

Valorizing Social Science Research Results: CODESRIA's Experience

In the foreword of the book entitled *African Researchers and Decision-makers: Building Synergy for Development?* (Ndiaye 2009: 2), Gilles Forget, IDRC Regional Director, stated that in Central and West Africa, researchers and decision-makers do not make good bedfellows. According to him: "Despite quality research conducted by national researchers, policy decisions often remain informed by advice from abroad" (Ndiaye 2009: xi). Yet "Good research should be relevant and accessible to decision-makers, just as good rational policy should be based on relevant research findings" (Ndiaye 2009: 2). This is why a good tool is needed for popularizing research findings so they can be useful to both researchers who produce them and decision-makers who use them.

Indeed, policies should be informed by research, and by reliable data, hence the use of the term *evidence-based policies*. In an era of economics and knowledge societies, research and the valorization of research results are even more important. But what kind of research is it about? Or, in what framework and under what conditions can we conduct and valorize the results of high-quality research? Which audiences (which recipients) are being targeted by research? In several recent correspondences received by CODESRIA, colleagues who had taken part in a major research project highlighted the difficulties faced by some decision-makers in accepting the findings of the research they conducted. This means that scholarly truth can sometimes be disturbing, even subversive.

Arising in 1973 from the desire of African social science researchers to produce knowledge and develop scholarly capacities and tools that can promote the freedom, cohesion, welfare and progress of African societies through the emergence of a pan-African community of active researchers, CODESRIA focuses on the protection of intellectual freedom and autonomy in accomplishing the mission of researchers and the elimination of linguistic, disciplinary, regional, gender and intergenerational barriers.

Ebrima Sall &
Mamadou Dramé
CODESRIA

To ensure the publication and dissemination of the results and ideas generated by research networks, CODESRIA's Publications Programme was set up and, over the past 40 years, CODESRIA has established itself as the leading scholarly publisher in social sciences on the African continent, with 90% of its publications directly derived from the research activities it organizes or finances through support to research networks, universities, research institutions in Africa and increasingly in the diaspora.

Valorization of research, an institutional challenge and a scholarly practice

According to the National Review Committee, "valorizing" research means "making usable or commercializing the findings, knowledge and skills of research" (CNE 1999: 9). "Valorization" encompasses all practices seeking to add value to research, i.e. all practices used by academics to gain recognition for their activities and to add value to their research work. It is done through the dissemination of works to peers (articles, books and colloquiums) and through pedagogical valorization associated with knowledge creation and transmission at a single place of training.

There are two complementary directions at this level:

1. The quality of associate researchers' works attributed by peers (scientific journals, recruitment committees, scientific awards juries) according to academic criteria of validity and relevance.
2. Research centred on the problems defined by industries, public authorities, international organizations or social movements, and knowledge also produced outside universities whose works, quality and interest

have also gained recognition of political, social and commercial nature (Shinn 2002).

This implies two types of valorization:

1. Scientific valorization through the production of knowledge certified by peers.
2. Valorization through the recognition of the social and economic utility of research, via the creation of enterprises, patent application, and the commercialization of their research outputs.

However, in his book, *Scholars in the Marketplace. The Dilemmas of Neo-Liberal Reform at Makerere University, 1989-2005*, Mahmood Mamdani invited researchers to make a distinction between consultancy as a profit-oriented research activity and research that seeks to address concerns linked to a better knowledge of the world (Mamdani 2007). With the crisis and the commitment of many researchers in consultancy, the tendency to confuse these two types of research activities is observed in many countries. From the outset, the strategic choice of CODESRIA has been to give priority to the production of scholarly knowledge and hence to genuine research.

Types of research valorization

Personal, institutional and disciplinary valorization

The notion of "scientific valorization" of research activities refers to activities that enable associate researchers to gain recognition of their work by the scholarly community and which are at the very heart of contemporary scholarly activity, through peer communication activities (Pontille 2005). There are various ways of valorizing research.

- Peer recognition: It includes published scientific literature, and also the practices of oral dissemination of works (colloquiums, seminars, etc.). It requires peer communication to ensure the value of research. It is also an opportunity for public recognition of intellectual property over knowledge produced.

- Symbolic recognition of the scientific quality attributed by peers can also take effect through membership of specific academic bodies which are decision-making arenas for recruitment, project funding or training in research as well as leadership of a research team, election or appointment to a section of the National Council of Universities or a Recruitment Commission (Latour, 1995).
- Educational valorization: training in, by and for research "Teaching is about engaging learners in the knowledge building process and no longer transmitting already established knowledge" (Lessard & Bourdoncle, 2002: 139).
- Social valorization of research: praxeological aims (whose results are "scientific in nature but the pragmatic consequences of which are the purpose" (Bedin, 1994: 185), thus contributing to the explication or resolution of social or practical issues, and sociopolitical aims: recognition of the social or professional interest or benefits that some works may generate for community. Knowledge produced should find recipients and users in the socio-professional fields.

Dissemination and valorization of CODESRIA social science research

CODESRIA uses a number of approaches to valorize African research, from the most orthodox (the publication of books and scientific journals) to the most innovative (production of documentary films and theater plays, open access and social media).

1. Valorization of research through publications

The manuscripts published by CODESRIA are texts from its programmes, including the activities of the fellowship, training and research programmes, and the Executive Secretariat. These programmes aim at training the young generation of researchers as well as experienced researchers, to carry out their research in order to address the continent's major challenges through Institutes, symposiums, colloquiums and conferences or national, transnational, multinational and comparative research groups. CODESRIA Publications Programme also receives and publishes unsolicited manuscripts of authors working on current issues facing

Africa and gets solicitations from publishing houses for co-publication projects (Karthala, L'Harmattan, Presence Africaine).

Massive dissemination policy with the use of Open Access

The dissemination takes into account two complementary and core directions. It includes the distribution of hard copies to the member institutions of CODESRIA. In addition, a part is devoted to distribution through the network of distributors in five African countries: Senegal, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa and Cameroon. Co-publishing with publishing houses based in countries such as Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, South Africa, France and the United States has helped to extend distribution networks to a number of countries. A print-on-demand system is set up with African Books Collective in London for digital printing and the sale of electronic publications in Europe and North America. At the same time, all publications are freely accessible and downloadable on the CODESRIA website in PDF format. CODESRIA participates extensively in scholarly events in order to present the results of the research it has generated but also to take part in the major debates concerning the continent. For greater efficiency, CODESRIA has acquired its own digitization unit for its publications and is in the process of creating its own digital library.

3. Valorization publications for decision-makers

Policy briefs (which distill research into key lessons that can be of interest to decision-makers) of about 8 pages maximum are intended to influence policies. Their main aim is to give policy-makers guidance based on the results generated by research in order to help them make decisions in the interest of the public. These publications summarize research findings and provide guidance on the best policies to be implemented.

Using modern communication media such as the Internet and social networks

To popularize research results, the communication unit uses social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Scoopit, etc. Thus, the live-streaming of conferences can be watched directly on the Website.

Open Days and Conferences

Every major meeting is an opportunity to open the doors of the Council to the public of researchers and decision-makers. Round tables and conferences on burning issues that have been the subject of research are organized to enable the public to take ownership of the results of the researchers' works. In June, there was a round table on youth and security which brought together researchers, civil society actors, journalists, students, members of the diplomatic corps and other types of social actors. Similarly, every month, a book from the works of CODESRIA scholars is presented in the *Impressions* programme which is broadcasted on 2STV, a Senegalese TV channel.

The Journal of African Transformations (JAT)

This interdisciplinary journal, published in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, intends to become the first platform for exchanges between researchers and policy-makers on issues related to economic, ecological, social and political transformations in Africa. It aims to showcase the subjects addressed by researchers and practitioners working in organizations and universities on the transformation of African societies. It is a forum that serves as a link between decision-makers and researchers and proposes an analysis of African countries' governance practices as well as guidelines for more efficiency in practice.

Impact of Valorization of Research Results Produced by CODESRIA

In nearly 44 years of existence, CODESRIA has grown from a small organization to a true scholarly institution whose main foundation is knowledge production, the rejection of the fragmentation of research in Africa as well as the promotion of research and social science researchers. Its publications have had a definite impact on the experience of researchers, knowledge of the continent and the promotion of social science research in Africa. Between 1973 and 2013, 433 books were published, as well as 3 048 scientific articles. Similarly, 1,365 doctoral theses and master's dissertations were defended and submitted to CODICE between 1988 and 2014. All these theses and dissertations received a grant from CODESRIA.

The impact of this production can be seen on several levels:

- Knowledge of the continent: enabling African researchers to reflect on their own continent was one of the major challenges for scholars. Indeed, one of the objectives of CODESRIA at its foundation was to show the African reality on the basis of research carried out by Africans on Africa. The relevance of such an option is to avoid discourses on the continent being generated from abroad and not taking into account the real concerns of Africans. CODESRIA wanted to promote such freedom of tone and approach by refusing imposition on where to direct its attention. The publications have thus made it possible to have a different view on Africa, a view that is not focused solely on scourges, wars and diseases but oriented to the real daily life of Africans, their realities, their aspirations and their orientations.
- Researchers' careers: doing research is one thing, sharing the results of one's research is another. However, it is publishing which enables a researcher to make his/her results known but especially to raise debates, following the findings of the work. With the rigor noted in the publication process, the demand for genuine production quality, sustained and accompanied by capacity building programmes, both in qualitative and quantitative research and in scientific writing, the quality of CODESRIA publications is irrefutable. Thanks to the 4,036 articles generations of researchers gained promotions in their universities and familiarized themselves with international standards of scholarly production, both during research and publication.
- Dissemination of knowledge produced by Africans: Africans have often been victims of stigmatization and have had great difficulty in getting their works published elsewhere, especially works on Africa. This has long favored an ignorance of Africa, read through the prism of the scientific works of Westerners who have more means to conduct research and more opportunities to make their research results visible. Thus, besides training in research and incentive to work on the most important issues for the knowledge of Africa, the pu-

blication of results helps to have a better knowledge of the continent, through research conducted by Africans, without bias and with the necessary rigor.

Channels of research valorization

For the dissemination and valorization of research results, CODESRIA relies on a large number of partnerships:

- Strategic Partners
 - ♦ Distributors: as we already emphasized, CODESRIA identified several major distributors on the continent according to their geographical location: Nigeria, Uganda, Morocco, Cameroon and Senegal. In addition to the European and American market, CODESRIA works with African Books Collective making print-on-demand, JSTOR for universities that want access to the Council's publications, and is negotiating with *L'oiseau Indigo* for the Francophone space.
 - ♦ Publishing houses: for improved efficiency in distribution, collaborations are established with publishing houses, including Routledge, Presence Africaine, Zed Books, HSRC Press, UNISA Press, Karthala, L'Harmattan, and Mkuki na Nyota. This allows a sharing of production costs, greater global visibility, and better distribution of products at lower costs.
 - ♦ Institutional partnerships: CODESRIA works extensively with higher education institutions such as universities and research centres in the areas of training, research and publication. Some of these universities and centres have become venues of flagship activities, or anchor points of CODESRIA journals (this is the case of CRASC in Oran, AARC in Cairo, the Forum for Social Studies in Addis Ababa). Other institutions include: Makerere University, the University of Lomé, the University of Ouagadougou, the Cheikh Anta Diop and Gaston Berger universities in Senegal, and the universities of Botswana, Nairobi, Ibadan, Ghana Legon, Yaounde I, and Western Cape. In Senegal, which hosts many activities, CODESRIA has also worked on curriculum development in social sciences, particularly as part of a project that focused on how universities address major societal

issues in teaching and research programmes. Similarly, CODESRIA is involved in the project of writing the *General History of Senegal*, inspired by the UNESCO *General History of Africa*. The Council also works with research institutions from the North and South and promotes South-South cooperation through a partnership with the Latin American Social Science Council (CLACSO), based in Buenos Aires, and the International Development Economics Associates (IDEAs), with headquarters in New Delhi, India. It has signed agreements with many other partners and collaborates with various research institutions, such as the Nordic Africa Institute, the Social Science Research Council, and CROP, the African Studies Centre in Leiden, the French Research Institute for Development, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Human Sciences Research Council and the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences of South Africa. Collaboration with regional organizations and the United Nations system has also been a privileged and highly effective means of valorizing the results of research conducted or supported by CODESRIA. Thus, an MOU was signed in 2014 with the UN Economic Commission for Africa to co-produce and co-edit the Journal of African Transformations. In 2015 another MOU was signed with the African Union Commission to strengthen research cooperation with the continent's main inter-governmental body. Discussions have also been initiated with the African Development Bank, and collaboration with UNESCO, UN Women and other United Nations agencies is being done in the same spirit.

- **The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI)** is a good example of another form of collaboration to address one of today's major global challenges: climate change. Indeed, RFGI is a research and training project with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) focusing on environmental governance in Africa. It engaged three postdoctoral fellows, and 34 research-

chers working in 12 countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. At the end of the project, about 40 publications were produced within the framework of this initiative, as well as a documentary film and two manuals for the local communities living in the areas concerned by the programmes to reduce the emission of carbon gas caused by the destruction or degradation of forest resources (REDD+, and REDD++). It is worth stressing that thanks to this initiative, 14 of the 28 young researchers engaged in research teams could carry out doctoral studies on natural resource management issues in the context of climate change.

Limitations of research results valorization with decision-makers

The goal of CODESRIA is to produce research covering the whole continent and the diaspora. This is why collaboration between researchers is encouraged and should be emphasized in every project initiated. The Council aims to:

- Foster collaborations between researchers from different generations,
- Foster collaborations between researchers from different disciplines,
- Foster collaborations between researchers of different origins and languages.

The ultimate goal is to enable young researchers to learn from senior researchers in order to have a community of researchers useful to community, as their reflections can inform decisions by policy-makers in search of the well-being of populations. Thus, the Council promotes publications that provide specific guidance to policy-makers, regardless of their decision-making level. This is the rationale for the publication of policy briefs at the end of some large-scale research activities.

However, things are not as simple as they would be in an ideal environment. As Abdoulaye Ndiaye points out, there are limits related to:

- Frequent lack of appropriate research policy addressing major public issues;
- Limited researcher understanding of the decision-making process, the issues and their role in that process;

- Researchers' lack of will to disseminate research findings;
- Disconnection from research beneficiaries, which may be the fault of researchers or decision-makers, or both;
- Decision-makers' lack of awareness of the existence of relevant research;
- Red tape, which hinders ownership and effective use of research outputs;
- Governments' inability [or refusal] to recognize and use research findings, mainly due to insufficient human and financial resources; etc. (Ndiaye 2009).

Moreover, research findings can be used by some to better fight for social justice and equity, which can lead to confrontations. The "sensitive" nature of some issues may also give rise to controversy over research results. This means that the messages emanating from research, places and recipients should all be taken into account when formulating research valorization strategies.

Conclusion

All told, it is clear that the aim of research is not to see its results left lying in drawers but rather disseminated in all reflection and decision-making spaces. As Bourdieu puts it, we should "disclose the knowledge from the scholarly city." Since its foundation, CODESRIA's mandate has been to participate in the training of researchers, but also in consolidating the achievements of experienced scholars through the promotion of exchanges between junior researchers and senior researchers. Research findings are intended to be used for the improvement of the welfare and the living conditions of populations through a better knowledge of the continent to address populations' concerns. "Social science is not for monkeys, but for human beings," said Thandika Mkandawire (Sall 2002). The fact that societies are plagued by inequalities of class, gender, etc. makes the issue more complex. Thus, for the dissemination and popularization of research results, several channels are used, ranging from the most traditional ones such as publication through books, journals, bulletins, etc. to the use of information and communication technologies, including the Internet, social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, etc. In the same vein, dialogue continues to be promoted through conferences, round tables, open days, etc. in order to maintain the face-to-

face dialectics which is the very symbol of higher education and research.

Thanks to these actions, discussions on the future of the continent are held, with a view to contributing to its development.

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