

Fulfilling the CODESRIA Mandate in a new Context

I would like to turn the search of ‘new’ priorities for CODESRIA towards updating its own ambitions and key objectives:

Positive Results

There is no doubt that CODESRIA has honourably accomplished its mandate.

i) Because it repatriated African knowledge production to the continent, thus making the latter not only the passive object of knowledge by and for others, but also the active subject of self-knowledge for oneself and others. So, African researchers have met and exchanged farther which reduced their atomization and isolation. They could reconcile their thematic and 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.

ii) The second most promising result lies in training which enabled promoting young researchers in completing their works and theses, benefiting from orientation or advanced level training on

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theory, practice and writing in the various social science disciplines, receiving publication assistance and awards fostering competition and excellence.

iii) There are many CODESRIA publications that stand out for the most part because of the importance and the relevance of their themes, the quality of their information and rigour of argument. The wide field of social sciences is marked out by books, monographs, working papers and more than ten journals, especially adding to this, the CODESRIA documentation and information Centre (CODICE) resources. In fact, CODICE, ‘is in charge of collecting, processing and disseminating social science-related information’. It is not only meant for internal use for documentary and information support to its own programs. CODICE is open to African researchers in general, research and training institutions,

and even to governments and their agencies. It is therefore unnecessary to over emphasise the importance of this large collection of various documents and its database constantly enriched and updated.

Limits/frontiers

Limits as frontiers to conquer are revealed by the dynamics of success itself. It is also at the same time a historical vision of what is occurring on the margins, ‘informal areas’ more sensitive to effects of domination in the form of ghettoization and theoretical and practical feudalization, of which they are the extreme product sometimes grotesque if not final. The ‘extremism’ of proposals mirrors or expresses the place where they have been manifested and their peremptory dogmatism is due to the absence of arguments to which it invites and of which it represents provocation, not only for others but first for itself. The alleged ‘vision’ is or should be an ‘interpretation’ of conditions and limits of CODESRIA historical productivity genetically considered in its system of constituent relations and its evolution.

i) The initial or founding perspective for a global and pan-African approach, independent and alternative analyses, research and social change purposes was weakened and tarnished after being brilliantly supported by a small group of exceptional and exclusive individuals known for their ideological thoroughness (progressive, pan-African)

ii) The university did not play the expected role of partnership: reduction and registration in public policies of movement. It gave way (for many reasons, including career) to national compartmentalization and ethnic disintegration, thus creating tribal areas for knowledge field limitations in many social science areas, kind of extreme *areas studies*. Then or concomitantly, the university is no longer a place for research, but for ethnic and conservative feudalities, for venality and 'kind' and needy precariousness without the required spare time for research.

iii) The research receiving funding is the one developed by 'donors' in structural adjustment programs, those from multilateral and bilateral organizations dispensing and justifying them, the one addressing new objects they create or revive like civil society, watchwords turned into concepts, into cognitive pseudo-proposals, and into entities imposed to hired investigations. Needless to say that in its training, publications thematics, its 'free and spontaneous' choices, CODESRIA, as in the case of university now operating 'extramuros' was

not spared by conditioning of research. Academic standards were maintained to organize and boost what is all but watchwords and mode effect for social sciences politically disabled for wealthier nations' spare time classes. In this context, the abundance of productions is not necessarily proportionate to its relevance and its importance. There is some great mental confusion to which it's nevertheless vain to oppose some orthodoxy or formerly bright ideas.

What to do as a priority?

I would just like to point out few indications I consider significant strategically. These are simply accentuations of what is already being done as a corrective action within an entity we found positive, considering our difficult environment:

i) We need to reformulate the initial mandate calling for an African and global perspective, advocating independent analyses by way of authentic research and social change. The how is extremely important. As everybody's work, our interactions within common projects, at the appropriate scale, supported by production of presuppositions and common references, making discussion and cooperation possible. Like after Babel, we need to proceed from total 'language' confusion and dispersion and carry out the theory of our practice. Social science without 'Philosophy' is a blind subject and Philosophy (preconceived) outside and without social science practice is void and of no effect;

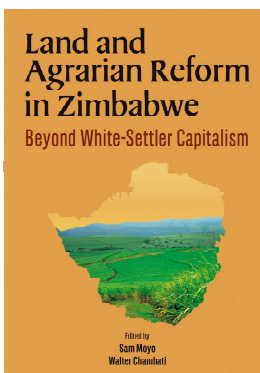
ii) International groups need to be promoted and reorganized in this spirit. We need to give them a preponderant role, and resume together with them the great ambitions of African total knowledge marking the work of those who coveted Africa in its entirety at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, and who produced inventory and summary works we are still using today;

iii) National Working Groups, as they are, must be subject to evaluation and total revision. They have a tendency to suffer continuous and permanent lack of visibility. The most annoying in that, is the fact they are not the best face of the CODESRIA spirit, activities and productions, a famous place frequented by all those who, at one time or another, needed social science assistance and resort. In fact, they have a tendency to appear, if not be seen as a private and esoteric property of individuals and networks, that do not do much of it, if not personal, client-cantered and sectary use;

iv) Finally, CODESRIA resources in their whole variety need to be accessible. They must be constantly injected into research everywhere, in theses and dissertation production, article writing. CODICE resource materials should be made more accessible to all members. How this is to be done should be discussed in a realistic way but in any case the sooner it is implemented, the better. I would be inclined to make it a top priority.

Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe

Edited by Sam Moyo & Walter Chambati



The Fast Track Land Reform Programme implemented during the 2000s in Zimbabwe represents the only instance of radical redistributive land reforms since the end of the Cold War. It reversed the racially-skewed agrarian structure and discriminatory land tenures inherited from colonial rule. The land reform also radicalised the state towards a nationalist, introverted accumulation strategy, against a broad array of unilateral Western sanctions. Indeed, Zimbabwe's land reform, in its social and political dynamics, must be compared to the leading land reforms of the twentieth century, which include those of Mexico, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Cuba and Mozambique.

The fact that the Zimbabwe case has not been recognised as vanguard nationalism has much to do with the 'intellectual structural adjustment' which has accompanied neoliberalism and a hostile media campaign. This has entailed dubious theories of 'neopatrimonialism', which reduce African politics and the state to endemic 'corruption', 'patronage', and 'tribalism' while overstating the virtues of neoliberal good governance. Under this racist repertoire, it has been impossible to see class politics, mass mobilisation and resistance, let alone believe that something progressive can occur in Africa.