

## Editorial

# Research and Africa's Independence, Transformation and Unity

CODESRIA is now in the second year of a new Programmatic Cycle, 2012-2016, under a new Strategic Plan under the theme "Extending the Frontiers of Social Science Research and Bringing Social Research to Public Issues". The new Strategic Plan was developed after a long consultative process involving successive Executive and Scientific Committees, members of CODESRIA and officials of some of CODESRIA's main funders as pointed out in the editorial to the *CODESRIA Bulletin 3&4*, 2012. Some of the original think pieces from the various meetings at which the directions in which CODESRIA ought to be moving in the coming years were published in that issue. The final thinking is what was synthesized into the new strategic plan. We have, in this issue, the final batch of those original ideas as shared by some colleagues that attended those meetings under the general heading "New Directions and Priorities for Research in Africa: Some Think Pieces".

Amady Aly Dieng thinks that African scholars have neglected two major issues: social stratification and nomadism in Africa. He argues that not much attention was paid to the question of social stratification and this led to problems. The social levers likely to facilitate the achievement of real independence were neglected. He further argues that: "A good knowledge of social stratification in every African country will allow identification of hostile or favourable forces likely to come up in view of projects aimed at achieving genuine independence and true economic and social development." Amady Aly Dieng points out that very few studies have focused on the question of nomadism, especially among African scholars belonging to sedentary communities: "During most of his adventure, man has been shaped by nomadism and he is becoming a traveller again. Nomads, pastoralists and transhumants were penalized by the colonial school system that was designed for sedentary people and especially for city dwellers." He goes on to argue that the importance of nomadism cannot be overemphasized because nomads invented everything; "all basic essentials".

Souleymane Bachir Diagne argues that CODESRIA should pay attention to three issues; first is the issue of African unity and regional integration on the continent; second is religion and the third one is philosophy. The research agenda should focus on a forward-looking reflection and get to understand the meaning of African emancipation. On religion, Bachir Diagne argues that religion has today become "a crucial issue every-where, owing to concerns about modernity, democratization, secularisation, and women's empowerment." He thinks that African philosophy, is an important area to focus on, since it is no longer a confrontation between euro-philosophers and ethno-philosophers. He situates this proposal in the context of "discussions already conducted by CODESRIA ... [and] ... the research on African intellectual history in general and on non-Europhone intellectuals conducted in recent years under the aegis of CODESRIA would perfectly be consistent with this theme."

"Social scientific productions should be self-centred around a social formation", so argues Bernard Founou-Tchuigoua. He

observes that knowledge about society cannot be neutral. He is concerned that without a sense of self-centredness, Africa is in danger of losing its bearing in a highly globalised world. "How is the African anti-globalisation movement to be guided in the choice of new challenges? ... The organized headlong rush for the control of raw materials and oil, and a degree of pollution which endangers the human species itself, a socialist alternative will not be credible unless great autonomous research efforts are made throughout the world."

Fabien Boulaga observes that CODESRIA has done well by leading the way in the production of new knowledge by Africans, in Africa and for Africa. The new direction should be towards consolidating this work and to 'move towards a more comprehensive apprehension of their "common object" and their assessment of its extension and the diversity in those areas, that is, its geographical, historical, economic, political, and cultural experiences.'

Laroussi Amri is concerned about the position Africa occupies in terms of research and science. He proposes that we should develop new ways of thinking. We should stop borrowing theories wholesale without criticality because all theories were created for a reason and were meant to serve specific roles. He says: "Describing the history of a theory, the conditions of its emergence, the purposes it serves, the procedural methods of field research or materials it values, the underlying meanings ... all this, with the intention to determine the extent to which it is consistent or not with the realities of countries of the South, specifically Africa." He is calling for "new ways of thinking that will set us free."

Taladidia Thiombiano, in his piece, is quite clear that CODESRIA and all committed African scholars should not lose sight of Africa's position in the world. He notes that there is a need to focus on policy directions that Africa should consider in a globalised world and proposes that CODESRIA reflects on global strategic challenges given the impact they are likely to have on Africa.

Aminata Diaw thinks that CODESRIA should develop a programme focusing on China's activities in Africa, for this is an area, that should be researched and understood sooner rather than later. Is the China-Africa relationship about cooperation or exploitation? She is also interested in linking this research thematic with the European and North American presence and influence in Africa. The research results would help us understand how Africa can benefit from this new geopolitical and economic situation.

Abdallah Saaf observes that CODESRIA should prioritise a political science perspective in research to reflect on research orientations, and methodological bases and adapt them to contexts. He proposes an assessment of the status of research in Africa today, with particular reference to politics and governance" ... carry out a kind of adjusted stocktaking of the

state of social sciences ... to evaluate accumulations in social-scientific practices throughout the continent. ... The trends observed in the past decade are very instructive. Current local and global challenges cannot be ignored in this thinking."

The debates section of this issue of the *Bulletin* starts with Wole Soyinka's article entitled "A Name is More than the Tyranny of Taste" on Cinema in Africa, which he first presented as a Keynote Address at the CODESRIA - Guild of African Filmmakers FESPACO Workshop on "Pan-Africanism: Adapting African Stories/Histories from Text to Screen", held on 25–26 February 2013, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. By using the example of African naming systems and practices, he argues that creativity should not be constrained by concerns over originality. There are many sources of contents including African mythology "Let it be admitted, however, that all we do is play variations on existing naming templates, not that we strain to be fully original. The same process applies, as stated earlier, to the creative process – styles, themes and even – very often – content."

Demba Moussa Dembélé in "Amilcar Cabral – 40 Years On: Tribute to a Revolutionary Intellectual" observes that "Amilcar Cabral was 'the slave of a cause', that of the Liberation of his people and the peoples of Africa from the yoke of oppression and imperialist domination. ... He sacrificed his life in the defence of that sacred and immortal cause." Cabral was a visionary charismatic leader, staunch pan-Africanist champion and revolutionary intellectual.

Yusuf Bangura in "Building a United and Cohesive Society" comments on the progress that Sierra Leone has so far achieved in its attempts at nation building. This paper was first presented at a conference called to "focus on ways of building a peaceful, tolerant and cohesive nation".

In "First Steps to Creating the "Nilo" Currency for Africa" Yash Tandon argues that the creation of an African currency which he calls the 'Nilo' as a non-convertible African currency to service purely intra-African trade" is an imperative because "no country or region in the world can enjoy real independence without owning and controlling its own money. ... It is the reality of the present (and past) asymmetrical global economic and political systems. It is my view that, in order to advance the cause of pan-Africanism and for Africa to be able to speak effectively in the global fora, it is incumbent that it creates and controls its own currency."

Teboho J. Lebakeng in "Rediscovering Archie Mafeje and How South Africa is Coming to Terms with its Ignored Intellectual Icon: A Rejoinder" argues that Archie Mafeje has not yet be accorded the rightful position he deserves in South African scholarship. He wonders why Mafeje was ignored in spite of his immense contribution to African scholarship. This is a man who has been variously described as "an African intellectual pathfinder", "a pioneering intellectual powerhouse", and "an intellectual giant". Is it possible that he has been ignored because he "was a scholar who spoke the truth, unflinchingly, to power and did not – to use an ambiguous compliment – suffer fools gladly"?

The debates section ends with an article on the deadly Marikana miners' strike in South Africa of August 2012 by Peter Alexander entitled "Marikana Massacre: A Turning Point in South African History?" According to Alexander this confrontation could be a sign of things to come; it is the public expression of the massive anger people have accumulated against the government, and it

seems to signal possibilities for major fragmentation of the ANC. It seems to mark the beginning of "... new political projects ... rising levels of struggles and some convergence of battles involving workers and the poor. All of this has been clarified, sharpened and reinforced by Marikana, an important event, and probably a turning point in South African history."

This issue of the *Bulletin* also pays tribute to Professor Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane who died on 12 April 2013. Jimi O. Adesina reflects on Magubane's well lived life. Adesina tells us: "To understand Magubane and the corpus of his intellectual contribution to South African liberation scholarship on the one hand, and African Sociology on the other, one needs to locate him within the contending forces that defined twentieth century South Africa, the African-American context of the 1960s, and the continental African anti-colonial movements." This is exactly what he proceeds to do in his article: "Professor Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane: An Obituary". We also pay a tribute to the late Hocine Khelfaoui, former editor of JHEA.

In this issue we acknowledge honours that have been bestowed upon some two senior members of the CODESRIA family. Professor Francis B. Nyamnjoh of Cape Town University and former head of the CODESRIA Publications Programme, who has been named the 'Africa Hero of the Year 2013'. He was "honoured in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the advancement of Africa through his scholarship and teaching practice."

Professor N'Dri Assié-Lumumba of African and Diaspora Education at the Africana Studies and Research Center, Cornell University, member of CODESRIA's Scientific Committee, was recently elected Vice President of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) for 2013–14 and will assume its presidency in 2015–16. This election and responsibility is significant, mainly because, it makes her the first African scholar to be elected to lead CIES. We congratulate them both on these very big achievements.

The point that Africa must fight for its independence and strive to achieve true economic and social development is not only made in the proposals for new directions and priorities in research but also in the policy and strategic choices that leaders and politicians on the continent have to make. Yash Tandon sums it up in his view that Africa's liberation is to come through the establishment of an African currency. If "money is war by other means" as he argues, how is Africa going to defeat its enemies when it has no control over its money and money systems?

As we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU, this comes as a reminder that to sustain the high growth rates to transform our economies and negotiate a highly dignified place for our continent and peoples in the world of the twenty-first century, we need to make the dream of a united Africa a reality. This came out very clearly in the two conferences on "Being pan-African" and "Pan-Africanism and Africa renaissance: Reframing the Narrative" jointly organized by CODESRIA and several other organizations as part of the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the OAU/AU, in May.

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