

Thoughts on the Humanities in CODESRIA

My thoughts on the Humanities in CODESRIA will be stated in two approaches: improving what is already ongoing in CODESRIA and suggestions on new ideas worth exploring. This approach is born out of the conviction that Humanities have gained some grounds in CODESRIA over the past 10-15 years but there is still room for improvement. The other issue to be touched on is the relationship between CODESRIA and the University of Ghana through the African Humanities Institute Programme, with which I have been associated since its inception in 1996.

CODESRIA General Assemblies

I have participated in three CODESRIA General Assemblies – Maputo (2005), Yaounde (2008), and Rabat (2011). In all these, there were papers presented from Humanities. However, it would have been a plus if there had been artistic workshops in which for example the host nations' performance arts were featured accompanied by academic presentations on development and significance. We had dance and musical performances at these events which were organised more as entertainment pieces accompanying dinner and as such not seen as worthy of academic engagement. An evening of a theatre performance or a film show that educates and informs participants on the host nation will also be welcoming. A guided tour of significant sites in the hosting cities would also have been rewarding.

CODESRIA-FESPACO Workshops In Ouagadougou

I was also a participant in all five CODESRIA-FESPACO workshops in Ouagadougou from 2007 to 2015. Though papers were presented at all the work-

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shops, no publication has yet come out from CODESRIA. The workshops also seemed detached from the main festival as there was little information on it at the festival website or in its programme brochures. Thus festival participants were unaware of the workshops in order to attend. A closer collaboration with the festival secretariat would improve workshop visibility. Additionally, the workshop could be expanded to include a roundtable debate on the festival theme as well as critical discussions of selected films in competition for the Grand Prix – Etalon Yennenga. These discussions should involve the filmmakers who will share their concerns with workshop participants. It is possible for CODESRIA to arrange with FESPACO Secretariat to organise special film screenings to be followed by discussions since the workshop cannot last the whole festival period.

Further Suggestions

CODESRIA could consider organising periodically the following:

- International conferences with presentation of papers as well as practical workshops and demonstrations or master classes in the areas of Film, Theatre, Dance, Music.
- International art exhibitions on African Heritage.
- African creative writers' workshop with playwrights, poets, screen writers, novelists, etc.

CODESRIA University of Ghana Relationship

CODESRIA University of Ghana relationship was further deepened through the establishment of the CODESRIA African Humanities Institute Programme in 1996, which saw annual multidisciplinary residential fellowships for selected African scholars hosted in Legon. The institute has not seen much activity since the fellowship programme ran out. The institution of a new multi-year fellowship programme will revamp the somehow dormant relationship as faculty and students will benefit from such programmes which will also improve the visibility of CODESRIA at Legon. Points worth considering are:

1. Any MOU to be signed or renewed would have to contain some benefits to be enjoyed by the University of Ghana else it stands not to get the official nod.
2. A well-staffed and equipped office of CODESRIA on UG campus will contribute to visibility of any relationship between the two institutions.
3. A special section at the University Balme Library dedicated to CODESRIA stocked with its publications will also increase visibility.
4. CODESRIA hosting some of its institute programmes and other events in Ghana will also lead to visibility and boost relationship with Ghana.

CODESRIA African Humanities Institute

The institute has over the years built a resource in video recordings of paper presentations, discussions, workshops and fieldtrips of the fellowship programmes as well as other events. Four key CODESRIA events were fully documented on video: the 30th Anniversary programme



in Dakar in 2003, General Assemblies in Maputo, Yaounde and Rabat. Additionally the five CODESRIA-FESPACO Workshops were also fully documented on video. Digitising these materials and storing them is a more secured preservation method than the current state on magnetic tapes which are prone to rapid deterioration. They are important resour-

ces that must not be left to go waste. Needed equipment will be an Apple Mac PC, big capacity hard drives for storage, analogue video players (S-VHS, Mini-DV, Betacam SP) and a video capture digital interface. Additional NLE software would enable editing and re-packaging for use in a variety of ways to support teaching, learning and research.

If the Institute is to continue to play the role of documenting CODESRIA activities on video as it has done over the years, then it should be equipped with digital video cameras with sound and lights accessories in addition to hiring of professional crew for assignments when it becomes necessary.