. After the usual small talk, he often started talking about a research related subject. Anika, aged 18, is a young woman who has been interviewed before by a newspaper. Unlike David, Anika liked a more casual approach. At the first interview, she told me she did not like to be interviewed in a conventional manner, where I asked questions and she gave answers. She wanted us to have conversations instead, preferably with some background music. Two brothers (12 and 16), always seem to enjoy our conversations, but they mostly tried to direct the topic to mobile phones, music artists, or TV shows.

The photo interviewing worked the best with the two brothers (12 and 16). They made pictures of important people in their lives, and of favourite items of their deceased mother's. One young man (18) tried to make pictures twice, with two disposable cameras. Both times the pictures failed. It is possible that the

children had never used a camera before, and therefore this method failed. However, they all did enjoy it, which suggests that I should have made more effort in showing them how to use a camera. Therefore, in the follow up study, I explained how to make pictures thoroughly to all children involved. This time, most pictures worked out quite well. The children presented their pictures in the discussion group. They explained what the pictures were about or who presented the person in the picture. Some pictures realistically showed what life is like in the townships.

Working with local interpreters helped me during my fieldwork. They prevented me from getting lost, and made me feel safer. They translated Xhosa into English when the children did not speak English, but they also often explained cultural phenomena. However, our views on children and childhood, and ideas on possible interventions often differed. In such cases, we would often both compromise. For instance, I wanted to pay participants financial incentives, but the interpreters doubted if the children would spend the money wisely. Therefore, we also sometimes brought them food. When we asked the children what they did with the money they usually said that they had bought food.

Conclusions and Discussion

In this paper, I have shown that existing ethical principles in child research often clash with viewing children as social actors. Therefore, researchers in the study of childhood need new ethical guidelines. Seeing children as capable human beings means respecting their ability to make their own decisions. In many cases it may not be possible for children to participate in research against their parents' or caregivers' will. It is, however, possible to diminish the possibility of children participating because of fear of sanction, through making informed consent continuous.

To reduce possible power differences in research with children, one needs to provide the children with as much autonomy as possible. In my study this meant always letting the children decide where, when and how the interview would take place. By presenting the research with a clear reciprocal character, power differences are also diminished and beneficial to the research.

In my opinion, giving support to children in need is an ethical necessity. Nonetheless, during my fieldwork, I was also aware of the possible negative effects for the children. For instance, the director of SAU warned me of not making the children too dependent on me because I was leaving. By my establishing a discussion group and getting the children involved in the counselling program at SAU, support became more continuous.

Although the effects on the children were of first concern, I also had to take account of the effects it would have on the research. Mostly I was afraid that my assisting these children would make them obliged to participate in the research.

However, as discussed, some children clearly indicated they did not wish to continue. In addition, the children that received most support were the children that were had already been involved in the study for a number of months. Therefore, it is not likely that children felt more obliged to participate when receiving material support from me.

In my study, local perceptions of children and childhood that were different to my own, and contextual factors influenced the research greatly. I had to deal with the perceptions of my interpreters and the perceptions of community members involved in the children's lives. Moreover, most children living in CHHs are extremely poor and have lost their parents and therefore continuous material and emotional support had to be part of the study.

Because all circumstances differ, a set of ethical values should be developed with room for flexibility (Christensen & Prout, 2002). In my view, there should be flexibility that allows for compromise between local perceptions and circumstances and the researcher's own views and ideas.

Notes

1. It was explained that the information they gave me would be used in a report with pseudonyms for their names and the location.
2. A pre-cooked porridge with a high level of calories and vitamins.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Adam Ashforth. *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. 2005. 396 pp.

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I must admit, I started off determined not to like this book. Firstly, I found Ashforth's previous work, *Madumo a Man Bewitched* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press and Cape Town, David Philip, 2000), to be superficial and self-promoting on the part of its author. Secondly, I am deeply sceptical of scholars from overseas who find it necessary to begin their works by expounding on the degree to which they have become 'sons' and 'brothers' to African families (p. ix). Despite the degree to which they may become embroiled in the daily lives of their 'informants', the latter remain just that. Admittedly, the researchers may develop close relationships with, and a genuine empathy for, these cultural brokers and interpreters. However, out of their fieldwork periods, they return home to their lives and families in the United States or in Europe. Africa is so far away. Now acknowledged 'experts' on Africa, they interpret 'us'– the African 'other' – for their 'home' audiences. They may try to suspend disbelief and understand what they call 'witchcraft', and explore its consequences, while doing fieldwork. However, on their return to the States or Europe, they do not have to live with the local consequences of the perceived forces of evil that they write about. Admittedly, their informants may have been 'bewitched'. These informants may have been the targets of gossip, or been drawn into accusations and counter accusations of 'witchcraft'. However, it is not the close friends, peers and students of the visiting academics who are affected, either as victims or avengers. At the end of their fieldwork, they leave and go back home. Maybe they return again for a further research period, or a number of further fieldwork periods. However, they always leave Africa – their 'research field' – to return 'home' where real-life (and their 'serious' academic work) happens.

Having said all of that, I found *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* – a work which 'emerges in large part from the experiences documented in *Madumo*' (p. xiii) – exceptionally interesting and well-written. Adam Ashforth first visited Soweto in 1990, intending to focus his research 'upon the politics of representation in a transition to democracy' (p. x). In doing so, for the first time in his life, he found himself living in 'a world where people were presumed to have capacities for causing harm to others by supernatural means', where 'people … feared sickness and death by witchcraft' and where friends

were 'accused of killing others by witchcraft.' Never before had he had someone he 'loved hounded to an untimely death as a witch', or 'been a subject of witchcraft' himself (pp. xii-xiii). These issues became 'particularly pressing' for him on his return to Soweto in 1997. This was when he found his adoptive 'brother', Madumo, 'in a crisis of witchcraft' (p. xiii). Shortly after the death of his mother in the previous year, in response to accusations levelled by Zionist prophets, Madumo had been accused by his younger brother of being responsible for her death through 'witchcraft'. Having financed Madumo's quest for a cure, and with his informed consent, Ashforth documented this process in *Madumo*. Since then, he has obviously done a lot more thinking and a lot more research. In doing so, and in producing a far more conventionally academic text than *Madumo*, he has set out to take seriously (in other words, treat 'as literal statements) propositions about witchcraft' (p. xiv) that do not fit easily into his own secular humanist ideological background. It is in achieving this in engaging the central research question of 'What implications might this have for democratic governance within a modern liberal state?' (p. 11) that the strength of *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* lies. As Ashforth points out to his global audience: 'their world is my world' (p. xi) and 'Africans living in a world of witches at the turn of the twentieth century also live in the same world as the rest of us – whoever we might be' (p. 316).

The work is divided into three parts. The first of these (pp. 7-130) engages what Ashforth calls 'the social dimensions of spiritual insecurity in Soweto at the turn of the twenty-first century' (p. 1). Here he shows how the fears, doubts and dangers arising from the perception of exposure to invisible evil forces are interlinked with other spheres of insecurity in daily life in the community at this particular time. These insecurities are the product of forces such as political instability and violence accompanying the death of the apartheid regime and in the birth of a new democratic society; the perceived escalation of criminal activity accompanying the process of transformation; poverty, the changing divisions of wealth and increasing socioeconomic inequality in the transforming society; and disease (particularly the spread of the HIV-AIDS pandemic). The section concludes with an examination of the implications of 'witchcraft' beliefs in this modern, urban setting. Contemporary Sowetans, he argues, suffer the consequences of spiritual insecurity in ways which have a life and reality, a dynamism, of their own. This, he argues, exposes the limitations of standard anthropological, and other approaches which analyse 'witchcraft' beliefs in terms of the concepts of 'rationality' and 'modernity'. If we are to understand them, we can only do so in terms of their success in answering the 'why me?' and 'why now?' questions for which Western science has no answers.

Part two (pp. 133-239) investigate the ways in which the contemporary inhabitants of Soweto interpret and deal with the invisible forces which, in their experience, act upon their lives. Looking at spirits and other invisible beings,

persons, images, objects and substances (especially, but not exclusively, *muthi*), Ashforth illuminates 'how everyday statements about witchcraft and other forms of harm involving invisible forces can be taken by reasonable people living in the modern world as plausible accounts of reality' (p. 2). He continues by examining issues of pollution and their association with death. According to Ashforth, these issues are central to any understanding of the stigma and denial surrounding AIDS. In following through the notion of spiritual insecurity, he also explores the role played by colonial conquest, urbanisation, transformations of kinship structures, Christian Evangelisation and African Initiated Churches (AICs) in perpetuating insecurity or attempting to bring about spiritual security. The chapter ends with an examination of what Ashforth calls the 'vulnerabilities of the soul that complicate issues of personal responsibility and individual autonomy' arising from 'the pervasive spiritual insecurity of everyday life' (p. 2).

Part three (pp. 243-318) examines the suppression of indigenous judicial procedures aimed at dealing with managing the problem of 'witchcraft' in African communities from colonial times. Discussion of the response of the post-apartheid government to issues of spiritual insecurity includes a reading of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a failed witch-hunt. Arguing that these matters provide a serious challenge to the legitimacy of the democratic state, Ashforth concludes this section with an examination of the history of attempts to eradicate 'witchcraft' beliefs through African education in South Africa, and current efforts to redesign the curriculum.

There are two appendices. The first (pp. 319-323) is a brief excursus on the literature on Soweto and the second (pp. 325-329) is a transcription of 'The Thohoyandou Declaration on Ending Witchcraft Violence, Issued by the Commission on Gender Equality', of 10 September 1998.

For me, one of the great strengths of the books lies in the fact that Ashforth has chosen to ground his study in a contemporary urban context. Most studies of 'witchcraft' in South Africa are based in rural communities. This makes it easy to see beliefs and actions as somehow being removed from the socio-political centre of the country – cultural 'survivals' among less-sophisticated and less-connected rural people. Ashforth firmly turns this notion on its head, demonstrating that it is very much an issue at the centre of modern city life. Gossip, jealousy and malice – the classic triggers of 'witch-craft' accusations – are present in all societies, both rural and urban. Indeed, they are often both more prevalent, and more hidden – and hence more 'secret' and dangerous – in cities than in the rural areas. Similarly, pride is as much of a 'magnet for witchcraft' in the towns as in the rural areas.

Ashforth manages to explore these issues in a way which does not exoticise belief and action. 'Most of the time, people in Soweto live in their bodies in ordinary sorts of ways' that sceptical outsiders would not find 'outlandish' (236). Recourse to beliefs about 'witchcraft', and taking action in terms of these

beliefs, is simply one way, among a multiplicity of others, of looking at the world and acting to bring security in a fundamentally insecure situation. Just as a car can be hijacked, so one's mind may be hijacked by *muthi* (p. 227). On a broader level, it is possible to describe TRC as a (failed) witch-hunt (pp. 270ff.). Ashforth situates his argument about these issues in the wider context of violence in Soweto and in South Africa generally – the bitterness in the heart which is the legacy of apartheid and the pervasive sense of social injustice that continues, and has been heightened, in the post-apartheid period. When the community do not trust the police, or the wider judicial system, to protect them against physical and mystical violence, they are forced to turn elsewhere for security. 'Witchcraft' accusations and witch-hunts are not the only solutions adopted. Indeed, they often form only part of the complex of actions undertaken by people to cope with the stresses, strains and uncertainties of daily life. Vigilantism, street committees, African Initiated Churches and the so-called 'mainline' (Protestant, Catholic and Pentecostal) churches all have a role to play. People may even turn to the law to deal with the symptoms, rather than the underlying causes, of insecurity. Whether we explain them in terms of 'witchcraft' or other terms, the dangers and insecurities of life in contemporary Soweto (and in the wider South Africa) are real. In fact, 'witchcraft' accusations are often the exception, rather than the rule. They provide a subtext - often exposed only through gossip, innuendo or joking behaviour - which underlies other methods of attempting to deal with violence, insecurity and danger. In many ways, 'people talk about witchcraft least when it matters the most' (p. 313).

Ashforth premises his analysis of spiritual insecurity, the core support of his argument, 'upon a presumption of malice underpinning community life.' This he describes 'as a negative corollary of the doctrine of *ubuntu*'. Where 'the philosophy of *ubuntu* proclaims that "a person is a person through other persons," everyday life teaches that life in a world of witches must be lived in terms of a presumption of malice that adds: *because they can kill you*' (pp. 1 & 86).

At first, this left me with the uneasy feeling that he was returning to some kind of colonial mindset where Africans were seen as suffering from spiritual insecurity because they did not worship the 'true God'. However, as his argument develops, it is clear that the insecurity that he is referring to is that which drives all of us to seek solutions to the threats and uncertainties that we encounter in our daily lives, and to give meaning to our lives. For Ashforth, all our precepts upon which we have been content to live our lives 'in a world without witches are demonstrably as baseless as those supporting' the residents of twenty-first century Soweto 'as they make their way through witch-ridden worlds.' For Ashforth though, 'it is better to live in a world without witches.' Liberation from 'the reality of invisible evil forces leaves … [us] free in important material ways'. However, such 'freedom is a luxury … predicated on

security', a security which is at present absent for many of the people of South Africa (p. 317). This is an interesting contribution to our understanding of not only Soweto but all of us and our inner – and external – demons.

As is to be expected, there are some things that I would have like to have seen done differently. Firstly, I feel strongly that the work would have benefited from a stronger comparative perspective. Many of the themes which emerge from the book are reflected in the works of authors such as Peter Geschiere, Wim van Binsbergen, Clifford Geertz and Terence Ranger in other parts of Africa. Ashforth's exploration of 'spiritual insecurity' could only have been deepened by comparison with their works, many of which (with the exception of those of Ranger) appear in the bibliography in any case. I would also have liked to have seen more of a dialogue with authors working within South Africa, such as Isak Niehaus and Edwin Ritchken.

Secondly, I do not think that Ashforth has adequately established the connection between 'witchcraft' and national-level politics. It is debatable whether or not a significant number of people actually expect the state to actively provide them with protection against metaphysical violence. Certainly, there are a considerable number of people who would like the Witchcraft Suppression Act to be scrapped and who would welcome new legislation which would enable them to retaliate against assaults by 'witches'. However, I would argue that it is unlikely that people expect the state to provide them with the means of doing this – what they seek is the freedom to consult indigenous specialists in these matters.

Thirdly, Ashforth specifically states that he will not 'presume to dispense policy advice on how to deal with' the problem of spiritual insecurity 'other than to point out that it informs virtually every aspect of social life and thus impinges on virtually every aspect of politics' (p. 19). Given the crucial role that this concept plays in his argument, and his assertions about the failure of the post-apartheid state to deal with issues of spiritual insecurity, this is a serious omission. One would certainly have liked to have seen thorough discussion of possible scenarios for consideration in tackling the problem. More detailed discussion of attempts to deal with problems arising out of witchcraft beliefs and accusations through education would also have been extremely useful.

Fourthly, I feel that Ashforth has paid insufficient attention to the relationship between 'witchcraft' and HIV-AIDS. He certainly refers to it, and sees it as being extremely important (see especially pp. 9, 18, 45, 81, 91-92, 106, 108-110 & 154-156). However, in a previous article, he suggested that this epidemic would stimulate a parallel epidemic of 'witchcraft' accusations ('An Epidemic of Witchcraft? The Implications of AIDS for the Post-Apartheid State', *African Studies*, 61, 1, 2002, pp. 121-143). Not only does he seem to downplay this controversial but interesting idea in the present work, he also

fails to provide an in-depth analysis of those who attribute HIV-Aids to 'witchcraft', and why they do so.

Fifthly, I feel that 'zombies' – people magically killed and transformed into slaves by 'witches' do not receive sufficient attention in the text (pp. 41-42, 277 & 234-235). For me, dehumanised, enslaved people doing the bidding of their owners are an incredibly powerful symbol of the alienation and exploitation of dependent wage labourers, and the proletariat in general, under capitalism. Ashforth mentions their existence but does not unpack their meaning in enough detail.

Sixthly, Ashforth mentions the generational conflicts involved in contemporary witch-hunts. In the past, these were under the control of the 'kings and chiefs' and actions were taken by the elders of the community. Recognised judicial procedures and channels of appeal were in place. Today they are often a form of mob-action under the control of youths. There is arguably a greater potential for witch-hunts escalating out of control than was the case in the past (pp. 256ff). It is a pity that Ashforth did not develop these themes more fully.

Lastly, the terms 'witches' and 'witchcraft' are highly problematic. They carry a western cultural baggage which frequently obscures what local people mean when they use them. In my own work, I escape this problem by using the local terms for these beliefs and practices. In the polyglot Soweto, Ashforth is unable to take this course of action. One would nevertheless have liked a through discussion on problems of definition and usage in the preface or the introductory chapter.

Despite these omissions, and having come a full circle from my starting point, I heartily recommend this book for the specialist, and more general, reader on 'witchcraft', religion, legislative reform, socioeconomic inequalities, violence and insecurity in South Africa.

Lungisile Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of Land in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006. 326 pp.

Jeff Peires
Bhisho

Those of you who have not yet read this outstanding work should not waste time reading the review but should rush out and buy it immediately. A substantially revised version of his 2002 doctoral thesis, Lungisile Ntsebeza has written a book on his home district of Xhalanga that deserves to be recognised as an instant classic.

Cala, the seat of the Xhalanga magistracy, is so far off the beaten track that it was the last of the 28 towns of the former Transkei to get its own tar road, and that was only in 2004. Its history has been similarly marginalised, being hidden even from Beinart and Bundy's *Hidden Struggles*. It has never been credited for the pivotal role it played in the battle against Bantu Authorities, although the resistance of Emnxe locality long preceded the famous Mpondo revolt of 1960. Yet among Xhosa-speaking people, Xhalanga is well-known as a cradle of intellectual and political ferment. It had a radical bookshop when it never had a bank. It had peasants but it never had mission schools. Xhalanga's more famous children include MK members Ezra Sigwela and Ambrose Makiwana, the first MK Chief of Staff; trade unionists Gwede Mantashe, Enoch Godongwana and the Mayekiso brothers; jurist Dumisa Ntsebeza and revolutionary martyr Bathandwa Ndondo gunned down in broad daylight in September 1985.

Lungisile Ntsebeza helps us to understand just how all this happened. The modern Xhalanga district was created in the aftermath of the Thembu rebellions of 1880 that divided western Thembuland into three parts: the white commercial farming district of Elliot; the traditional Thembu district of St Marks (Cofimvaba) dominated by the first Matanzima; and Xhalanga which the colonial government allocated as a buffer zone to loyal black peasants of mixed ethnic origins. The loyalty of the black landowners was as ephemeral as the Cape liberal era which sponsored them. They longed for what were called *embokotwa* titles, that is titles similar to those held by farmers in the neighbouring white district of Elliot. They rejected the inferior titles available to blacks, just as they rejected the inferior political representation available from the Glen Grey style native councils. These legitimate wishes were frustrated by white colonialism, and they changed sides. As Ntsebeza puts it, 'The people who were giving the government a hard time, and who were now being referred to as agitators, were eminent loyalists in the latter part of the nineteenth century'.

For eighty years, the people of Xhalanga fought these struggles without help or hindrance from traditional leaders. The royal families of Stokwe and Gecelo had been displaced in the original 1880 rebellion, and the headmen of the

district were mainly landowners who sympathised with the other landowners. But lurking in nearby Cofimvaba was Chief K. D. Matanzima whose ambition to become a Paramount Chief could only be realised if he extended chiefly control over Xhalanga. How he did so, in spite of the best efforts of the Xhalanga 'Jacobins', is related in the central section of this absorbing book. Here I can do no more than capture the flavour of the times by quoting Xhalanga's greeting to Matanzima and his fellow-chiefs in 1958, 'asifuni nkosi apha voortsek mnka naye, ukunya kwenkosi, umnqundu wenkosi' [we don't want a chief here, voetsak, take him away, shit of a chief, backside of a chief]. There was burning of huts, there were murders and deportations, but Proclamation 400 won out in the end. People in Xhalanga today will tell you that their district is undeveloped on account of their resistance to Matanzima. They are not complaining, it is something in which they take great pride.

Ntsebeza's narrative takes us to 1994 and beyond. His focus throughout is on traditional leaders and land matters but he pauses along the way to take in critical issues such as the political struggle between the ANC and the AAC (Unity Movement) in the 1950s, and the rivalry between Xhalanga's long-established NGO sector and ANC/SANCO/Union structures in the 1990s. Ntsebeza sees the ANC, after 'years of ambivalence and prevarication' as coming down on the side of the traditional leaders and fears a 'retribalisation', but his evidence in this regard is drawn mainly from the national scene. I was ANC member of the National Assembly for Xhalanga from 1994 to 1996, and I don't see it quite like that. I see something like a three-way clash between traditional leaders, progressive intellectuals and ANC functionaries entrenched in the Sakhisizwe Local Municipality. I see the Xhalanga traditional leaders benefiting not so much from national support but from the increasing disillusion of the masses with the delivery systems of the Local Municipality. I also see the Ntsebeza family featuring somewhere sometime, though not perhaps soon.

Lungisile says in a throwaway footnote that 'a detailed study of the politics of Xhalanga from the 1970s onwards warrants a book of its own which I am seriously considering'. That is something we can all look forward to. In the meantime, this one will do us very nicely.

Lungisile Ntsebeza and Ruth Hall (eds.), 2007. *The Land Question in South Africa – The Challenge of Transformation and Redistribution.* Cape Town. HSRC Press.

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The Land Question in South Africa is an excellent collection of insightful papers that focuses on the problems, challenges and possibilities for land reform in contemporary South Africa. Besides the introductory chapter written by the editors, the volume consists of eight chapters. Two chapters, written by Henry Bernstein and Sam Moyo, set the global and regional context for the six chapters on South Africa that follow. These latter chapters effectively entail, to use specific phrases from chapter titles, 'taking stock' of land reform (Ruth Hall) during the first post-apartheid decade and charting the way 'towards accelerated implementation' of reform (Rogier van den Brink et al.) over the next decade and beyond.

All chapters clearly indicate that the land reform programme has demonstrated only limited progress. From the evidence presented by the various contributors, the failure of the programme is particularly stark with reference to land redistribution and land tenure changes, and is less marked in the case of land restitution. Yet, according to Ntsebeza (p. 107), there seems to be 'no agreement on the reasons'. The causes underlying the truncated character of the programme – as propounded in the chapters – indeed represent a diverse mix, but it is questionable whether they are inherently incompatible with each other. The reasons include policy inconsistencies, fiscal and budgetary limitations, insufficient institutional capacity, lack of political will, resistance from white commercial farmers and, last but not least, the fact that 'the rural poor are weak and fragmented at this stage' (Andrews p. 216).

Ntsebeza's chapter is concerned in particular with a 'debate' about the significance of the South African constitution in inhibiting reform. He notes an inconsistency within the constitution between clauses that protect property rights and clauses that allow for expropriation under certain conditions. On this basis, he argues that the constitution acts as a brake on land acquisition for redistribution purposes. His main protagonist in this 'debate' appears to be his co-editor, who claims in her own chapter (and elsewhere) that 'the most immediate constraints … appear to be more political than legal' (Hall p. 99). In other words, the constitution does not simply set limits but also affords possibilities for acquisition, and the problem lies squarely and fairly at the feet of the sitting ANC government. It seems though that this 'debate', as currently

constructed, has the danger of degenerating into static conceptions of social possibilities; it downplays how this contradictory moment in the land reform initiative (which both writers capture) is played out in a contingent manner according to the shifting balance of political forces in South Africa. In this regard, the editors seem to patch things up in their introduction by agreeing that land reform is 'a fundamentally political project' (Hall and Ntsebeza p.20), and hence is an indeterminate project.

Hall's chapter though does not focus specifically on the 'debate', but involves a much broader review of the progress and challenges in the land reform process. Like other contributors, she emphasises the persistence of 'deeply etched racial and class divides in the countryside' (p. 103) and argues that the government's adherence to the willing seller-willing buyer principle serves only to entrench those divides by stymieing land acquisition. She implies that this persistence is consistent with the predominant neo-liberal thrust in South Africa. In this context, she makes the critical point that even if more far-reaching redistribution was to take place, 'the prospects of a successful smallholder farming sector' in post-resettlement areas would likely 'recede' (p. 100) due to insufficient state support arising from the liberalisation of the agricultural regime under the impact of the neo-liberal trajectory. Yet, underlying her analysis, and influencing much of the volume, is a linear model of policy formation and implementation which appears to measure reform progress 'against policy frameworks and targets' (p. 87). Problematically, this kind of analysis implies that policy simply exists to guide practices, and it fails to consider how policy models often arise to rationalise and legitimise existing practices. This means that 'progress' cannot be properly measured in terms of the distance between policy goals and policy effects. Insofar as policy goals form part of a broadly accepted and coherent land programme, and insofar as this programme is repeatedly confirmed through even non-transformative practices, then 'success' has been 'achieved'.

In her thoughtful chapter, Cheryl Walker seeks to transcend idealised notions of land reform, including 'nostalgia and romantic identity politics' (p. 146) and the 'inflated expectations' (p. 134) that 'redistributive' programmes (including restitution and tenure changes) may have on rural livelihoods. Her long involvement in the land 'sector' (pre-dating the post-apartheid period) may in part explain her pragmatic realism that suggests that in 'insisting on all possible targets, we advance none' (p. 132). She argues that the demands for historical redress may not necessarily translate into best development practices for the future, and she goes on discuss priorities for the state that are – relatively speaking – achievable and worth pursuing. These include the finalisation of the restitution process, and targeted acquisition (if necessary, by expropriation) of land for development projects for the landless and land-short. Although her chapter is not 'an academic exercise' (p. 133), it nevertheless has analytical undertones. In this respect, one concern is her ongoing reference to the burden

of 'constraints' on land reform (pp. 133, 146), whether programmatic or non-programmatic in form. In political terms, just as an unbridled populist romanticism may lead to championing the cause of radical restructuring 'from below' at all costs, the over-privileging of constraints to land reform may lead to political conservatism. Intellectually, pragmatism is not far off from pessimism, and this may impact on the conceptual framework employed when analysing land reform; in particular, it downplays how constraints are in fact socially produced, reproduced *and* transformed.

The three chapters by Moyo, Mercia Andrews and Ben Cousins raise diverse points, but they are in agreement on a range of issues – some of which are shared by other contributors. More specifically, these three writers directly challenge the 'large farm' model of land efficiency propagated by commercial farmer organisations in South Africa (and more widely in the sub-region) and seemingly accepted (if only passively) by the ANC government. They thus emphasise the need for large-scale land redistribution and the importance of the 'small farmer development trajectory' (Moyo p. 61). In Cousins' words, this entails a 'new' class of emergent petty commodity producers' emerging 'from within ranks of the desperately poor' (p. 232). Although not a central point in his chapter, Bernstein (p. 48) makes the telling point that, in any analysis, 'scale in agriculture' must be seen as embedded in 'specific, and variant, forms of social relations'. In line with this argument, converting large farms into small farms may simply replace racial forms of agrarian injustice with the pronounced patriarchal biases that exist in small-scale farming throughout the sub-region. The 'new' class of petty commodity producers may be riddled with 'old' gender inequalities.

In arguing for the small farm option, Moyo, Andrews and Cousins are seriously concerned about the non-equity (racial) implications of converting customary land regimes into private freehold tenure as propagated by multi-lateral donor institutions. More generally, they argue against market-led land reform, in large part because it undermines the quest for 'redistributive justice' (Andrews p. 205). And they suggest that an interventionist state, or what Cousins (p. 233) calls a 'proactive state', is critical for ensuring significant land reforms. For Moyo, in particular, this would entail forcefully engaging with the national question as the 'racial foundations' of land reform strongly 'resonates' (p. 65) throughout southern Africa. Finally, all three chapters bring to the fore the significance of 'an organised movement that can drive policy reformulation' (Andrews p. 218). In the end, these writers still cling (some might say romantically) to the prospect of popular-driven state-facilitated land reform leading to successful small-scale farming, or what Bernstein disparagingly refers to as 'agrarian populism' (p. 43). Their arguments raise complex questions about the nation-state which are often left unaddressed in the literature on land reform. In the case of contemporary Zimbabwe – a society which seems fertile ground for some sort of theorising about the state – there is a

striking lacuna in this respect in the land reform literature and beyond. Certainly, claims about a more activist state need to be underpinned by nuanced conceptual and theoretical work.

A similar point pertains to the relation between state and society, and (in particular) the notion of 'transformation' that appears in the subtitle to the volume and in two of the chapter headings. There is considerable lack of clarity in the volume about what the term entails or what is to be transformed. This may be intentional, considering that transformation is an open-ended and contingent process. In this respect, the editors simply speak about a 'transformative vision' (p. 10). Transformation refers to social change, and underlying the various renditions of 'transformation' contained in the book are commitments regarding the form and content of change. The subtitle of the book links transformation to 'redistribution'. Clearly, for most of the contributors, transformation is a process that goes beyond redistribution and de-racialisation, and entails far-reaching change to the agrarian political economy (Walker pp. 142, 143). Moyo (p. 61) though expresses doubts about a 'gradualistic approach' to radical land reform. Likewise, van den Brink et al., note that significant land redistributions are 'most often done in periods of upheaval and political violence' (p. 162) yet they remain (romantically?) optimistic about the prospects for peaceful reform (p. 194) in South Africa. Like the 'state', the notion of societal 'transformation' requires serious methodological reflections.

I end this review with comments on what could likely be the two most controversial chapters in the book: by van den Brink et al., and Bernstein. The chapter by van den Brink et al., is controversial not only because of the message but also because of the messengers. The authors include Glen Sonwabo Thomas (Director-General of the Department of Land Affairs in the South African government) and Rogier van den Brink (Senior Economist in the World Bank). The chapter by van den Brink et al., is pushing a World Bank perspective, although not explicitly so. They perceive private property as the most modern form of landholding; the exception to the rule seems to prove that private property makes 'economic sense' (p. 161). Like other contributors to the book, they argue for the efficiencies of small-scale farming, or what they call 'family-sized' farms (p. 155).

The particular emphasis by van den Brink et al., is on the importance of land market forces and the need to unleash them more fully. For instance, in the case of land acquisition, they claim that land markets are distorted and 'need help' from the state (p. 167). This help would entail the removal of restrictions on land subdivisions and the raising of land taxes on unutilised commercial land, thereby facilitating access by the poor to small portions of land via the market if necessary financial assistance from the state is also forthcoming. The white commercial farming community[1] has recently expressed deep concern about such suggestions from what they (and probably others) perceive to be an unholy World Bank-government alliance. However, van den Brink et al., anticipated

such a reaction (pp. 185-186) and, in the end, they call for a 'policy framework which allows a menu of options to be pursued' (p. 193). On the other hand, the chapter appears far less sensitive to the kind of response that rural inhabitants might give to a market-led privatised land reform programme that may only further undermine and marginalise their livelihoods. One wonders whether land occupations and other forms of 'uncivil' action have a place in their broad 'policy framework'.

For some years now,[2] Bernstein has been proposing a reformulated agrarian question. He refers to the classic agrarian question as the 'agrarian question of capital' (specifically, of industrial capital) and he claims that, because the transition to capitalism has occurred globally, the 'question of capital' has been resolved at this level. Stalled capitalist industrialisation in the 'peripheries' has left the classic question unresolved in these regions but now largely redundant given the existence of industrial capitalism as an all-pervasive world-system. He claims that the agrarian question needs to be significantly re-conceptualised as an 'agrarian question of labour' in the light of the subordinated integration of the South and East in international commodity chains and markets under the neo-liberal regime. His revised analysis brings to the fore the 'fragmentation (or fracturing) of labour' in the 'peripheries', with 'ever more disparate combinations of wage- and self-employment (agricultural and non-agricultural petty commodity production)' as reproduction strategies (Bernstein 2003).

In the volume under review, Bernstein continues to pursue this argument, and it is also taken up by Cousins under the notion of the 'agrarian question of the dispossessed'. He applies Bernstein's classic and reformulated questions to *within* South Africa and specifically to the position of *agricultural* and not industrial capital. According to Cousins, the 'scale' and 'productive capacity' of capitalist agriculture in South Africa means that the question of capital has been resolved by 'accumulation from above' (p. 227) but the question of dispossession can only be resolved by 'accumulation from below' through the emergence of the 'new' petty commodity producers. In turn, and quite confusingly, the second resolution seems to undermine the first resolution as the small-scale producers invariably contest 'the monopolistic privileges of white/corporate farming' (p. 227). These arguments do not seem consistent with Bernstein's position – Bernstein seeks to transcend the 'internalist' (single social formation) problematic (p. 32) in his global analysis and, further, his prime focus is on the transition to industrial capitalism and not on the emergence and consolidation of capitalist agriculture.

Cousins's discussion though leads us to consider whether there may be blatant confusions or at least unclear formulations within Bernstein's own argument. In the past, insofar as capitalist agriculture facilitated industrialisation within a particular social formation, Bernstein argues that the agrarian question of capital 'subsumes that of labour' (p.32). And he claims that, currently, the agrarian question of labour is not subordinated 'to that of capital',

and this is 'manifested in struggles for land against "actually existing" forms of capitalist landed property' (p. 41). The exact status of 'capital' and 'labour' remains obscure. In speaking about the subordination or otherwise of the 'labour question', is Bernstein making a statement about the prevailing balance of class forces or about the class category to be privileged epistemologically when making sense of agrarian change? Given that 'capital' and 'labour' are relational terms and are constitutive of each other, is Bernstein not separating them out and reformulating the agrarian question un-dialectically? Does an emphasis on the global resolution of the classic agrarian question betray an insensitivity to the idea that all 'resolutions' have a variable local content? Most critically, Bernstein needs to justify why the agrarian question needs to be reformulated at all rather than abandoned altogether.

Despite the criticisms noted above, there is little doubt that this volume is an essential contribution to the debate about land reform in contemporary South Africa. The marked emphasis on the practicalities of advancing the land reform process in creative and fluid ways is likely the single most important contribution of this publication.

1. See *Farmer's Weekly*, 13 October 2006 and 20 October 2006.
2. See for instance: H. Bernstein, 2003, 'Land reform in southern Africa in world-historical perspective' in *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 30. No. 96; and H. Bernstein, 2005, 'Rural land and land conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa' in S. Moyo and P. Yeros, eds., 2005, *Reclaiming the Land: The Resurgence of Rural Movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, London: ZED Books.

Linda Richter and Robert Morrell (eds.). *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*. Cape Town. HSRC Press. 2006.

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Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa is a book that is long overdue. For far too long men, as subjects of academic research and writing in South Africa, have suffered from what David Gilmore(1990:2) refers to as 'the taken for granted syndrome'. Admittedly, the study of men and masculinities in South Africa has slowly started to develop some momentum, with books such as *Changing Men in South Africa* (Morrell, 2001) providing some invaluable insights into the construction of masculinities in local contexts. There has however been precious little written about men in one of their most important roles as fathers. In a country where as many as '57 per cent of all children, and 63 per cent of African children specifically [have] fathers who [are] "absent" or deceased', the importance of looking at men in the role of father cannot be underestimated (Dorrit Posel and Richard Devey in Chapter 4 of *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa* p. 49).

The book's point of departure is that understandings of fatherhood, and the roles fathers play in a child's life, 'can and do change over time and according to context' (Morrell and Richter, 2006:1), depending on factors such as material resources, political climate and popular social discourse. The first section of the book deals with the central issues upon which the rest of the book builds. Robert Morrells chapter in the section somewhat broadly connects fatherhood with masculinity by arguing that fatherhood is not in fact a biological given, but rather something which is contested and understood based on what it means to be a man in a particular context. Francis Wilson then presents some of these contextual influences by stressing that poverty, often hand-in-hand with migrant labour and HIV/AIDS, has resulted in a 'dislocated social structure' (p.30), frequently resulting in fathers being unable to fulfil social and economic responsibilities to children.

The next section of the book then puts fatherhood in historical perspective by revealing how factors such as migrancy, institutionalisation and poverty have over more than half a century played a role in changing understandings of fatherhood as well as the roles these fathers play in the lives of children. Mamphele Ramphele and Linda Richter, for example, provide a brief but insightful look into how the lives of 16 children from New Crossroads in Cape Town were affected by economic and social deprivation linked to the absence of their fathers brought about by apartheid's legacy. Mark Hunter in his chapter then provides some tentative insights into why some Zulu men have abandoned

their 'social role of fatherhood' (p.100). He suggests that since the 1970s, increasing unemployment among Zulu men has led to the decline in their ability 'to meet accepted social roles of fatherhood' (p. 106). Their disempowerment has led in turn to changes in the construction of fatherhood that casts it in a negative light.

In the third section of the book, authors then critically examine how fatherhood is constructed in our minds and represented in the media, arguing amongst other things, that in order to change what it means to be a father we need to understand and change how fatherhood is represented. In her chapter Jeanne Prinsloo, for example, discusses how men in fathering roles are 'invisible in most media forms' (p. 139), with men being represented in 'macho roles in which force and violence frequently feature ...' (p.143). She shows how these representations are problematic as they provide inadequate reference points for 'how we expect fathers to be "good" fathers' (p.144). In contradistinction, Solani Ngobeni compellingly argues, through an analysis of John Singletons movie *Boyz n the Hood*, that by romanticising fatherhood in the media we run the risk of overemphasising the importance of fathers to the healthy development of children and in turn 'castigate' (p. 153) families headed by single mothers – the predominant family structure in South Africa. Perhaps the most interesting contributions to the section, provided by Desmond Lesejane and Nhlanhla Mkhize, argue the case for using the image of fatherhood found in traditional South African culture to restore and redefine understandings of what it means to be 'father', understandings that were damaged by colonisation, migrant labour, apartheid and unemployment.

The penultimate section of the book endeavours to uncover what it means to be a father in South Africa today by discussing how fathers are positioned in relation to their children in terms of the law, the world of work and the effect of HIV/AIDS. Grace Khunou provides an impassioned critique of family law, by arguing that while fathers in South Africa have the obligation to pay maintenance, they still do not necessarily have concomitant rights to access their children. She then argues that this bias prevents many devoted fathers from developing essential relationships with their children. Marlize Rabe, using interview data, compares the role expectations of migrant and resident fathers working on a goldmine in Johannesburg, suggesting that, despite the absence of some fathers, being a good father for most of these men means more than simple economic provision. Finally, chapters by Chris and Cos Desmond and by Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane, discuss the immense social and economic impact of the high rate of absentee fathers in families affected by HIV/AIDS. They argue that in order for families, and children in particular, to cope with the pandemic, fathers need to become more emotionally and economically involved with their children.

Finally, the book outlines how programmes initiated both locally and abroad can help promote and support the role men can play as fathers in society. Dean

Peacock and Mbuyiselo Botha, for example, discuss what men can do to promote gender equality by becoming more involved in programmes which promote 'healthier and more responsible models of masculinity' (p.284). They then briefly examine how programmes such as the Men in Partnership Against Aids Programme (MIPAA) and the Men as Partners (MAP) Network have all played a role in promoting men's involvement in increasing gender equality. In the final chapter Tom Beardshaw, the Network Director of Fathers Direct in the United Kingdom, makes some qualified suggestions on how research, policy and programmes can be changed or enhanced to improve 'work with men in families' (p.306). As this brief tour of the contents of the book reveals, the issue of fatherhood in South Africa can be approached from many different angles. I however found that this has limited the impact of the collection somewhat. I found that I was left wanting more from the authors: more detailed data and analysis and chapters that were more clearly linked by a common thread. Much of what is presented in the book is tentative and some of the chapters fail to live up to their promise. These and other shortcomings of the book were probably unavoidable. The book is the first of its kind in South Africa and so it was bound to reflect a lack of research into fatherhood. What the book does do, however, is allude to some of the causes of the troubled, and all too often non-existent, relationships children have with their fathers. Therefore the book's value lies not in its ability to provide answers, but in its ability to raise some important questions. As such, it is a 'must read' for anyone interested in the frequently troubled nature of fatherhood in South Africa.

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