

CODESRIA Reports

CODESRIA 40th Anniversary Conference

Introduction

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) commemorated the 40th anniversary of its establishment in Dakar, 10-11 June 2014. The theme of the conference was: "Building on 40 Years of Research and Knowledge Production for Africa". The event consisted of two days of historic meetings and round-table sessions which were attended by the founding fathers of the Council, former members of the Executive Committee of CODESRIA, former members of the Scientific Committee, various technical and financial partners, Senegalese government authorities and a significant number of members the community of researchers from the African continent and the Diaspora.

Opening Session The opening ceremony of the conference was chaired by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Senegal, Madam Aminata Toure, who delivered a goodwill message on behalf of President Macky Sall. Also present at the occasion was the Senegalese Minister of Culture and several others eminent personalities, officials and representatives of regional research organisations and members of the Diplomatic Corps. Some of the organisations that were represented at the conference include: the Mo Ibrahim Foundation (MIF) represented by Abdoulaye Djané, the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) represented by Themba Masilela Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala represented by Lina Soiri, UNESCO represented by Marema Touré, the Rockefeller Foundation represented by Mwihaki Kimura Muraguri, the Thabo Mbeki Foundation represented by Vusi Gumede, Open Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) represented by Mathias Hounkpè, Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) represented by its Director Odile Faye, and Africa Arab Research Centre represented by Shahida El Baz.

**Ato Onoma
Abdon Soffonou
Parfait Akana
CODESRIA**

In his welcome address, the Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, Ebrima Sall extolled the vision of the founding fathers of CODESRIA, which led to the establishment of the Council. He outlined the role and achievement of CODESRIA in its 40 years of existence noting that the Council has lived up to its mandate. He however pointed out the goal of CODESRIA must go beyond discussing history and assessing progress, adding that it is also necessary and important to rethink Africa and take a critical look at the future of the continent. According to Ebrima Sall, "we need to assess the ability of our community to adapt and to address the challenges facing the continent. The great challenge researchers will need to address today is that of the empowerment of Africa in all its dimensions. All this will be possible through the determination of all". He therefore called on members of the social science community to focus on new contextualization and conceptualization to meet current development requirements in Africa.

Also while speaking at the occasion, the President of the Executive Committee of CODESRIA, Fatima Harrak, expressed great appreciation to the government and people of Senegal for the unquantifiable support to CODESRIA in its 40 years of existence. She noted that the presence of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Heritage and Culture of Senegal at the occasion was symbolic and underscored the importance the Senegalese government attached to the Council. She did not fail to thank all her predecessors, the various members of the executive and scientific committees and CODESRIA staff for their commitment and sacrifice for the benefit of the continent over the years.

Fatima Harrak reviewed the progress made by CODESRIA since its foundation, through various research, training and publication programmes developed in its 40 years of existence and concluded that "CODESRIA has really fulfilled its mandate and we should be happy to celebrate the 40 years of service," According to her, despite the constraints that limit the development of research in Africa, the Council's contribution has been remarkable. However, she pointed out that, although CODESRIA has recorded many achievements in the field of social science research efforts still need to be made to mobilise the African research community and the diaspora to address the challenges facing the continent.

In her response, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Senegal, Madam Aminata Toure, said it was a pleasure for her to chair the ceremony. She paid tribute to the founders of CODESRIA for their vision in establishing the institution. She also commended CODESRIA's contribution to the process of empowerment and development of the African continent. MadamTouré noted that the initiatives developed by CODESRIA through programmes to address the challenges of research, training and publishing in the social sciences are very laudable. The Prime Minister then reiterated the commitment of the Senegalese government to continue to support CODESRIA.

Presentations and Discussion Sessions

As part of the anniversary programme, a series of presentations and discussions were held on various issues centred on the theme of the conference. In all, there were six round-table sessions.

Bridging the knowledge divide

The first round table focussed on: "Bridging the knowledge divide and negotiating a global presence: Epistemologies of the South and challenges for Southern

Scholarship” allowed an in-depth reflection on the struggle for the decolonization of the social sciences and humanities, and the transformation efforts of the global epistemological order. How do divisions in the global production and consumption of knowledge evolve in a rapidly changing world? How do new technologies challenge the boundaries between ways of knowing and ways of being? To what extent does the discourse on the “South” hide behind a façade of homogeneity, interesting gaps and cracks in the developing world? Have we managed to broker a global visibility for the knowledge generated in the South? These were some of the questions that emanated from the session.

Thinking Africa

The second round table on the theme “Thinking Africa” raised issues of “empowerment”, challenges of the social sciences and the barriers related to the socio-political environment and the dominant ideologies for academic freedom. Discussants interrogated issues such as how “thinking Africa” was perceived worldwide. Questions were also raised about the extent to which new restrictions on thinking and reflection are related to the former barriers to independent thinking in Africa as well as the value of thinking in a neoliberal Africa of the early twenty-first century.

Crises and Revolutions

The third round table on the theme “Crises and Revolutions” raised some issues on the concepts of “crisis”, “transition” and “revolution” in the literature on Africa. Some of the questions raised were: what can we learn from the frequent utilisation of the concept of “revolution” and the low emphasis on evolutionary change in the discourse on Africa regarding African political economies and international systems in which they are integrated? What is a revolution? What are the policies behind change and the highly contested meanings of “revolution”? What are the various ways to establish, engage in and experience the profound changes, including the transformation of the global economy, the rapid changes in ICT, the new developments in the higher education sector and recent political processes in North Africa, which influence almost all spheres of life on the continent?

Internal Review Committee on the institutional development and governance of CODESRIA

The fourth round table focused on a discussion of the report of an internal evaluation committee set up to review “institutional development and governance of CODESRIA”

The idea of an internal review process came out of the GA in Rabat in 2011 in view of CODESRIA effort to reposition itself for the future and re-examine its mandate and intellectual agenda, its mission and governance systems and the value it can contribute in a new context. The EC thereafter appointed Thandika Mkandawire as the chair of the committee.

The Committee’s report centred on the following highlights:

- **Mandate:** The committee had three mandates to: strengthen the secretariat and management structure; reinvigorate CODESRIA’s agenda and scientific processes; and strengthen governance. The committee decided to focus on the third mandate because the first will require a management audit and the second, a scientific review. While reflecting on issues concerning the charter and membership of CODESRIA the committee emphasised the need for CODESRIA to re-produce itself at national and regional levels as well as through South-South cooperation.
- **The need for reform:** Reforms have to be informed by principles. Do we share need for reform? Do we share larger principles on the basis of which reform should be done? While contemplating answers to these questions, the council has to deal with the effects of earlier reforms, which have led to unintended consequences. Also, it needs to adapt itself to a changing landscape where there is greater freedom around the continent, universities are larger in number and often more stable than earlier, possibilities for funding are becoming tighter; and other like institutions working on social science research are cropping up around the continent. Finally, while the Council’s flexibility has been good it requires a bit of coherence to remain true to itself. There is also significant change in the landscape in which the Council operates.
- **Membership** is a recurring issue, which affects GA and the election of the EC, which in turn determines the appointment of the ES and governance of the Council. In South America there are two separate organizations: CLACSO for centres and FLACSO for faculties. CODESRIA has combined these two and over time also introduced individual membership (1993) and associate members. While the Council has become more inclusive, the way this has been done has created problems since no effort was made to clarify the nature of these memberships and the relationship between them. The committee hopes to rationalize the charter to create membership provisions that suit the Council’s vision. This should include procedures for acquiring membership, provisions for a membership committee and a record of members and their standing.
- **Executive Committee:** The charter of the council requires it to adhere to the principles of the OAU, with the goal of strengthening the pan-African nature of the Council. Unfortunately, it has been interpreted over time to mean regional representation. The EC has to receive attention. The only criterion for membership now is choice by regional members. There is a need to add criteria concerning scientific accomplishments for all members. There should also be criteria concerning experience in institutional leadership for presidents. A formalized nomination, vetting and election process should be established. Terms of members should be staggered to ensure experience at all times. The reservation of seats for specialists on the committee might help ensure great inclusiveness. The ES must also have significant academic accomplishments and relevant experience in institutional leadership and should be able to recruit secretariat staff in consultation with the EC.
- **General Assembly:** The Council’s charter does not require the joint convening of the GA and a scientific conference and they used to be held apart earlier. The exigencies of funding led to their combination. This has created much confusion with people attending the conference assuming they have an

automatic right to participate in the Council's business affairs.

- **The new Charter:** It will be great to have a simple and short charter accompanied by a series of bye laws, regulations and policy documents to replace the oral traditions that guide much of the Council's work.

There were several contributions after the presentation. The major questions include: how governance system can enable the council serve its members better; what the needs of diverse and heterogeneous membership are and the extent to which the council should give consideration to regional diversity, age and gender diversity.

It was suggested that the Council should pay more attention to issues of inclusion and the training the next generation of social science researchers. In meeting new challenges it should consider the experiences of other like organizations in doing so. The SSRC has gone from an association of discipline organizations to a member-less organization. When its main funder- Rockefeller- pulled out the SSRC created a friends-of-social science platform, recruited donors unto its board, and asked universities to make annual donations. In the new environment the council could think of devolving more of its activities to universities and focusing on fellowships dealing with the most important subjects of research. An exploration of the impact of digitization on the continent and the work of the Council as well as a reform of governing councils to reflect the plurality of research in Africa are needed.

A note of caution was also sounded that whatever change is done must be carefully thought out and calibrated to avoid problems. It might be best to just keep charter and reinterpret it. There is a need to justify the launching of a review and to explicitly state its mandate and the vision of the Council from which other things will follow. The holding of regional assemblies that feed into GA might help bring people into the Council but the Council should try to pull back from the regionalism that pervades EC elections

Development and transformation

The fifth round table on the theme "Development and transformation" allowed discussants to revisit the concept of "transformation", conduct a thorough analysis of the dominant development models and explore social and economic transformation alternatives. What does "transformation" mean in the new debates on development in Africa and what role can be played by industrialisation, sectors of knowledge services and economies in the process? How do we perceive regional economic integration as a basis for the process of economic transformation of Africa? How do we give high priority to the issue of inclusion and level it up with that of growth, which has been dominating economic thinking for two decades in Africa? These were the core questions at the session.

Future Africans and new frontiers of social science research...

The sixth round table was on the topic: "Future Africans and new frontiers of social science research and knowledge

production in Africa." The session acknowledged CODESRIA's efforts to reposition itself in the larger process of contributing to the positive transformation of the African continent, while maintaining its historic pan-African ideal. There was however a lively debate on some key questions: What should be the focus of CODESRIA in the next 40 years and beyond? How do we relate new ways of thinking the "future" to the pre-adjustment efforts in development planning in Africa? Is it basically a "return to a future"? How does the transgressive spirit, which is central to the reinvention and re-creation of the future interact with ethics and respect for tradition and history that is for many the essence of being an African? What are the new research priorities? How do we effectively promote new generations of researchers? How do we make the relationship between policy research and social action more effective?

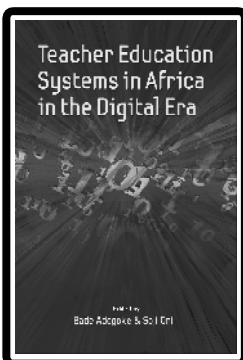
Conclusion

Maintaining its historical pan African ideals in the decades ahead as it remakes itself within the broader process of contributing to the positive transformation of the African continent remains one of the dominant pre occupations of CODESRIA. The debates around the African Union's 'Agenda 2063' and discussions about 'The Africa We Want' re-emerged at CODESRIA's 40th anniversary. The conference ended with a unanimous resolution to re-invent and re-position CODESRIA for the challenges of the future.

Teacher Education Systems in Africa in the Digital Era

Edited by Bade Adegoke & Adesoji Oni

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Teacher education is vital for the realization of a nation's development aspirations. The conception, incubation and delivery of any national development policy, as well as the reform and implementation of extant policies, are driven by the quality of teachers and their products within a functional educational system. Indeed, national and global models of development, including the millennium development goals revolve round the frames of quality education, beginning with teacher education. It is therefore important to have functional teacher education systems in Africa to help its citizens explore the networking of the world as a global village. This is achievable through a systematic

mobilization of national resources and visible commitment to the development of a modernized cadre of scientific and technological manpower. This book, *Teacher Education Systems in Africa in the Digital Era* is a rich exposition of theories and praxes essential for the development of teacher education in Africa. The book has immense benefits for teachers, teacher trainers, funding agencies, other stakeholders and policy makers.