

Africa and the Challenges of the 21st Century

13th CODESRIA General Assembly, 5 – 9 December 2011, Rabat, Morocco

Introduction

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) held its 13th General Assembly on 5 - 9 December 2011 in Rabat, Morocco. Held every three years, the General Assembly is one of the most important scientific events on the African continent. More than 600 participants from various disciplines and from about 30 African countries took part in the 2011 edition, during which partners and donors of the Council were also present. This triennial event offered African researchers the opportunity to reflect together on the main challenges of the world and, in particular, those confronting Africa and the social sciences. The theme for was *Africa and the Challenges of the 21st Century*.

The 13th General Assembly was also another occasion to elect new Executive Committee members and President of CODESRIA for the next three years

The General Assembly took place in a context characterized by a series of global, continental, regional and institutional events, out of which three stood out:

- The effects of the financial crises of the last three years have shown the limits of the classical theories and analyses defended by international financial institutions and the majority of Western countries. The crisis did not spare African economies.
- Beyond the economic aspect, 2011 also marks the 50th anniversary of the Casablanca Conference that set the foundation for the Organization of African Union and for the independence of many African countries. However, 50 years later, the continent is yet to overcome the violent conflicts that characterize its political and social development. So, many issues face the continent: what are the lessons of this historic moment? What are the challenges facing the African continent today?
- The so-called Arab spring has been one of the major events on the continent, and the end of the year 2011 has been marked by changes that run deep in the affected part of North Africa.

The major moments of this great scientific event were the opening ceremony, the keynote lectures by Amadou Makhtar Mbow (Inaugural Lecture), Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Leopold Sedar Senghor Lecture), Jomo Kwame Sundaram (Cheikh Anta Diop Lecture) and Sam Moyo (Claude Ake Presidential Lecture). Following these were the major roundtables on thinking the future, the evolution of the multilateral system (particularly the UN systems), the World Social Science Report, the ongoing democratic revolutions, and higher education leadership; as well as sessions on Samir Amin and Thandika Mkandawire, the celebration of the 1961 Casablanca Conference (which was one of the most important moments in the process that led to the

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creation of the OAU/AU) and the endnote lecture during which Professor Jayati Gosh succinctly spelt out the state of the global economy and the ways out of the global crisis for, not only Western countries, but also for those who seem to be the most affected.

The opening ceremony was chaired by His Excellency Nizar Baraka, Deputy Minister of Economic and General Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco, and attended by members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of various international and regional organizations and a great number of eminent researchers from Moroccan institutes and universities. Among other speakers at the ceremony were Professor Sam Moyo, outgoing president of CODESRIA, Professor Radouane Mrabet, President of Mohamed V-Souissi University, Rabat (the host institution) Professor Yahia Abou El Farah, Director of the Institute of African Studies, Rabat, Dr Ebrima Sall, Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, Professor Iba Der Thiam, Vice-President of the National Assembly of Senegal and Professor Amadou Mahtar Mbow, former Director of UNESCO.

This report contains the major discussions held during the General Assembly held at the Ecole Mohamedia d'Ingenieurs, Mohamed V-Souissi University Rabat..

The Inaugural Lecture

In his inaugural lecture, Professor Amadou Mahtar Mbow recalled the link between the Europeanization of the world and the challenges of the African continent, which began in the fifteenth century and continued until the late twentieth century, with the globalization phenomenon. Africa has been both a victim and a source of the gradual Europeanization of the world, and it is through the resources of the African continent that the development of Europe was partly accomplished. But Africa has not received sufficient returns on the investment. It is in this context of domination and capital accumulation that we must examine the challenges that have been confronting Africa for decades. Professor Mbow thinks that, to have a voice in the current world order, Africa must overcome five major challenges - political, economic, technological and intellectual, as well as that of integration. By way of conclusion, Professor Mbow urged African researchers to encourage the development of the social sciences and especially to understand that they are the most qualified to rethink the modalities of the continent's development.

Thinking the Future, Reinventing our Future

This roundtable, organized in honour of the great African intellectual and eminent Professor, Samir Amin, was chaired by Thandika Mkandawire, former Executive Secretary of CODESRIA and Professor at the London School of Economics.

Seven scholars shared their views on the future of Africa. These included Alioune Sall, Director of the African Futures Institute in Pretoria; Leonard Harris, Professor at Purdue University; Pierre Sane, former Deputy Director of UNESCO; Elisio Macamo of the University of Basel in Switzerland; Rene Otayek of the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Bordeaux, Yusuf Bangura of UNRISD, Geneva; and Mohamed Dowidar of the University of Alexandria, Egypt.

In his introductory remarks, the chairperson, Thandika Mkandawire, gave a brief testimony on the intellectual and human qualities of Samir Amin. According to, Professor Amin has always shown extraordinary thought and unequalled intellectual curiosity. An embodiment of the committed intellectual who has left his mark on a generation of researchers, Samir Amin has made a considerable impact on knowledge production in Africa and the world at large. In this regard, his works must be published and translated into several languages so that they can be of immense use to future generations.

In its response to the various presentations, Professor Samir Amin emphasized that the reinvention of Africa would not be easy, as new and more complex challenges ones have been added to old ones. According to him, for Africa to play its part in the comity of nations, it must resolve some basic issues such as integration, citizenship and acceptance of differences. Some of the central questions addressed by Professor Samir Amin were the in-depth democratization of societies, the socialization of economic management as a process combining all dimensions of social life, the active coexistence of different peoples. In his view, as he has always written and defended, the process of disconnecting the imperialist system must be reinforced to achieve national, regional and international autonomy. Amin thinks that we must instill a culture of daring, and that "CODESRIA has not lacked courage in the past and must show the same boldness in the present and the future." As usual, he did not conclude his without criticizing the current foundations of capitalism. In this regard, he asked whether we are on the eve of the decline of capitalism or simply of the de-Westernization of capitalism with the arrival of China, Brazil and India on the global financial market.

The roundtable was an opportunity for members of the audience to questions that they thought deserved urgent attention from researchers and policy makers on the continent. These included the issue of good governance, political instability and conflict, dysfunctions in international relations, the fight against racism and the management of new identities that have become increasingly complex, and exclusion, among others.

Higher Education and University Leadership in Africa

Chaired by Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr, former President of CODESRIA, this session was a forum for reflection on leadership in higher education in Africa. The speakers included Professors Adam Habib of the University of Johannesburg, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza of the University of Illinois at Chicago, Ndri Assie-Lumumba of Cornell University, Adele Jinadu of the Advanced Social Science Centre in Nigeria and Teresa Cruz e Silva of Eduardo Mondlane University of Mozambique and former President of CODESRIA. The roundtable re-visited the question that has continued to worry many African researchers: "How to efficiently manage the African university in an environment of a multifaceted crisis".

One issue that recurred in all presentations and the discussions that followed them was that of the interactions between the various levels of education: primary, secondary and tertiary. According to the discussants, the issue of education should be considered holistically if we really want the African education system to become the desired catalyst for the development of the continent and its peoples. For several years now, we have witnessed the 'commodification' of higher education in Africa, a gradual decline in the quality of teaching and 'massification', all of which are detrimental to the academic and socio-political environment on university campuses. This situation of near impoverishment has resulted in the decline of African universities in world rankings. The unfortunate trend that consists in filling the lower ranks of academic positions is due to lack of attention to quality research. Indeed, competition for positions in university governance, the fight for grades and low funding have undermine the fundamental foundation on which the African university should have been based.

Finally, all the speakers agreed that the accelerating processes of globalization are destroying the autonomy of African universities.

What Role for Multilateral Institutions in a New Africa?

This roundtable was chaired by Professor Carlos Lopes, Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and member of the Scientific Committee of CODESRIA. The other speakers included Professors Adebayo Olukoshi (Director of IDEP and former Executive Secretary of CODESRIA), Thandika Mkandawire, Gita Welch (UNDP Resident Representative and UN System Coordinator in Dakar), and Marema Toure (Senior Programme Officer, UNESCO / BREDIA, Dakar). To Carlos Lopes, the future of Africa is the responsibility of Africans and of African institutions. Africans must remain the principal architects of development. The speakers recalled that at the beginning of independence, relations between Africa and international institutions were more successful. The difficulties really started in the '80s and '90s. The economic downturn has contributed to the questioning of heterodox approaches to development, with an ideological reversal leading the Bretton Woods institutions to take a more neoliberal stance on development issues while donors began funding agencies that served their own interests.

The speakers recalled that development ideas were never imposed on Africa by the West. Rather, they were inherited from the Bandung Conference. To reverse this, the continent's development requires knowledge. Therefore, Africans need to bring to the forefront the debate on higher education in Africa and work towards lifting the resistances that impede equal access to the UN system.

The Casablanca Conference

Chaired by Professor Radwan Mrabet, President of the Mohamed V-Souissi University, Rabat, this session was attended by a host of eminent personalities, among whom were Professor Amadou Mahtar Mbow, former Director General of UNESCO; Bourita Nasser, Secretary General of the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, former Senegalese Minister of Foreign Affairs; Helmi Sharawi, Director of AARC, Egypt; and Kofi Anyidoho, Professor at the University of Ghana, Legon.

Down the memory lane, the objective of the conference was to ensure that legitimately elected governments were not overthrown by foreign neocolonial forces as was the case with the Lumumba Government of Congo in 1960. Although the conference had not fully accomplished its mission, that of ensuring the political and economic integration of the continent – the founding of OAU – greatly contributed to the completion of the liberation of the continent and to the fight against apartheid in South Africa. Despite these efforts, we are still far from an integrated market as suggested by the Abuja Treaty, and even though Africa is now home to a billion people, with a third of the world resources, 60 per cent of young people and the ownership of oil reserves moving from Asia to Africa, the continent is being further fragmented instead of being united, as evidenced by the breakup of Sudan. The events that took place in Ivory Coast and Libya are also strong political illustrations of the disunity of Africa.

The 50th anniversary of the Casablanca Conference was an opportunity to pay tribute to Morocco which, since its independence, has always been at the forefront of issues concerning African unity. But it is incomprehensible that the kingdom now finds itself outside of the African Union. All seemed to say that Morocco has to find its place within the African Union because Africa is incomplete without Morocco. It would be a pride to see African countries hold a second conference in Casablanca to take stock of African integration and prepare the continent for the future.

The Social Sciences and the Challenges of Africa: Research Priorities in the Aftermath of World Report 2011

Organized in collaboration with UNESCO, the roundtable was chaired by Professor Adebayo Olukoshi, Director of IDEP and former Executive Secretary of CODESRIA.

The World Social Science Report 2010, presented by Françoise Caillods, emphasizes the importance of social sciences in understanding the trends in human societies. The number of social science students and teachers has increased at a faster rate than in other sciences. Today, there are a number of important scientific productions on this area and increasing collaboration between researchers in these disciplines. Research results are widely disseminated in books and articles, and increasingly through new communication channels such as the Web. Added to this is the existence of a strong demand for expertise in social science from policy makers, the media and the public in general.

Despite these positive achievements, great inequalities continue to hit regions, countries and institutions worldwide. But, knowledge production, measured by the number of publications in scientific journals, is still very unevenly distributed between countries. North America and Europe hold the record in publishing and the dissemination of research results. Four countries produce two-thirds of scientific journals in social sciences in the world (the US, the UK, the Netherlands and Germany). Developing countries occupy the last positions. Many social science research on issues of local interest and written in national languages are invisible. These works are not cited at international level, nor taken into account in global studies. A gap therefore exists between local and global knowledge. Moreover, English is confirmed as dominant. It is deplorable that some productions in Arabic, such as literature, law and

philosophy are still inaccessible or even unknown. The drastic decline in public funding affects both institutional capacity and the quality of research. This is observable, not only in low-income countries, but all around the world

The fragmentation of knowledge and the limitations in the evolution of disciplines show a trend towards a proliferation of sub-disciplines and a growing hyper-specialization. But to fulfill their functions and to meet global challenges, the social sciences have to become more inter- and trans-disciplinary than they are today. The report highlights a wide range of issues as important as the impact of information technology on diffusion, dissemination of results, dissemination of social science and the potential of open access journals on the Web.

Françoise Carillons drew attention to the proposals made at the end of the report to improve the visibility of social sciences in the world and enable them to cope with current and future global challenges. The report recognizes that there is growth in the social sciences, but because of changes in the world, debates have focused much more on market reforms and the survival of the capitalist system.

After the presentation, members of the audience stressed the need to forge a new epistemology of the social sciences, and the role of CODESRIA in this process is very important. It is therefore essential for social scientists in Africa to 'be bold' in meeting the many challenges facing the continent. Finally, CODESRIA must react to this report, so as to ensure that the issue of knowledge fragmentation is not used as a hegemony and domination tool.

Agrarian Issues in Contemporary Africa, Asia and Latin America

This roundtable was chaired by Professor Sam Moyo, Director of the African Institute of Agrarian Studies, Zimbabwe. Several scholars in this area use the opportunity to present their ideas on how to better understand the changes underway in the use of agricultural land.

The objective of this roundtable was to discuss the problems of peasant struggle and mobilization campaigns in the process of democratization, human relations issues, uneven production, the exploitation of peasant labor, issues related to the problem of the agrarian struggle, and the inadequate responses of governments to the agrarian crisis, among others. According to the speakers, the agrarian crisis in Africa stemmed from the lack of infrastructure, the selfishness of some rural populations and very low dynamics on agrarian transformations. In addition, liberalization has so much paved the way for acquisition and transfer of land to new financially buoyant players that it is necessary to conduct an audit or mapping that can help us see more clearly what is happening to African lands

The discussions that followed the different presentations highlighted the need to properly lay the conceptual foundation of the concept of 'rural society' and that of the 'agrarian question'. Some discussants suggested an increased presence of the African state in the agricultural sector (state ownership of the industry) while others opt great attention should be focused on meeting the challenges of food sovereignty. Other areas on which discussions were held were the nature of agricultural production, as to whether it is important to continue encouraging the small-scale farm production or to shift to large-scale production, and the liberalization of the agricultural sector.

Africa and the Promise of a New Democratic Revolution

This session was chaired by Professor Shahida El-Baz, Director of the Arab and African Research Center, Cairo. Speakers' focus was mainly on understanding the changes taking place on the continent and especially in its northern part.

In his speech, Samir Amin criticized Sadat and Mubarak for dismantling the productive system of Egypt, and substituting an inconsistent system linked to the imperialist monopolies. For him, the 'Egyptian revolution' illustrates the possibility of the announced end of the 'neoliberal' system, a movement which is in line with three active components: the young 're-politicized' by their own will, the forces of the radical left and the middle classes. The Muslim Brotherhood only belatedly accepted the movement. So, it is a social revolt that is a carrier of alternative choices, which may in the long run be part of the socialist perspective.

Another speaker, Helmy Sharawy, submitted that the Egyptian revolution was the product of an accumulation of frustration and injustice of a patrimonial power grabbing by, not only the clan of the president, but also by his family.

Frej Stambouli blamed the real problems of Tunisia on youth unemployment, corruption, strong social and regional inequality, and particularly the lack of freedom and dignity. These factors have led to demands for change. The peoples have questioned the idea of the 'end of history' by challenging the dictatorial powers that have long undermined the workings of the republic. It is noteworthy that these popular movements were essentially secular, and had no Islamic claim, as these were ordinary people who have acted as real agents of change, forcing the dictator to resign.

The case of Libya appears more complex because the 1969 revolution originated from challenging Western intervention after the second war to dominate the Arab world. The 2011 revolution was a reaction of people yearning for freedom. It should be noted what happened in Libya should be interpreted as a tragedy which showed the extent of fear in peoples living under dictatorship.

The role of civil society in all these revolutions and changes on the continent on issues of state accountability on its obligations to its citizens, was underscored by Mshai Mwangola in his presentation, using Kenya as case study.

In total, the 13th General Assembly featured 13 plenary sessions, 33 parallel sessions and 24 roundtables organized by independent scientific institutional partners such as the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa (HSRC), the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), The Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD), the Nordic Africa Institute (Uppsala, Sweden), Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies (AEGIS), Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), the African Studies Centre in Leiden (Netherlands), and the Institute of African Studies at the University Mohamed V Souissi (Rabat). These sessions served as good fora for the participating scholars to exchange ideas on major challenges facing Africa in this second decade of the 21st Century, such as climate change, the China-Africa relations and a multi-polar world, particularly with the emergence of BRICS (the so-called emerging big countries), international migration,

the impact of new information technologies and communications on the development process, governance, poverty, the evolution of gender relations, and the place and role of the youth.

Administrative Sessions

The business sessions were held in three phases. The first was devoted to the presentation and discussion of the reports of the outgoing president, the executive secretary and the chairman of the Scientific Committee; the second was a discussion on the CODESRIA Charter, while the last phase the election of the new Executive Committee, during which Professor Fatima Harrak of the Université Mohamed V-Souissi, Morocco, and Professor Dzodzi Tshikata of the University of Ghana, Legon, emerged as President and Vice-President, respectively. Other members of the new Executive Committee for the next three years, on regional basis, are:

- Central Africa: Etanislav Ngodi (Congo Brazzaville) and Emmanuel Yenshu Vubo (Cameroon); with Joseph Gahama (Rwanda) as alternate
- East Africa: Kenneth Inyani Simala (Kenya), Fikeni E.M.K. Senkoro (Tanzania); With Husain Adam (Sudan) as alternate
- North Africa: Fatima Harrak (Morocco), Helmy Sahrawy (Egypt); with Hispania Chablis (Tunisia) as alternate
- Southern Africa: Puleng LenkaBula (South Africa), Jessie Kabwila Capasula (Malawi); with Soloflo Randrianja (Madagascar) as alternate
- West Africa: Claudio Alves Furtado (Cape Verde), Dzodzi Tsikata (Ghana); with Abderrahmane Ngaidé (Mauritania) as alternate

Conclusion

In choosing the theme "Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century" for the 13th General Assembly of CODESRIA, the Executive Committee wanted to share not only concerns but also the hope of building a better Africa in a better world. In conclusion, five key lessons can be drawn from by this General Assembly: diversity, commitment, recognition, in-depth scientific debate and the culture of audacity.

The diversity aspect was manifested in five dimensions:

- a. The geographical dimension: the participants came from thirty African countries, but also from Europe, Asia, North and Latin America;
- b. The multidisciplinary dimension: all relevant disciplines of the social sciences and humanities were represented – History, Anthropology, Philosophy, Sociology, Literature, Economics, Management Science, Information Science, Political Science, History, etc;
- c. The linguistic dimension: besides English and French, Portuguese was also used, and Arabic was introduced for the first time. This was a good sign towards connecting all the working languages of African researchers;
- d. The generational dimension: In addition to the presence of renowned scholars and researchers both from within and outside Africa, the 13th General Assembly registered a strong presence of young researchers of the third and fourth generations. This diversity promises to bridge the



gap between all generations of researchers in Africa, with the new learning from the aged and experienced, and vice versa. Young researchers were therefore encouraged to invest more in developing new ideas for a better Africa; and

- e. The gender dimension: the 13th General Assembly of CODESRIA was also marked by a presence of female participants and, more strongly, the emergence of two females as new President and Vice-President of the Council. Commitment has always characterized the community of social scientists in Africa. The 13th General Assembly was an opportunity for African researchers to further demonstrate commitment to their creed to complete the work of the forerunners of social science research and development in Africa.

Through the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Casablanca Conference and the tributes to eminent professors produced by the continent, the African social science research community has demonstrated its gratitude, not only to the first generation of African leaders of thought who had worked for

the independence of the continent, but also to the scientific community through its leaders who were at the forefront of research on the continent and the world.

The depth of the scientific debates at the General Assembly is also worthy of commendation.. Media reports from far and near have shown that the debates during the plenary sessions were very lively and intense, with a rare combination of scientific analysis social activism and intellectual commitment. Also, most papers presented at parallel sessions were rated as well written.

The final lesson to learn from the 13th General Assembly is in relation to the culture of audacity in a world facing a financial crisis, with adverse effects on African economies. Although the rhetoric of the participants was very critical of African realities, it ended on a note of hope. Indeed, for many researchers, the twenty-first century will be 'the century of Africa' if only Africans can continue to cultivate the courage to face all the challenges facing the continent.